

Aquaculture Leadership Group Meeting Minutes – 7 Oct 2020

In Attendance

James Fox Davies, Fowey Shellfish Co, ALG Chair (JFD) Roger Covey, Natural England (RC)
Kim Cullen, SF2040 (KC) Ruth Allin, Defra (RA)
Sara Catahan, Defra (SC) Kelsey Thompson, Morecambe Bay Oysters (KT)
David Jarrad, Shellfish Association of GB (DJ) 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)
Oliver Robinson, British Trout Association (OR)

Guests

Tim Huntington, Poseidon (TH) Neil Auchterlonie, SF2040 (NA)
Dr Jen Ashworth, Defra (JA) Aoife Martin, Seafish (AM)

Apologies

Rob Whiteley, Natural England (RW) Michael Gubbins, CEFAS (MG)

Meeting Minutes

Agenda #1

Welcome

Agenda #2

15 July 2020 Minutes

- Tabled and accepted

Agenda #3

Q&A on Seafish paper submitted earlier to ALG

- No comments

Agenda #4

Update from Defra

RA updated ALG on Defra's aquaculture activities

- Fisheries Bill – moving through the process and nearing the end
 - Defra has received a concern from SAGB re: the provision of aquaculture in the FB and will be getting back to SAGB in due course
- Beccy Redrup is back in the office and moving forward on the aquaculture regulatory framework project. More information will be provided soon.
- Pacific Oysters – Defra is getting value from industry discussions and will continue to engage

- EU Exit
 - Central stakeholder engagement unit is preparing several comms events
 - Depuration issue – exporting non-depurated aquaculture products to EU after the exit will require a certificate
 - Industry continues to have ongoing concerns about CEFAS' capacity to inspect and issue those certificates in a timely manner. Extra resource has been funded to boost that capacity
 - A conversation between CEFAS and industry would be sensible. RA will raise it with CEFAS colleagues
 - Further concerns remain around the logistical challenges of new export routes so would be good to have further conversations with industry over the coming months
- HMPAs - Industry continue to have some concerns so Dr Jen Ashworth from the Defra HMPA team which is leading the response to the Benyon Review is attending the ALG meeting to have that discussion
- IFCA's – Rob Clark of the Association of IFCA's has indicated that he is happy to attend a future ALG meeting to discuss any concerns. The IFCA's are preparing an aquaculture position statement

Discussion

- Depuration certification
 - There are ongoing concerns regarding B - class certification for exports. Currently the system is requiring 5 days' notice for certification for oysters and the oyster farmers don't work that way because they don't get 5 days' notice of orders. Could certification writing be devolved to others?
 - Defra can confirm there will be a certificate available from April 2021 for non-aquaculture bi-valves for depuration. This work is actively being pursued within Defra and there is regular contact with SAGB
 - When will industry see the depuration certificate and is there agreement from the EU ports? RA will feed back to her Defra colleagues, the Aquatic Animal Health team, leading on the work and ask them to communicate with stakeholders e.g. SAGB to clarify the details
- Water quality
 - There is a separate forum that is looking at water quality issues: the Shellfish Stakeholder Working Group. SSWG is an industry, regulator and researcher group that Seafish supports
 - SSWG are working on shellfish water quality issues so it makes sense for them to pick up water quality issues
 - SSWG will take forward the query on the EA's review of the shellfish water directive and how the boundaries could be changed. Communication with the Defra Water Quality team could more sensibly go through SSWG rather than duplicating efforts via ALG. KC to follow up with SSWG
- The SF2040 Secretariat and ALG Chair will meet with the new Chief Executive Officer for the Association of IFCA's as there are questions about if all IFCA's are members of the AIFCA and what is their position statement on aquaculture

Actions

1. DJ will circulate SAGB's response to the Fisheries Bill to ALG
2. KC to follow up with SSWG Secretariat to align activities and communication. Also to follow up with ALG members who are also SSWG members to provide updates on water quality progress
3. RA to contact Defra colleagues at Aquatic Animal Health re: further questions from ALG as captured in the minutes above
4. KC to contact Rob Clark, AIFCA, for a meeting

Agenda #5

Update on the Size of the Prize project

AM updated ALG

- Contract terminated with the original consultant

Discussion

- Does the need to continue the work remain?
 - Yes. ALG feels the research is still worthwhile
 - Helps state the case for investment and a tool for industry to use
 - Need a evidence-based document to show what the sector can do given certain circumstances

Agenda #6

Update on Highly Protected Marine Areas and the Government's response to the Benyon Review

