

Crab & Lobster Management Group (CMG) Meeting

31 March 2022

Remote meeting via Microsoft Teams

Attendees

Claire Pescod, Macduff Shellfish (Chair)
Aoife Martin, Seafish
Andrea O'Shaughnessy, MMO
Andrew Wheeler, Wheeler Consulting
Annabel Stockwin, Defra
Barrie Deas, NFFO
Beshlie Pool, South Devon and Channel Shellfishermen's Association
Chris Ranford, The Cornish Fish Producers Organisation
Christian Proud, MMO
Colin Bannister, SAGB
David Jarrad, SAGB
Jessica Duffill Telsing, MMO
Eleanor Holford, MMO
Ella Brock, Seafish
Emma Plotnek, Fishing into the Future
Fiona Birch, Mindfully Wired
Hannah Fennell, Orkney Fisheries Association
Harry Wick, NIFPO

Helen Hunter, Defra
Hubert Gieschen, MMO
Jim Evans, Welsh Fishermen's Association
John Balls, North Devon Fishermen's Association
Lewis Tattersall, Seafish
Marta Moran Quintana, Seafish
Martyn Youell, Waterdance
Matthew Johnson, Defra
Mike Cohen, NFFO
Natalie Hold, Bangor University
Patrick Smith, DAERA
Paul Brown, Brown & Bright Shellfish Ltd.
Rachel Irish, MMO
Rebecca Treacy, Seafish
Richard Corner, Seafood and Eat It
Sarah Clark, Devon and Severn IFCA
Sarah Hussey, SeaFarms
Trevor Bartlett, Devon Crab

Apologies

Carlos Mesquita, Marine Scotland
Andrew Brown, Macduff Shellfish
Matt Johnson, Defra

Chloe North, Western FPO
Jennifer Mouat, SWFPO

General comments from members

1. It was highlighted that Project UK are hosting crab management workshops for the industry. An update from these workshops would be useful at a future meeting of the CMG.

Wester Waters Effort Regime (WWER) workshop update (Annabel Stockwin)

2. The outputs from the WWER workshop will be incorporated into the work developing the Fisheries Management Plans (FMPs), particularly the harvest strategy. This will allow flexibility for future management of species to be consulted on. Any changes to the management in Western Waters will be applied at the UK level.

Crab management plan & lobster management plan (Lewis Tattersall, Seafish)

3. The crab and lobster FMP has been prioritised for delivery in 2023 as part of Defra's frontrunner phase. The September 2023 deadline for publication includes time for consultation and sign off from ministers meaning that FMP drafting, stakeholder engagement, and delivery to Defra must be completed by Q1 2023. The CMG FMP working group have developed and reviewed a set of objectives and actions. The next step is to sequence these objectives and align the expected resource required for delivery of each action.
4. Defra have developed an FMP toolkit and an evidence strategy. The draft CMG research plan and management plan are being finalised against Defra requirements. They will be presented to the working group for review before they are presented to the overarching CMG. Seafish and Defra are working on a stakeholder engagement plan to ensure the wider industry have the opportunity to be involved in the review and development of the FMP.

5. Comments from the group:
 - a. The importance of considering harvest control rules and their application across the industry was highlighted by members of the group. Considering every metier of the industry will be integral for the FMPs to successfully implement harvest control rules.
 - b. Concerns were raised regarding the lack of information on effort from EU vessels fishing in UK waters. Industry is concerned about meeting the FMP deadline when there is a lack of data available to make evidence-based management decisions.

NI update (Patrick Smith, DAERA)

6. DAERA has made two Statutory Rules on edible crabs which came into force in January 2022:
 - a. Legislation to increase the minimum landing size of edible crab from 140mm to 150mm.
 - b. Legislation prohibiting the landing of detached crab claws.
7. DAERA opened a consultation regarding the landing and sale of soft-shell brown crab. The consultation is closed, and responses are being considered.

Regional Fisheries Groups (Eleanor Holford, MMO)

8. The Regional Fisheries Groups (RFGs) have been running for one year. The groups are largely based on the ICES areas and are intended for the inshore fleet and non-sector stakeholders. Industry is encouraged to engage in the RFGs to discuss their priority issues with other industry representatives, MMO, Defra and Cefas. The next set of meetings are due to take place in May, with the option to join online or in person.
9. The groups have the option to discuss fisheries management at meetings. It is important to ensure that the outputs of such discussions are shared with the CMG to ensure there is alignment in the FMP development process.
10. The RFGs may be a useful forum as part of the engagement strategy for wider consultation on the draft FMP.

