

Shellfish Industry Advisory Group (SIAG) Meeting

21st September 2023 - via Microsoft Teams

Attendees

Mike Roach (Chair), National Federation of Fishermen's (NFFO)
Andrew Rooney, Rooney Fish
Carrie McMinn, Agri-food & Biosciences Institute
Claire Pescod, Macduff
Colin Bannister, Shellfish Association of Great Britain (SAGB)
David Jarrad, (SAGB)
Ella Brock, Seafish
Emma Plotnek, Fishing into the future
Enayet Mannan, Defra
Fiona Birch, Mindfully Wired Communications

Gordon Chittenden, MMO
Jim Evans, Welsh Fishermen's Association
Jim Portus, Scallop Industry Consultation Group (SICG)
Lewis Tattersall, Seafish
Louise Price, MMO
Matt Baxter, MMO
Sarah Hussey, Seafarms
Sophie Bennett, Seafish
Tim Smith, Association of IFCA's
Trevor Bartlett, Devon Crab

Apologies

Andrew Brown, Macduff Shellfish
Beshlie Pool, South Devon & Channel Fishermen
John Balls, NFFO

Mark Taylor, South Devon & Channel Fishermen
Paul Brown, Brown & Bright
Sarah Clarke, Devon and Severn IFCA

Review of actions and minutes from SIAG meeting, May 2023 (Mike Roach, NFFO)

1. Minutes from May SIAG were approved by members, with all actions completed or set to be covered in this meeting.

Update on key issues of interest to the SIAG (Mike Roach, NFFO)

2. The chair reported how industry are becoming fatigued by consultations, requests for information and participation in meetings, which is poor timing as the Tranche 2 FMP consultation period soon draws to a close. The chair felt this is putting quite a burden on industry and believes they are not being adequately supported for taking the time to engage. The suggestion was made that responses to regional consultations and national consultations be synergized, since it is a challenge for industry to feed in to both when they are happening simultaneously.
3. Key discussion points from group members were as follows:
 - A member seconded the chair's point, referring to the principles that government set out to define the legal procedures and processes for conducting consultations, with the view that some principles have not been adhered to.
 - Defra acknowledged the challenge faced by industry with consultations occurring simultaneously and the need to learn from this, and ensured this information would be fed back to Defra. Defra did highlight that holding the in-person events aimed to relieve some of this pressure, as consultation topics will be explained to industry and the resultant open discussion may be an easier way to engage since comments are to be fed directly into the consultation in the form of an event report.
 - A member noted that there has been some very useful, localised information given at recent consultation events. They expressed appreciation for Defra feeding event discussions directly into the consultation and the usefulness of having an MMO representative and QR codes available so attendees can fill in responses there and then. It was agreed between the members and the chair that these methods of contributing should have been promoted more.

- A Fishing News article has been written by a member evaluating the current management landscape.

Cockle FMP update (Tim Smith, AIFCA)

3. Tim Smith from the Association of IFCA's gave an update on the Cockle FMP:
 - a. The Association of IFCA's (AIFCA) are the nominated lead on the cockle FMP, due to management historically being headed up by IFCA's owing to the four very distinct and localised commercial cockle fisheries; hence the IFCA's that regulate a cockle fishery being involved in the FMP development.
 - b. Defra's ambition is that this FMP will work alongside longstanding cockle legislation and that it will be beneficial to collate all legislation into one centralised plan.
 - c. Estimated timelines for the development of this FMP:
 - i. A draft version of the measures is to be completed by the end of October 2023.
 - ii. IFCA authority meetings and further bespoke meetings are to be held in late November and December 2023.
 - iii. The online consultation survey is expected to run through December 2023.
 - iv. Submission to Defra is planned for early February to undergo the Gateway review process.
 - v. A public consultation will take place ahead of publication at the end of 2024.
 - d. Aspects of this FMP were considered:
 - i. The need for this FMP to concur with the Welsh cockle FMP, link [here](#).
 - ii. The need for more research around atypical mortalities.
 - iii. The need to understand the socioeconomic impacts of water quality and depuration requirements on the ability for emerging fisheries to become established.
 - iv. Improving the mechanisms of reporting and monitoring the harvest of cockles to achieve consistency and greater scope, since the scale of hand gathering is unknown.
 - e. AIFCA has developed a website to communicate some of these emerging themes and the work that is underway.
 - f. AIFCA asked the SIAG how they would like to be involved in this FMP and suggested the formation of a cockle-specific sub-group.
4. Key discussion points on this item were as follows:
 - Members have written a report that may be of interest, discussing the harvest control rules, stock assessment data and life history traits in relation to the IFCA management for the Thames Estuary fishery. This report is very current having been published this year and formed part of the MSC condition for this fishery. Anyone interested in receiving the report should contact Kent & Essex IFCA.
 - The group discussed stock assessment methods and the modelling processes available to determine MSY; this is especially difficult for cockle due to relatively massive fluctuations in recruitment. Following on from this, examples of the amount of variation in the standard of cockle management were given and so emphasized the need for FMP development to be regionally tailored.
 - The importance of retaining co-management was spoken of in response to the formation of a sub-group. Members felt it essential to have an industry working group since industry are reporting issues that aren't raised to IFCA's.

