

Minutes of the Seafish Northern Ireland Advisory Committee Meeting

Held virtually on Thursday 24 March 2022

Attendees:

Members

Harry Wick, Northern Ireland Fish Producers' Organisation (Chair)
Colin Taggart, R Seafood
Carrie McMinn, Agri-Food and Biosciences Institute
Mathieu Lundy, Agri-Food and Biosciences Institute
Ewan Hunter, Agri-Food and Biosciences Institute
Daniel Whittle, Whitby Seafoods
Edward Whittle, Whitby Seafoods
Rosemary Johnston, Whitby Seafoods
Ben Collier, Northern Ireland Gear Trials
Ciaran Cunningham, Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs
Mark McCaughan, Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs
Patrick Smith, Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs
James McKervey, Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs
Helen Hanratty, Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs
Adam Holland, Sea Source
Paul Leeman, Northern Ireland Scallop Fishermen's Association
John Chambers, Kilhorne Bay Seafoods

Seafish:

Lynn Gilmore, Director of Communications and Engagement
Sally Chamberlain, Regional Manager – Northern Ireland
Arina Motova, Head of Economics (in part)
David Brooks, Seafish Board (observer)

Minutes

Phillip Quirie, Project Co-ordinator and Administrator

1 Welcome and apologies

- 1.1 The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and conducted roundtable introductions.
- 1.2 Apologies were shared on behalf of Ronnie McBride and Fiona Taylor (Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs); Sam Mawhinney (Denholm Seafoods); Alan McCulla (Anglo-North Irish Fish Producers Organisation / Sea Source), Andrew Rooney (Rooney Fish), Bob McCoubrey (Mourne Seafood), Colin Adamson (Young's Seafood), Juanita Emerson (Northern Ireland Fish Producers' Organisation Training Centre).

2 Minutes of the previous meeting, held on 25 November 2021

- 2.1 The Chair invited feedback on the draft minutes. The minutes were approved as an accurate record of the meeting.

ACTION 01: Phillip Quirie will upload the approved minutes of the November 2021 meeting to the Seafish website.

3 Actions from previous meeting

3.1 Sally Chamberlain confirmed all actions had been completed.

4 Roundtable updates and horizons

- 4.1 The Chair explained this as a chance to provide meaningful updates which may lead to opportunities and encourage interaction between members for mutual benefit.
- 4.2 The catching sector is greatly affected by the increase in fuel prices – 24 fleet segments will see a severe reduction in profit, including the *Nephrops* fleet. Tails and whole prawn prices are very high which is a light relief, but there remains uncertainty due to potential further price rises.
- 4.3 The gear trials project was put on hold due to the pandemic but recently resumed with a five-day sea trial of a *Nephrops* trawl. The gear trials are a collaborative project between the two main POs, AFBI, Seafish, and DAERA. The full analysis is yet to be provided but early indications suggest a reduce in catch of undersized whiting by 10% without affecting the haul of *Nephrops*.
- 4.4 Kilkeel Seafoods are adjusting their selling prices to reflect the increased costs of raw materials. Their new Managing Director, Simon Cummings, will attend a future SNIAC meeting. They are also trialling an onboard tailing machine and catch detection system on the Golden Ray.
- 4.5 Kilhome Bay Seafoods are also experiencing difficulty with increased fuel and raw materials costs and have adjusted their prices accordingly since January.
- 4.6 AFBI are starting to consider their approach to outward comms – explaining what AFBI do and why it's relevant. They are also finalising a piece of work assessing marine blue carbon, which can be presented at the next SNIAC meeting.

ACTION 02: Sally Chamberlain will invite Ewan Hunter to present work on blue carbon at the next SNIAC meeting.

- 4.7 A joint project between NIFPO and ANIFPO to assess the fuel use and greenhouse emissions of the entire NI fleet is almost complete. The next step is to establish mitigators and options and the report will remain internal to begin with.
- 4.8 The scallop enhancement programme has identified sites for closure and the regulations are ready to be approved by the EU. Discussions between the Northern Ireland Scallop Fishermen's Association, Seafish and AFBI will look at ways to continue this work. Seafish have a piece of work assessing larvae dispersal in the Irish Sea – this piece of work has been delayed and will be carried out this year. AFBI have a separate piece of work which will monitor the identified sites.

5 DAERA update

5.1 Patrick Smith gave an update on the Fishing & Seafood Development Programme:

- The final report is expected in May 2022 and explores what action is required to develop harbours in Northern Ireland to cope with the development of the modern seafood industry. The report includes proposed objectives for harbour development.

- Kilkeel to become a marine hub for the Irish Sea, becoming more accessible due to increased water depth. It will be used for vessel repairs and other marine activity. The land space around the harbour will also be increased to allow for business units to be built.
- Ardglass to be developed to become a fishing and processing hub, with increased land space to accommodate processing units.
- Portavogie to be maintained as a fishing port and also prepared for future blue economy activity.
- Environmental and technical studies will be carried out in due course.

5.2 Patrick Smith reminded people that the Joint Fisheries Statement is out for public consultation and closes for responses on 18 April.

5.3 Ciaran Cunningham provided an update on the NI protocol:

- The NI fleet is seen as a third country going into GB ports, which is causing problems – export health certificates and catch certificates are primary issues.
- The Minister has contacted Minister Victoria Prentis and George Eustace to try to resolve this and remove these obligations for NI vessels.
- In the meantime, an integrated digital system is being developed to remove the burden of managing arduous and duplicated paperwork.
- The catching sector continues to do all it can in terms of providing evidence and lobbying MPs.