Dr Jen Ashworth (JA), Defra, presented to ALG

- Benyon Review headline recommendation is that HPMAs are an essential component of the MPA network, and Government should introduce them as soon as possible in Secretary of State Waters
- Defra's current work and next steps
 - Engaging stakeholders to feed into developing the government response
 - Aim to publish the government response (cross govt response) to the Review in early 2021
 - If government decides to introduce HPMAs it is likely to be a small number of pilot sites
 - Intend to work with stakeholders to develop a delivery plan for how pilots could be identified
 - Will consult widely with stakeholders before any decision to designate an HPMA
- Defra will plan a series of stakeholder meetings once they know more. JA is happy to come back to ALG and SAGB when there are details

Discussion

- HMPAs are supposed to be the highest level of marine protection. So it is probably unlikely that extractive aquaculture systems (e.g. the farming of macroalgae seaweed and bi-valve molluscs) would be compatible with the definition of HMPAs. Defra need to confirm the definition of HMPAs but it is unlikely that activities will occur in such an area
- If Defra want to pilot HMPAs and see if they are an effective tool and deliver the recovery that is believed possible then the organisation will look for places where that recovery can be delivered. It probably wouldn't be sensible to choose locations where major infrastructure or areas of economic

value like aquaculture activities already exist. When using socioeconomics to look at where HMPAs can be sighted those things will play into that. Defra will have to see where the identification process leads. They want minimum impact on existing businesses as well. They are not looking at compensation at this point in time. This is part of a far bigger conversation about marine protected areas and marine management as a whole and not just for HMPAs

- Defra will speak with MMO and other agencies when identifying pilot HMPAs and looking at potential impacts such as sewage as well as legislative routes they take as to how existing activities are managed
- Sea temperatures are changing and will have a big impact on marine generation. Defra are looking at climate change resilience and communicating with the Scottish Government as well who have done some work in this area
- With regard to a position on Pacific Oysters and HMPAs, Defra haven't worked through the detail yet

Action

1. KC to email the presentation to ALG members

Agenda #7

English Aquaculture Strategy (EAS) Delivery Plan

Release of Strategy

- November
- 3 outputs will be available on the SF2040 webpage on the Seafish website. Can be downloaded as pdfs
 - 1 page of key highlights
 - 24 page strategy summary
 - Full report

Dissemination

- SF2040 Secretariat will email press release and output links to SILG & ALG members, Minister and MPs, Coastal Local Authorities, Southwest Aquaculture Network, Defra and Seafish, IFCAs, Academia and Research funders
- ALG members are encouraged to forward the Strategy outputs to their contacts
- If ALG industry members want to contact their local MP, LA, LEP, uni, etc. please let KC know
- The Strategy was presented at the 20 Oct SWAN and 21 Oct ACIG meetings

Discussion

- ALG agreed that the delivery plan is fundamental to what the strategy is supposed to do and both elements should be released together
- ALG agreed that the Lead and Key Partners' columns should be amalgamated. This provides the flexibility to work out the detail later on of who will be responsible for what
- The Association of the IFCAs need to be contacted re: the Delivery Plan
- Defra sent the Strategy draft to all agencies listed in the Delivery Plan for comment
- ALG is not mentioned as a partner in the Delivery Plan – this should be rectified where appropriate
 - There may be a role for the SF2040 Seafood Industry Leadership Group (SILG) as well

- SF2040 Secretariat's role in the Delivery Plan is to assist with finding funds for projects and bringing organisations together to discuss and progress actions
- Some ALG members expressed the following critical actions as priorities: SH1, SH2, GR1 and GR2 (outlined in the table below)
 - SSWG is already progressing SH2 through data and research; KC and AM to discuss further

Shellfish 1: Finalise a formal policy for the use of Pacific oysters in English waters balancing the potential harm from further farmed introductions with the socio-economic benefits of producing this now established species.
Shellfish 2: Develop the risk-based approach to the classification of shellfish production waters that ensures food safety for consumers but provides increased assurance and certainty to shellfish farmers, investors and markets.
Governance & Regulation 1: A clear policy for English aquaculture development is prepared within the framework of the Fisheries Bill, the Common Fisheries Policy (Amendment etc.) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019, and the wider policy environment
Governance & Regulation 2: Following completion of Defra's review of aquaculture regulations, implement the agreed approach for transparent, streamlined and proportionate regulation. This includes the level of evidence required for the permitting of different types and scales of aquaculture. There is a need for clarity on the decision criteria that will be used and the nature of any trade-off analysis, as well as standards relating to response and decision times

Actions

1. KC to contact Rob Clark at the Association of IFCAs to discuss Delivery Plan
2. KC, JFD, and NA to discuss where ALG and SILG fit within the Delivery Plan
3. KC to follow up with LLV, JH and DJ re: SSWG updates at ALG meeting
4. KC to follow up with AM re: SSWG – their role, remit and how their work aligns with the Strategy
5. KC to follow up with OR re: his priorities for fin fish

Agenda #8

Any Other Business

1. Next ALG meeting will be in early December
2. Tim Huntington (TH) thanked ALG for their support for the development of the EAS