Engagement update: Fisheries Live events (Helen Hunter, Defra)

5. As consultation events have now drawn to a close, Defra thanked everyone for getting involved in the 25 in-person and 3 online events that were held, of which over 300 people attended.
 - a. Notes were taken at each event to formulate reports which will be fed directly into the consultation analysis.

- b. The communications team are conducting an evaluation of every meeting to look at: how they ran, where they were located, what can be learnt from them and what could be improved for future series of consultations.
 - c. Members were reminded of upcoming consultation deadlines and the outreach that Defra are doing to maximise feedback in this time.
 - d. Defra addressed queries surrounding the choice of questions in the consultation form and the lack of feature of topics such as piloting finer scale management, which was due to limitations in the number of questions. Defra welcomed all responses which are not specific to any one of the consultation questions by email.
6. Key discussion points on this item were as follows:
- Members raised the current challenge of achieving cohesion between what is going on regionally with management and with the FMPs, the question of whether regional measures should be put on hold whilst FMPs are developed, and how proposed regional measures can still contribute to the objectives emerging in the FMPs. They notified the group that IFCAs are in communication with Defra about this process.
 - Further points were raised over the other changes that are preoccupying the industry during this consultation time, such as the upcoming MCA medical certificate deadline which has a much greater and much more immediate impact on industry.

Queen Scallop FMP update (Helen Hunter, Defra)

7. The Queen Scallop FMP is set to be published at the end of 2024 and can only cover the English component of the stock. This is a challenge since Queen Scallop stocks extend throughout UK waters, with significant components in the Irish Sea and the Isle of Man. Defra asked the group as to how involved they would like to be regarding this FMP. A consultant has been hired to conduct the initial scoping exercise to define the evidence base for the stocks and associated fisheries. The resultant report will also inform whether an FMP covering only English waters will actually achieve sustainable stocks.
8. The Queen Scallop Management Group, originally established to develop UK measures, has now reconvened with the purpose of acting as a steering group for the FMP. Defra welcomed SIAG members to join.

Highly Protected Marine Areas update (Enayet Mannan, Defra)

9. The group were updated on the following matters:
- a. Baseline monitoring begins this month for the three sites designated in July: Allonby Bay, the North East of Farnes Deep and Dolphin Head.
 - b. There was a ministerial commitment made to explore additional sites when the initial pilot was announced in February of this year, and so efforts are currently focused on developing the criteria to identify candidate HPMAs.
 - c. The consultation regarding a fishing byelaw closed a week before the meeting. The byelaw is expected to be implemented in early 2024.
21. Key discussion points on this item were as follows:
- It was fed back that measures brought in post-consultation such as buffer zones have not been well received by industry. Involving industry in the earlier stages i.e., site selection would be appreciated.

IVMS rollout update (Matt Baxter, MMO)

22. The group were updated on the progress of iVMS rollout:
- a. Independent testing found two of the four suppliers to be suitable: Fulcrum NEMO and Succorfish SC2. Following the independent testing, rollout has now resumed.
 - b. European Maritime & Fisheries Fund (EMFF) grant funding has increased from a cap of £650 to £1050, with the deadline for applications on 30th November 2023.
 - c. Port visits are now underway in phases based on vessel length, including a contingency phase to accommodate vessels not available on certain dates due to fishing. Please see

[Inshore Vessel Monitoring \(I-VMS\) for under-12m fishing vessels registered in England - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#) for more information and the dates and locations.

- d. Uptake by the beginning of the port visits has already been good at 35% across all vessel sizes.
- e. To ease communicating this process to industry, there is a dedicated helpline which is manned 9am - 5pm on weekdays in addition to the outbound calls that the MMO are conducting to notify industry – 01900 508618.
- f. The MMO are handling certain issues arising from the rollout, such as the changes in what the grant can cover and offering reimbursement where relevant in a timely fashion, since these are large amounts of money for industry to be out of pocket by.