6 AFBI update on mixed species management

6.1 Mathieu Lundy provided an update on the assessment on mixed species management (Attachment: *01 AFBI mixed species management update*). He explained that the work programme is ongoing and co-ordinated by AFBI, Cefas, and Marine Scotland. It's not solely to provide fisheries advice but will also monitor biodiversity, the ecosystem, and predator/prey dynamics. He also outlined ongoing research work and fishery sampling plans for 2022, which include enhanced inshore data collection; assessment of cod movements; collection of acoustic data for cod and haddock; genetic studies of Irish Sea whiting and scallops; and herring stock identity. An important outcome from the research to date is that fishing activity doesn't currently affect cod reproduction – other factors appear to be affecting cod stocks.

7 Ukraine-Russia situation

7.1 Arina Motova provided an overview of the impact of the Ukraine-Russia conflict is having on the UK seafood industry (Attachment: *02 Ukraine-Russia conflict impacts*). She explained that all the main parts of the supply chain can expect to be affected, as over 30% of whitefish imported originates from Russia. The subsequent rise in fuel costs will grossly affect the catching sector and processors will suffer due to increased cost of raw materials.

Seafish have [this dedicated page](#) on their website which provides an overview of the impact on the UK seafood industry.

7.2 A brief discussion followed. Members agreed that the presentation was useful, and they would benefit from receiving the slides – it was mentioned that it would be a good document to use to justify price increases to customers.

ACTION 03: Phillip Quirie will circulate the presentation on the impact of the Ukraine conflict along with the draft minutes.

8 Seafish Exec and NI work update

- 8.1 Lynn Gilmore gave an outline of recent pan-UK Seafish work that is of relevance to the Northern Ireland industry and this committee (Attachment: *03 SNIAC update March 2021, pages 1-8*). In summary, Seafish activity included:
- Seafish strategic review – results of industry consultations confirmed that there is a strong sense amongst industry that it requires Seafish support. The strategic review has given Seafish a strong steer and mandate going forward, and further information will be circulated to SNIAC members soon.
 - The Annual Plan for 2022-23 was recently signed off by the Seafish Board and will continue to focus on the five core challenges.
 - Fisheries management work – working with industry and government on numerous initiatives to protect fish and shellfish stocks for future generations.
 - End of life fishing gear work is ongoing, with the creation of the UK Gear Forum and a new policy steering group.
 - Seafish are developing tools and resources to support the seafood industry response to climate change. Seafish hosts two webpages: [climate change and the seafood industry](#) and [climate change impacts and adaptation](#).
 - Seafish have two key pieces of work promoting UK seafood in markets around the globe, through a branding toolkit and hosting a UK pavilion at Seafood Expo Global in Barcelona in April.
- 8.2 Sally Chamberlain then provided an update on the NI work programme (Attachment: *03 SNIAC update March 2021, pages 9-18*). A summary of progress was given on the following projects:
- NI aquaculture support – reviving the Aquaculture Representative Group and carrying out scoping studies.
 - Marketing Seafood Through Education (MaSTE) – MaSTEclasses are underway after being delayed due to the pandemic, and more classes will be scheduled throughout this year. A portion budget reallocated to produce instructional seafood prep. and cookery videos as well as disseminating Seafish Seafood Guides to MaSTEclass participants.
 - NI Seafood Trails – there are 9 trails developed covering 15 port and harbour communities. The trail maps are going to print this week and website online w/c 4 April. Officially launch scheduled for May 2022.
 - [Small Ports Survey](#) – report has now been published online and available for download.
 - Numerous safety roadshows were delivered in December, with 130+ fishermen in attendance. Man Overboard training took place in Cork in February, with 39 fishermen in attendance.
 - NI Funding opportunities are [outlined on the Seafish website](#).

9 **Discussion: Seafish opportunities**

- 9.1 Sally Chamberlain outlined work priorities for 2022-23 (Attachment: *03 SNIAC update March 2021, page 16*) before the Chair asked members to suggest any areas that Seafish can help with.
- 9.2 Ciaran Cunningham felt it would be useful for Seafish to help establish a baseline of issues in NI to feed into Free Trade Agreement (FTA) consultations. Lynn Gilmore confirmed Seafish are gathering thoughts from industry on FTAs, and suggested Ciaran contact Fiona Wright in the Seafish Regulation team to establish a position for NI.
- 9.3 Ben Collier acknowledged the support Seafish has given the gear trials project and commended the appointment of David Warwick as the Gear Technology Specialist – his expertise has been invaluable, and Ben asked if David could be invited to a future SNIAC meeting to discuss the gear technology work he does.

ACTION 04: Sally Chamberlain will invite David Warwick to a future SNIAC meeting to discuss the Seafish gear technology work.

9.4 Sally Chamberlain asked members to contact her directly with any further ideas after the meeting.

10 Any other business

10.1 No other business was noted.

11 Date of the next meeting and close

11.1 The Chair thanked everyone for their attendance and participation and asked Seafish to arrange the next meeting in approximately six months.

ACTION 05: Phillip Quirie will arrange the next meeting in approximately six months.

No.	Action List	Timeline (Status)	Owneí
1.	Phillip will upload the approved minutes of the November 2021 meeting to the Seafish website.	Apíil	Phillip
2.	Sally will invite Ewan Hunteí to present work on blue carbon at the next SNIAC meeting.	Next meeting	Sally
3.	Phillip will circulate the presentation on the impact of the Ukraine conflict along with the draft minutes.	Apíil	Phillip
4.	Sally will invite David Warwick to a future SNIAC meeting to discuss the Seafish gear technology work.	Next meeting	Sally
5.	Phillip will arrange the next meeting in approximately six months.	October	Phillip