

Whelk Management Group (WMG) Meeting

14 January 2021

Remote meeting via Zoom

Attendees

Aoife Martin , Seafish (Chair)	Ellen Colebrook, Defra
Alex Passmore, More Seafoods	Emma Dixon-Lack, MMO
Andrew Brown, Macduff Shellfish	Helen Hunter, DEFRA
Andy Lawler, Cefas	Jim Evans, Welsh Fishermen's Association
Anne Freeman, Defra	Jim Portus, SWFPO
Arjen Brouwer, Defra	Julian Bray, Welsh Gov.
Bill Brock, Brighton & Newhaven Fish Sales	Lewis Tattersall, Seafish
Charlie Abbott, Lynn Shellfish	Marta Moran-Quintana, Seafish
Charlie Brock, Brighton & Newhaven Fish Sales	Martyn Youell, Waterdance
Charlotte Colvin, Bangor University	Matthew Johnson, Defra
Chloe North, Western Fish Producer's Organisation	Matthew Whittles, Defra
Chris Rowland, MMO	Michael Newton-Smith, Active fisherman
Duncan Jamieson, Defra	Michel Kaiser, Heriot-Watt University
	Natalie Hold, Bangor University
	Phil McBryde, Defra
	Robert Clark, Association of IFCAs

Apologies:

Jordan Andrews, Quay Fresh & Frozen Foods
 Les Lawrence, Shellfish Assoc. of Great Britain
 Scott Merrick, AM Seafoods

1. Discussions on Brexit

Defra representatives from a range of teams (including Negotiations and Access, Veterinary Trade Facilitation, and Trade teams) were invited to attend the WMG meeting to host an open discussion session on Brexit related issues specific to whelks.

Defra provided an update on the EU-UK Trade and Cooperation Agreement (TCA). To date there have been only preliminary discussions on fishing access and allocation for non-quota species. The WMG will serve as a forum through which to update members on negotiations.

More detailed notes on this section will be sent as a standalone document; notes will be combined with those from the Crab & Lobster Management Group discussions on Brexit.

Additional resources for seafood businesses

The following resources may be useful for WMG members:

- [UK-EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement, December 2020](#) (including summary document and full TCA including Annexes and Protocols)
- Seafish resources on [UK Exit from the EU](#)
- Seafish guidance notes for:
 - [Seafood exporters](#);
 - [Seafood importers](#), and;
 - [Seafood catchers/farmers](#).

2. WMG update

Assess effectiveness and appropriateness of existing management tools (Matt Johnson, Defra)

- The aim of this action is to build on the baseline information prepared by Defra on management tools by including information on effectiveness and appropriateness. This research will be used to inform future discussions on management of whelk stocks.
- The team has encountered some challenges with this work, including issues around defining effectiveness in the absence of defined management objectives or specific performance indicators.
- Anecdotal information on effectiveness of management measures has been collected from all IFCAs.
- There is a need to look at management of fisheries outside IFCA jurisdictions. Defra will continue to collect anecdotal information on effectiveness to the devolved administration level and then this work will be paused as a reference document.

Members commented on the progress of this action:

- Difficulties in assessing effectiveness of management measures show the importance of incorporating mechanisms to measure success when developing a management regime. This is a particular issue when measures are introduced with no clear management objectives.
- This information may be better displayed using GIS and could incorporate data on the fleet in each jurisdiction (e.g. no. of vessels, estimated no. of pots, and landings data).
- While it is difficult to assess the effectiveness of management measures this work (including anecdotal information on effectiveness) provides an important resource to help guide future management of whelk stocks. WMG members are keen that the work continues particularly so that it captures measures in place around the coast.

Update on the Welsh government Whelk Management Measures 2020 consultation (Julian Bray, Welsh Government)

- In 2020 the Welsh government consulted on the introduction of management measures (including an authorisation scheme, an annual limit on the total amount of whelk that can be taken from the Welsh zone, and a flexible monthly cap on landings) and an associated administration fee for whelk fisheries in Welsh waters.
- The consultation received 57 responses which were overwhelmingly positive about the proposals.
- The consultation was carried out between March and June 2020; some businesses said they had been unable to respond to the consultation due to the Covid-19 pandemic. As a result, the consultation was re-opened in October 2020 though only an additional three responses were collected.
- There is now a process of fine-tuning measures to propose to the Minister, and hope to achieve this before the Welsh elections in May 2021.