23. Key discussion points:

- A member queried equal support for fishers that are engaging at different stages of the rollout, since installation costs and potential airtime costs were not covered for those fishers in the earlier stages. The MMO are happy to review this matter on a case-by-case basis and consider reimbursement if appropriate evidence is supplied.
- Price increases were discussed and the issue of the ability for industry to supply this money upfront. The project is funded by the European Maritime Fisheries Fund (EMFF), who maintain strict guidelines on how funding can be granted. It was recommended that individuals struggling with this issue should contact the grants team at UKFisheriesSupport@marinemanagement.org.uk.
- A member spoke of some individuals still awaiting reimbursement from the first round. The MMO responded that these have often been in cases where the relevant information hasn't been supplied or the MMO are having difficulties contacting them.
- The MMO thanked everyone for their engagement and cooperation with this project.

Scallop Industry Consultation Group (SICG) update (Jim Portus, SICG chair)

- 24.** The SICG last met on the 7th of September 2023 and key updates are presented below:
- a. Following the recent meeting, 75 days at sea has been proposed for the coming quarter.
 - b. There has been an ongoing survey of King Scallops in the North Sea and the East Channel, within which they were also given permission to survey scallops in French waters.
 - c. A request was made for Welsh industry members to feed their views into the King Scallop FMP consultation, since more insight is needed from this area.

Crab and Lobster Management Group (CMG) update (Claire Pescod, CMG chair)

- 25.** The CMG last met on the 6th of September 2023 and key updates are presented below:
- a. The Round 1 FISP project investigating the use of cameras to address data deficiencies in crustacean fisheries is nearing completion and the final prototype will be distributed soon to gather data for final tweaks.
 - b. Draft crustacean welfare codes of practice will be presented to industry panels at the beginning of October 2023, with the target of publishing by the end of the year. The Nephrops fleet will be the focus of the next round of the project.
 - c. The 2023 Crustacean Compassion industry benchmark audit will be published in January 2023 and will assess the management and reporting practices of 30 UK companies.
 - d. The Crab and Lobster FIP has just finished its sixth and final year, and attentions are now shifting to assessing appetite for full assessment. Project UK coordinated a "Southwest Hub" this summer to support formation of a client group for some of the southwest FIPs that have recently completed their timeline.
 - e. NEIFCA are running a consultation on their shellfish permit byelaw, which includes the addition of a number of shellfish species (including Nephrops and scallops), pot limits, permit capping, and a new payment structure. Read more on this [here](#).

Whelk Management Group (WMG) update (Lewis Tattersall, Seafish)

- 26.** The WMG last met on the 11th of September 2023 and key updates are presented below:
- Responses to the whelk FMP have been lower than expected. Members were encouraged to feed into the consultation.
 - Heriot Watt University discussed their findings on pot selectivity with the intention of finding alternative processes to riddling. Whilst increasing the escape gap area did not prevent the capture of undersize whelks, an increased soak time showed massive improvements. Bait alternatives are to be investigated next, in particular the use of binding agents to enable the bait to last longer.
 - Kent & Essex IFCA discussed the latest information regarding the occurrence of moribund whelks at the end of last summer. Kent & Essex IFCA have been conducting a release-recapture monitoring programme and temperature loggers have been deployed on pots to investigate the most plausible cause: Temperature. A CEFAS toxicology report shall also be released soon.

AOB

- 27.** A representative from Fishing into the Future promoted the upcoming Fisheries Resource Education Programme events. These are three-day residential events designed at getting people from the fishing industry, science, and fisheries management to share their expertise. More information can be found [here](#).
- There are two upcoming events: demersal non-quota fin fish fisheries (6th-9th November 2023) and shellfish fisheries (26th-29th February 2024).
 - This initiative was recommended by the chair as an opportunity for fishermen to understand the policies and the science behind how management is done. Furthermore, there is financial support available for the fishing industry to attend these events.
- 28.** A member promoted the opportunity to apply for Fisheries Innovation & Sustainability (FIS) funding, offering support for fisheries international exchanges to learn about fisheries innovation and gear technology. Read more on this [here](#).

Actions

Number	Description	Responsible
14.1	Feed views and suggestions of the group into the evaluation of the consultation period, especially comments surrounding engagement fatigue and overarching challenges that have preoccupied industry.	Defra
14.2	Fishing News article evaluating the current management landscape to be shared with the group.	Colin Bannister/Seafish
14.3	Share AIFCA's website on the cockle FMP with the group.	Seafish
14.4	Initiate the formation of a cockle specific sub-group.	Seafish / AIFCA
14.5	Members invited to join the Queen Scallop Management Group.	All members/ Helen Hunter
14.6	Information on the iVMS rollout to be shared with the group.	MMO / Seafish
14.7	Call for Welsh industry members to respond to the King Scallop FMP consultation.	Welsh industry members
14.8	Details of the Fisheries Resource Education Programme and fisheries international exchange opportunities to be shared with the group.	Seafish

