

Finfish Industry Advisory Group (FIAG) Meeting Minutes

29th June 2022 10:00-12:00

Remote meeting via Microsoft Teams

Attendees:

Sophie Throup, Morrisons (Chair)

Adam Holland, Sea Source
Adam Wing, Seafood Scotland
Barrie Deas, National Federation Fishermen's Organisations (NFFO)
Cameron Moffat, Youngs
Chloe Rogers, UK Association of Fish Producer Organisations (FPOs)
Chloe North, Western PO
Chris Ranford, Cornish FPO
Dale Rodmell, Eastern England FPO
David Curtis, Bass Anglers' Sportfishing Society
David Rowlands, Marine Management Organisation (MMO)
Elizabeth Bourke, NFFO
Eliza Collin, Policy Lab
Hannah Rudd, Angling Trust
Fiona Birch, Mindfully Wired
Freya Mitchison, Defra
Gwladys Lambert, Cefas
Hannah Rudd, Angling Trust
Richard Hoskin, MMO
Ian McCarthy, Bangor University
Courtney Inch, MMO
Jim Evans, Welsh Fishermen's Association
John Balls, North Devon Fishermen's Association

Isobel Johnston, MMO

Juliette Hatchman, South Western FPO
Kate Langham, Policy Lab
Karen Pringle, SWFPO
Lewis Tattersall, Seafish
Mat Mander, Severn & Devon IFCA
Martyn Youell, Waterdance Ltd.
Phil McBryde, Defra
Katie McNally, Defra
Freya Mitchison, Defra
Ned Clark, Fisher
Neil Witney, Fisher
Paul Macdonald, Scottish Fishermen's Organisation
Richard Caslake, Seafish
Richard Hards, North Sea FPO
Richard Stride, Fisher
Rob Blythe-Skyrme, Fisher
Sara Mynott, Mindfully Wired
Sarah Hussey, SeaFarms
Silvia Rodriguez-Climent, Cefas
Simon Cadman, Cornwall IFCA
Simon Macdonald, West Coast Inshore Fisheries Group
Tim Dapling, Sussex IFCA

Apologies:

Aisling Lannin, MMO
Beshlie Pool, South Devon & Channel Shellfishermen Association

Felix Ameye, Seafish
Magnus Johnson, University of Hull

Welcome and introductions (Sophie Throup, Morrisons (Chair))

1. The minutes and actions from the last meeting were presented and approved by members, it was agreed that minutes of FIAG meetings will be published on the group landing page on the Seafish website.
2. Members had the opportunity to raise issues, the following points were discussed:
 - a. Representatives from the recreational angling sector expressed concerns that the name of the group, and use of "industry" could give the impression that the group only represented commercial fishing interests.
 - b. Concerns regarding fishing effort in the Channel were raised. Members highlighted the importance of understanding the impact of this fishing effort on stocks and the UK catching sector.

Sub-group structure & membership (Lewis Tattersall, Seafish)

3. A potential structure and plan for the FIAG and its possible sub-groups was presented to the group. The proposal is based on the structure that has been adopted by the Shellfish Industry Advisory Group (SIAG) over the past two years. All members are invited to:

- a. Provide feedback on the sub-group structure proposal document that has been circulated, and
 - b. Contact Seafish if they are interested in joining a specific sub-group, if that group is formed.
4. The FIAG could form three sub-groups aligned with the frontrunner Fisheries Management Plans (FMPs) focused on finfish NQS. FMPs provide stakeholders with an opportunity to feed into the future management of their fisheries. It is important to highlight that the FMPs mentioned are being developed by delivery leads, and any sub-group aligned with an FMP will be used as a means for stakeholder engagement in the development process.
 5. The proposed FMP sub-groups proposed are:
 - a. **Bass in English and Welsh Waters** (delivery lead: Policy Lab)
 - b. **Channel Non-Quota Demersal Species** (delivery lead: Marine Management Organisation)
 - c. **Southern North Sea & Eastern Channel Mixed Flatfish** (delivery lead: Defra)
 6. In addition to the FMP-related sub-groups, it was proposed that the FIAG set up a two priority issue sub-groups based on discussions held in the first meeting of the FIAG. These are:
 7. **South-West Ecological Risk Assessment (ERA)** – the South-West ERA assessed the cumulative impact of commercial fishing activities. This was due to issues aligned with data-limited species and the difficulties providing these with sustainability credentials. The ERA was updated in 2021 and a report is due to be published shortly. The purpose of the sub-group is to:
 - a. Implement management recommendations to address the high-risk issues.
 - b. Engage with the supply chain to demonstrate the role that the ERA method can play in helping supply chain businesses to meet their responsible sourcing credentials.
 8. **Spurdog** – industry members of the FIAG have raised concerns regarding Spurdog and the mismatch between evidence from fishers and the science used in management decisions. The purpose of this sub-group is to review this situation and bring together industry and researchers to explore options for improved research and alternate fisheries management solutions.

Comments from the group:

9. There is the danger of creating FMP sub-groups that will have a large amount of cross-over and it could be more useful to re-think the structure to account for these similarities.
10. The Cornish Fish Producers Organisation mentioned a Spurdog mitigation programme underway and offered input into the group.

NQS consultation on technical measures (Phil McBryde, Defra)

11. Defra recognize that there are concerns about the level of fishing effort by fly seining vessels in the English Channel. The issue is that the capacity of some vessels that have access to UK waters is far greater using fly seining gear than traditional towed gear.
12. Defra recognise that there is a challenge around the lack of data available anecdotal reports from fishers on the impact of these fishing activities.
13. How the government adapts to innovation and simultaneously encourages it in the rights areas, whilst ensuring species are managed sustainably is an overarching question facing Defra.

