

## Aquaculture Leadership Group Meeting Minutes – 9 Dec 2020

### In Attendance

James Fox Davies, Fowey Shellfish Co, ALG Chair (JFD)	Roger Covey, Natural England (RC)
Kim Cullen, SF2040 (KC)	Rebecca Redrup, Defra (RR)
Sara Catahan, Defra (SC)	Kelsey Thompson, Morecambe Bay Oysters (KT)
Dr Stuart McLanaghan, Seafish (SMcL)	Dr Christopher Sweeting, MMO (CS)
Martin Syvret, AquaSolutions (MS)	John Holmyard, Offshore Shellfish (JH)
Dr Lewis Le Vay, Bangor University (LLV)	Benjamin Coppin, MMO (BC)

### Guests

Neil Auchterlonie, SF2040 (NA)	Greg Smith, Seafish (GS)
Stacey Clarke, Defra (SCI)	Sarah Horsfall, SAGB (SH)
Ally Dingwall, Sainsbury's (AD)	Robert Clarke, Association of IFCAs (RCI)

### Apologies

Ruth Allin, Defra (RA)	Michael Gubbins, CEFAS (MG)
David Jarrad, Shellfish Association of GB (DJ)	Oliver Robinson, British Trout Association (OR)
Abbey Coppin, MMO (AC)	

## Meeting Minutes

### Agenda #1

#### Welcome

### Agenda #2

#### 7 Oct 2020 Minutes

- Tabled and accepted

### Agenda #3

#### Q&A on Seafish paper submitted earlier to ALG

- No comments
- SMcL asked if updates were useful and there was general agreement that they were

### Agenda #4

#### Update from Defra

SC and RR updated ALG on Defra's aquaculture activities

- Fisheries Bill – Received Royal Assent
  - Work has begun on the Joint Fisheries Statement; RR is linking with the Community Interest Group who are developing the Statement to ensure aquaculture and the English Aquaculture Strategy are accurately represented

- English Aquaculture Strategy – Defra is committed to helping achieve the critical actions and is already focusing on several actions within the Delivery Plan
  - Pacific oyster review
    - NE continues to advise that new farms should not be licensed in accordance with the current evidence
    - R&D projects underway to inform government policy in 2021
  - Aquaculture Regulatory Framework review
    - Project underway to review current framework
      - Phase 1 is a review of current guidance
      - Phase 2 will seek stakeholder input in Feb 2021
  - Feeding into the EMFF replacement scheme (Fisheries and Seafood Scheme [FaSS])
    - To ensure new fund is fit-for-purpose with aquaculture
  - Aquaculture statistics R&D project
    - Commissioned to CEFAS in Dec 2020; 2-phase project; overall goal is to deliver robust and accessible data on the industry
    - 1<sup>st</sup> phase: review of current landscape; due March 2021
    - 2<sup>nd</sup> phase: determine what variables are needed and when the data will be collated and published; this phase will include stakeholder engagement
  - Implementing other actions in the Strategy would require further resources

## **Agenda #5**

### **Update on the Shellfish Stakeholder Working Group (SSWG)**

LLW updated ALG

- Ongoing need for cross-information particularly as SSWG work links to action SH 2 in the English Aquaculture Strategy: Develop the risk-based approach to the classification of shellfish production in English waters
- SSWG is chaired by SAGB, supported by Seafish, and is a forum for industry, researchers, and regulators to engage on and seek solutions to water quality issues impacting on shellfish production
- SSWG membership: SAGB, shellfish producers, FSA, EA, CEFAS, port health reps and Bangor University
- Focus of the SSWG is on the method of assessing and managing the potential risks of shellfish contamination to consumer health because currently it is problematic. Problems include:
  - High variability in MPN test results is not uncommon
  - Testing is retrospective and lacks responsiveness
  - Sampling occurs at fixed timeframes so not always able to accurately determine risk outside this period
  - System is based on *E coli* as an indicator, while norovirus contamination is a primary concern
  - System does not fully take account of other measures to address risk, such as cooking
- SSWG outcomes will be:
  - Potential for shellfish contamination, because of water quality issues, is managed so that the risks to human health are avoided outright or appropriately mitigated in such a way that the burden on business is minimised