Crustacean welfare issues (David Jarrad, SAGB)

11. The London School of Economics published their report reviewing evidence of sentience in cephalopods and crustaceans in November 2021. Following the report, the government recognises that cephalopods and crustaceans are sentient and have been included in the UK Welfare (Sentience) Bill. A steering group was set up including the Chair of the CMG, Chair of the SAGB crustacean committee, Seafish and the Chief Executive of the SAGB to explore the potential impact crustacean welfare issues could have on the industry.
12. The steering group applied for Fisheries and Seafood Scheme (FaSS) funding to undertake phase 1 of the project to do preliminary research on voluntary codes/best practices used elsewhere around the globe, and how it might be feasible to implement similar codes in the UK for shellfish handling and dispatch.
13. Phase 2 of the project involves the development of the codes and is hoped to be funded by FaSS round 2. The steering group expects that focus groups will be set up for each code developed for every section of the supply chain e.g., fishers, wholesalers, processors, caterers, retail, consumer. The focus groups will include 6-8 members and will include representation from Defra and an animal charity. This phase could take up to 18 months.
14. Phase 3 of the project will be the implementation of the voluntary codes and industry adoption.
15. The project hopes to lead to the demonstration of good welfare practices across the whole supply chain and avoid any legislative change that could be detrimental to the sector. Regular updates of the project will be provided to the CMG.

Fisheries Industry Science Partnership research project (Natalie Hold, Bangor University)

16. Bangor University in collaboration with Seafish, Heriot-Watt University, Holderness Fishing Industry Group, South Devon and Channel Shellfishermen Organisation, and the Welsh Fishermen's

Association are undertaking a project to improve shellfish data collection and has been awarded £274,325 for 24 months (to March 2024) from FISP.

17. The project aims to increase the spatial and temporal coverage of catch composition data for UK shellfish fisheries. This will be achieved by deploying a number of autonomous sampling systems on active fishing vessels to gather data on catches of brown crab and lobster. The imagery will be analysed by computer vision technology providing data on quantity, size and sex of shellfish catches.
18. The outputs of the project will specifically address the research needs of crab and lobster fisheries and will contribute to the delivery of objectives listed in the crab and lobster fisheries management plans (FMPs).
19. The cameras are already being trialled on 3 vessels via Bangor University to allow for any initial problems to be solved before the technology is distributed more widely. The artificial intelligence technology will improve over time as it is dependent on how much data is inputted from the cameras to allow it to develop. There is no intention for every vessel to host a camera. Rather, the aim is for the equipment to be transferable between vessels depending on the data requirements.
20. The Holderness Fishing Industry Group were awarded FISP funding to progress a project using creel mounted cameras to address data deficiencies in the assessment of static gear crustacean fisheries by generating abundance indices that are not influenced by catch. The project will also look at pot dynamics, such as retention rates and inter-species interactions. More information on the project can be found here: <http://www.holdernessfig.org/page25.html>.
21. The industry are encouraged to get in touch with the Fishing Animateurs (<https://www.fishinganimateur.co.uk/new-page-1>) if they have research project ideas but need support in finding academic/UKRI collaborative partners.
22. Seafish in partnership with Bangor University, Macduff Shellfish and Waterdance have been awarded £17,750 of FISP funding for *Shellfish Research* to help develop a number of research proposals to:
 - a. Develop improved data collection programmes for crab, lobster and whelk fisheries.
 - b. Improve understanding of the wider environmental impacts of static gear fisheries.
 - c. Contribute to the delivery of objectives laid out in the Fisheries Act 202 and draft FMPs.

Emergent crab disease in the English Channel (Rosslyn McIntyre, Cefas)

23. Cefas presented an update on the amoebic crab disease found in brown crabs in the English Channel. The amoebic pathogen was found in adult edible crabs. Juvenile crabs have not yet been investigated. 98 crabs were sampled and 50% of these had the infection present. The pathogen requires a host to function and is thought to be passed on from animal to animal and not through the water column. There is no known risk to human health from this disease. The disease is not linked to the Northeast crab and lobster mortalities reported last year which has been attributed to a harmful algal bloom.
24. Symptoms of the disease in brown crabs include lethargy and post-capture mortality (on the way to landing). Industry is asked to contact their local IFCA if they see increased mortalities or unusual behaviours in crabs.

Non-quota stocks (Helen Hunter, Defra)

25. Last year's negotiations set out that the EU and UK would not apply the tonnage limits for Non-Quota Species this year. There is continual monthly exchange of uptake data for NQS between the UK and the EU. This year it has been agreed that if each party reach 80% of their overall tonnage (based on global tonnage limits) there will be an immediate discussion in the Specialised Committee on Fisheries (SCF). There is a commitment to develop a first set of multi-year strategies for shared NQS by the end of July 2022. There is a need to better understand how FMPs can compliment MYS and vice versa.
26. Defra recognise that the multi-year strategies will have a huge impact on industry and should not be rushed. Rather, the aim is to develop more rounded management that will positively impact the

industry. The data on UK effort in EU waters Jan-Jun 2021 has been published and the MMO will publish data on the second half of that year in the near future. Defra will pull together a short note on the key elements discussed regarding NQS for members' reference.

Actions

Number	Description	Responsible
7.1	Share draft slides on the FMP update.	Seafish
7.2	Share 14 potential crab management measures proposed by the industry in NI.	Harry Wick
7.3	Share updates from the Cefas crab disease research when available.	Rossllyn McIntyre
7.4	Defra to put together a short note updating industry on elements of NQS discussions.	Defra
7.5	Consider setting up a half day workshop on NQS to allow industry to share views with Defra.	Seafish/Defra
7.6	Invite Project UK team to future meeting to present an update on FIP work.	Seafish
7.7	Provide regular updates on the welfare project to the CMG, with the possibility of inviting Katie Smyth to a future meeting to present.	Seafish/SAGB