14. A consultation on technical conservation measures will be going ahead in summer to give Defra the ability to change the metier definitions used for fishing and to allow industry to offer their insight. The timescale to introduce measures cannot yet be confirmed due to the lack of evidence, as such a precautionary approach is being taken to ensure that any measures proposed are based on the best available scientific evidence.

Comments from the group:

15. Members reiterated the concerns regarding the lack of overarching data and science that is available to support decision making.
16. Members discussed the importance of considering the effects of displacement and other unintended consequences that may occur in response to any management measures being introduced following public consultation.
17. Members expressed concern regarding decision making based on qualitative data and how this could lead to problems in the future. However, it was acknowledged that there is a need to react in the short term and make best use of the information that is available.

FMP overview from delivery leads

Bass FMP (Kate Langham, Policy Lab)

18. The Bass FMP development project is currently in a phase involving interviews and lived experience research with fishers, this involves spending time with fishers to do observational and informal interviews with selected fishers working in the bass fishery. The team are primarily visiting 7 locations around England and Wales to meet stakeholders.
19. In August, Policy Lab will undertake “collective intelligence” gathering involving a week-long online debate which will allow stakeholders to answer a list of questions and to submit their own for others to vote on. Information gathered from these stages will be used for the co-design workshops being held between September and November 2022. After this phase, the work will be handed over to Defra.

Comments from the group:

20. Members questioned how the vast amount of information gathered will be prioritised and filtered down to the most pertinent points for a management plan. Policy Lab intend to do an in-depth analysis of the information they acquire and will filter it into key themes.

Channel Non-Quota Demersal Species FMP (Isobel Johnston, MMO)

21. The FMP covers ICES areas 7d and 7e and includes the following species: gurnards, cuttlefish, squid, octopus, John Dory, surmullet, and lesser spotted dogfish. The FMP is currently in the scoping phase where initial stakeholder engagement has occurred via an MMO roadshow to meet stakeholders. The FMP is then moving into the preparation phase that will involve drafting an evidence statement, further stakeholder communication and engagement, and drafting further FMP content.
22. The next steps for the FMP include sharing feedback from the initial engagement with stakeholders and planning how the FMP can be effectively structured.

Southern North Sea & Eastern Channel Mixed Flatfish FMP (Katie McNally, Defra)

23. The Southern North Sea & Eastern Channel FMP is part of tranche 2 of the frontrunner phase, meaning it will be published in 2024. The scope of the FMP included quota and non-quota species in ICES areas 4c and 4d. The species covered by the FMP include plaice, sole, flounder, halibut, witch, turbot, brill, dab, and lemon sole.
24. The FMP has almost reached the end of its initial round of engagement with stakeholders. Currently, Defra are collating evidence to inform the scope of the FMP and identifying evidence gaps.

By-catch Avoidance Tool map (Paul MacDonald, Scottish Fishermen's Organisation)

25. The Scottish Fishermen's Organisation (SFO) uses a Bycatch Avoidance Tool map (BATmap) to help fishers avoid aggregations of species which could either 'choke' a fishery (e.g. cod) or species which cannot be landed (e.g. spurdog). The tool uses real-time reporting by Scottish skippers to combine position and catch data from vessels to produce maps showing 'hot-spots' for aggregations of selected species.
26. BATmap collects data from participating vessels using a mobile app. When reported catches of non-target species in a given area reach a pre-defined threshold an automatic alert is triggered and participating skippers are notified, they can then choose to avoid areas where the risk of catching non-target species is higher.
27. Each participating vessel can view their own aggregated catch maps but not the catch maps of other skippers, this maintains confidentiality. The purpose of BATmap is not about sharing all fishers' information but sharing what is important to wider industry and to help meet collective goals of minimising bycatch.
28. BATmap was developed collaboratively; the pilot project was funded and led by the Scottish Fishermen's Organisation, the University of Aberdeen, and Fisheries Innovation Scotland (FIS), with additional support from the Scottish White Fish Producers Association, and Seafish. Please visit the website for more information: <https://info.batmap.co.uk/>

Regional Fisheries Groups (Courtney Inch, MMO)

29. Due to time shortages, the update on the RFGs was received by email and is included in the minutes below, though was not presented at the FIAG meeting:
30. The Regional Fisheries Groups (RFGs) are an initiative set up by Defra and the MMO in conjunction with the inshore fishing industry which aimed at enabling cross sector working, identifying priorities of local and regional areas and encouraging the inshore fleet to have a more active role in the management of England's fisheries. Meetings take place around the coast on a quarterly basis where industry and wider stakeholders can discuss issues and projects in the regions. There continues to be a wide range of topics discussed at each meeting including bass and spurdog, future FMPs, changes to stocks such as skates and rays and Sole. The majority of ongoing projects are currently in relation to quota stocks although we anticipate that there will be several upcoming actions taken in meetings in relation to non-quota finfish. For anyone who would like to get involved or have any questions, please contact the RFG team at regionalfisheriesgroups@marinemanagement.org.uk.

Actions

Number	Description	Responsible
2.1	FIAG operation and sub-group proposal: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seafish to update and circulate proposal document to all FIAG members 	Seafish / all FIAG members

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Members to provide feedback on FIAG operation and sub-group proposal document directly to Seafish • Members to contact Seafish directly if they have an interest in joining a specific sub-group (if formed) 	
2.2	Circulate FMPs from New Zealand / Canada to give members examples of FMPs that are already in place	Seafish
2.3	Members are encouraged to feed into the Defra consultation on technical measures (Seafish to circulate consultation link to all members when the consultation goes live, expected at the end of July)	Members
2.4	Add an item to the agenda of the next FIAG on emerging technologies and their use in delivering improvements in finfish NQS fisheries	Seafish