- Developing an Assurance Scheme for Shellfish and Human Health (DASSHH): Establishing a risk based approach that provides elevated levels of regulatory assurance alongside greater operator flexibility, while continuing to manage human health risks
- Six-stage work programme
  - Focus during 2020 has been on Stages 3 & 4
    - Stage 3 - Evidence
      - Bangor University research on Camel Estuary aims to:
        - Improve understanding of sources of microbial contamination in catchments and coastal waters and how uptake by shellfish varies with a range of potentially predictive environmental factors
        - Assess the effects of depuration on microbial contamination of shellfish harvested during high and low risk periods
      - Covid-19 delays but some preliminary results:
        - Analysis of historical data indicates some correlation between environmental indicators and presence of *E.coli*
        - Positive results on the work to explore alternatives to MPN
      - Future-proofing DASSH: Project is currently focused on *E.coli* as an indicator but research stage is also investigating:
        - If a monitoring regime based around norovirus might perform better than the current *E. coli* system
        - How such as regime could also enable a risk based approach to shellfish monitoring and harvesting
    - Stage 4 – Applicability: Demonstrating that a risk based approach can operate within existing regulatory requirements
      - Research underway to compare and contrast how the UK interprets the EU regulatory guidance with 10 other member states, including how anomalous results are treated, and assess what third countries do to export shellfish successfully to the EU given UK's changing status
  - Timeframes
    - Stage 3 Research should complete in mid-2021
    - Stage 4 Research: Report to be peer reviewed and available in early 2021
    - Initial discussions on Stages 5 & 6 are underway
- English Aquaculture Strategy
  - Identified water quality issues as a priority objective (SH 2)
  - SSWG already progressing this work (UK-wide not just for England)

### Discussion

- If we are looking at other EU states with a monitoring, risk-based system in place such as France & Sweden it is important to note how these are funded. Most are funded by govt as part of food safety system and the resulting UK should reflect this information
  - LLV will feed this back to the peer reviewers to ask them to include the economic aspect
- There already is an alternative and quicker method with regard to *E-coli* which is Impedience

- Labs have never adopted Impedience but the method is widely used in the dairy industry
- How can we get the labs to use new methods? Industry won't pay for it. Central labs aren't set up either but could be. Capacity and variability of samples are issues, and the kits are expensive. There are trade-offs to all the methods
- Risk-based testing reduces end-product testing
- Catchment inputs vs CSO inputs - Results will be available soon from the Camel Estuary project

## **Agenda #6**

### **Update from SF2040 on the English Aquaculture Strategy**

KC updated ALG

- EAS released 26 November
- Dissemination included SF2040 SILG & ALG members, Minister and MPs (ongoing), Southwest Aquaculture Network, Defra and Seafish, IFCAs, relevant DA departments and academia
- Media attention included Fish Farmer, Fish Focus, Undercurrent News and World Fishing & Aquaculture
- Next Steps
  - KC to meet with all potential participants listed against actions in the Delivery Plan in January and February to get a sense of the actions and where they are at and what's possible

## **Agenda #7**

### **Love Seafood by Seafish – An Introduction**

Greg Smith, Seafish Marketing Manager, presented to ALG

- Love Seafood (LS) strategic approach
  - Seafish organisational vision: To give the UK seafood sector the support it needs to thrive
  - Seafish organisational objective: To support the doubling of seafood consumption in the UK to two portions, per person, per week
  - Consumer marketing ambition: To positively influence consumer attitudes towards seafood, increasing value perception
    - How: industry-driven, always-on, consistent messaging, targeted activity, agency partnership, 20+ years vision
- Measuring success – there are 3 principles:
  - Reporting – structured framework in place
  - Bench-marking – what are other food and drinks doing and how are they performing and how do we compare?
  - Attitude tracking – difficult but not impossible to track; Seafish runs a 6 monthly survey with a consistent cohort (yougov)
- Shellfish features to date – recipe focused right now
- Shellfish features in pipeline – bringing in seasonal seafood
- Future work: positive Industry & shellfish – this will bring aquaculture into the spotlight; to talk more about the people within the industry through seafood champions & emotional stories to connect with

## Discussion

- COVID has had an obvious impact on foodservice which is a big hook to getting people to try seafood. Foodservice will be a focus in Love Seafood but depends on COVID recovery
- Love Seafood will facilitate access to experts who can help businesses do their own promotions
- Small, local, and independent retailers / fishmongers and food delivery companies present opportunities (push shellfish, provide recipe books). Different channels outside mainstream retail are often very well placed – however this will be a slow burn; will build up over time
- Shellfish is considered a premium product but the barriers to preparation are greater. With future activity Love Seafood wants to use ALG as the mouthpiece for myth-busting – another slow burner
- DAs can run their own localised activities under LS

## **Agenda #8**

### **Review SF2040 Recommendations 13 & 14**

#### Rec 13 Discussion

- Aquaculture is a part of the wider SF2040 Strategic Framework and England's seafood industry therefore it should be kept in the framework. There is value in looking at the EAS and bringing it into Rec 13 at a higher level (e.g. 'Deliver the EAS')
- Main text for Rec 13: 'Maintain / continue the purpose of the ALG and support English aquaculture toward a thriving and sustainable future'
- 1<sup>st</sup> bullet point – Deliver the EAS
- 2<sup>nd</sup> bullet point – should this be removed as it is covered in the EAS
  - Local context and motivation (i.e. interested parties) are important for any project / work looking at mapping potential aquaculture development sites
- 3<sup>rd</sup> bullet point – The DAASSH project covers water quality
- Still much to discuss therefore KC will consider the best way to engage with ALG to receive feedback on Recs 13 and 14 in order to complete the SF2040 Recommendation Refresh

## **Agenda #9**

### **Any Other Business**

1. Next ALG meeting will be in February 2021