Members commented on this update:

- Wales has already introduced a range of management measures for whelk fisheries, namely a phased increase in minimum landing size, the group discussed feedback on measures that are already used. Given that 2020 was an atypical year due to the pandemic, it is difficult to accurately assess the impact of management interventions though there have been anecdotal reports of some fishers having difficulties with the increased MLS, particularly in the Swansea Bay area where whelks are known to have a smaller size of maturity. Other fishers have reported no concerns about the MLS increase.
- Bangor University is currently undertaking whelk surveys in the Swansea Bay area.
- It is possible that the Welsh government may explore more nuanced management measures in the future to take into account local variations in stocks.
- There may be opportunities for the WMG to learn from the work that is happening in Wales, particularly around the effectiveness of new management regimes.

Update on the formation of the WMG science sub-group (Natalie Hold, Bangor University)

- The WMG has formed a science sub-group which met for the first time on 12 January 2021. The current members of the science group are: Andy Lawler (Cefas), Aoife Martin (Seafish), Charlotte Colvin (Bangor University), Ewan Bell (Cefas), Michel Kaiser (Heriot-Watt University), and Natalie Hold (Bangor University)
- The purpose of the WMG science subgroup is to understand and steer the scientific research that needs to be undertaken to meet the objectives of the WMG and sustainably manage whelk fisheries.
- The science sub-group will have a standing brief to feedback to the WMG at each quarterly meeting.
- The work of the WMG science sub-group will focus on defining the key issues/questions around whelk fisheries; prioritising actions; developing a research plan; and securing funding.
- Through setting the WMG objectives and the anecdotal data gathering work the group already has identified some key questions regarding whelk fisheries that need to be addressed to improve fishery management, namely around:
 - Defining stock boundaries
 - Assessing stock status
 - Measuring fishing effort

Members commented on this update:

- Some of the sampling proposals being suggested through the WMG are very similar to the scallop “red bag” biological sampling process (in which a sample of the entire scallop catch is landed in a labelled bag and sent to seafood processors to measure/weigh scallops, sub-samples are then sent to Cefas for aging).
- Industry members said that a similar process would be feasible for whelks, for example by using a single scientific pot attached to the end of a commercial string.

Overview of the MMO Catch App (Emma Dixon-Lack and Chris Rowland, Marine Management Organisation)

- The Catch App was introduced to address data deficiencies for <10m vessels in England. All <10m vessels (which do not submit log sheets) have to submit catch records on fishing activity as a part of their licensing conditions.
- The App gathers information including vessel name; date and duration of fishing trip; port of landing; gear used; fishing area; and weight of fish landed by species.
- Data collected via the App is used to inform management decisions, provide traceability, and allows fishers to build a track record.

Members commented on this overview:

- The Catch App does not currently gather information on what is caught in the UK or EU EEZ, however given earlier discussions on the Brexit adjustment period; this may be a useful addition going forward in relation to applying tonnage limits to non-quota species. However, as the use of the App is currently an English licensing condition, it does not apply to catches outside the UK EEZ.
- Regarding effort data and calculating CPUE, the App does not currently collect information on the type of pot used (for example parlour pot or whelk pot) which can make attributing fishing effort to landings of a particular species impossible.
- The WMG will submit a request to the MMO for a regular update on whelk fishing activity collected via the Catch App.

Whelk economic data gathering and collaboration (Marta Moran-Quintana, Seafish)

- The current Seafish fleet segmentation process means that whelk fishers are included in the “pots and traps” segment which includes crab and lobster fishers. This means that economic performance estimates for whelk-dependent vessels are not as accurate as they could be as they are in part generated using crab and lobster vessel data. Whelk vessels currently make up only 9-13% of the total sample for pots and traps vessels.
- To address this problem, all members are asked to encourage whelk fishers to contribute financial information to the Seafish survey.
- In order to undertake more detailed analyses of fleet economic performance there is still a need for trip level data on where fishing activity is taking place and on fishing effort (no. of pots used). Rather than attempting to create a secondary data source on fishing activity, the

WMG should instead focus on encouraging use of the MMO Catch App and on collaboration and data sharing between organisations.

3. Actions

Action no.	Action	Responsibility
4.1	Industry members will be asked to review the anecdotal information gathering questionnaire being developed by the science sub-group	WMG science sub-group and industry members
4.2	Complete work on assessing the effectiveness of management measures (with a focus on management of whelk fisheries outside of IFCA jurisdictions)	Defra
4.3	Submit request to the MMO for regular whelk data update from Catch App and present this information at each quarterly WMG meeting	Lewis Tattersall, Seafish
4.4	Industry members to encourage fisher involvement in the Seafish annual fleet survey to improve the economic database for whelk fisheries	All members
4.5	Preliminary discussions around managing fishing effort to be added to the agenda of the next WMG meeting (March 2021)	Lewis Tattersall, Seafish