

Seafish Wales Advisory Committee

MINUTES OF THE 18th MEETING

THU 14 OCTOBER 2021 | 11:00-13:00 | MICROSOFT TEAMS



Attendees

Jon Parker (Chair)	Committee Chair
Jim Evans	Welsh Fishermen's Association
Andy Woolmer	Atlantic Edge Oysters
John Penaluna	Penaluna's Famous Fish & Chips
Gareth Bevington (in part)	Welsh Government Marine & Fisheries
Paul Howes	CSAR, Swansea University
Bethan Jones	Welsh Government
Prof Lewis LeVay	University of Bangor
Julie Hill	The Lobster Pot

Seafish staff

Aoife Martin	Director of Operations
Dr Lynn Gilmore	Head of International Trade & UK Regions (West)
Dr Angus Garrett	Head of Horizon Scanning and Long Term Issues
Jane Devereux	Welsh Fishing Safety Project Officer
Phillip Quirie (Minutes)	Regional Project Co-ordinator & Administrator

1. Welcome and apologies

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting. Apologies were shared from Colin Charman (Natural Resource Wales).

2. Minutes of the last meeting held on 17 June

The Chair invited feedback on the minutes of the last meeting. It was agreed that the minutes provided a true and accurate record of the meeting.

ACTION 01: Seafish will upload the approved minutes to the SWAC section on the Seafish website.

3. Matters arising

An update of actions from the previous meeting was given:

Action summary from 17 June 2021	Assigned to	Timeframe
01: Seafish to upload the approved minutes to the SWAC section on the Seafish website.	Phillip	Actioned
02: Further discussion to be held on the future of the SWAC strategy and alignment with SWACs remit at next meeting.	All	For discussion agenda item 10
03: Seafish to identify a suitable date for the next SWAC meeting in October.	Phillip	Actioned

4. Recruitment update

The Chair welcomed Dr Lynn Gilmore and informed members that she earned promotion from Head of International Trade & UK Regions (West) to Director of Communications and Engagement from 1 November. Lynn reminded the Committee that Dr Holly Whiteley had left Seafish in August for a new role in Bangor University and informed members that recruitment of a new Seafish Wales Manager was underway. She said that the advertised role had attracted several high-quality applicants and that SWAC would be updated when appointment of a new Manager was confirmed.

5. Updates invited by SWAC members

The Chair asked each member to provide an update on any challenges or opportunities from their sector.

Julie Hill, The Lobster Pot

- Although continuing to receive plenty of sales orders and with shellfish prices higher than this time last year, post-Brexit paperwork is an ongoing issue.
 - Hard copies of each document are required, which means physically meeting lorry drivers at short notice to issue them the necessary hard copies, which is a stressful process.
 - Each consignment to the EU requires approximately 20 documents, which is difficult for such a small family business to adequately resource – staff are having to work through the evening and night to meet the requirements.
 - Timescales are unrealistic when exporting a live perishable product.
- Air freight to Asia is a huge issue, with businesses in Netherlands paying £2.50 per kilo compared to £10 for UK businesses – this is largely unjustified and difficult to compete with.
- Experiencing ongoing trade issues with Hong Kong – awaiting a letter from DEFRA to local Environmental Health office to provide relevant support.

ACTION 02: Seafish will assess the air freight cost issue and provide any available information or advice on potential solutions.

John Penaluna, Penaluna's Famous Fish & Chips

- Business is being impacted by price increases on fish and cooking oil, although he commented that potatoes prices have remained stable.
- VAT increases will cause some difficulty in the food service sector.
- Introduction of [Natasha's Law](#) (food allergen labelling requirements) is likely to pose difficulty for some producers across the UK as they prepare to implement the necessary changes. Richard Wardell from Seafish has been assisting with the process.
- Sales are holding up well and prices are high – the takeaway business is doing better this year than in 2019 and 2020.

Andy Woolmer, Atlantic Edge Oysters

- This is the first year that Atlantic Edge have got oysters onto the market, and although Pembrokeshire tourism has decreased since peak season in summer, restaurants are still busy and demand remains high.
- Demand for Welsh oysters is strong, with requests from all over the UK, and looking to employ additional staff to meet the demand.
- Brexit has affected many things. One concern for the oyster industry is sourcing wooden boxes for packaging – ordinarily they are sourced from France and Ireland – but a pallet of packaging from Ireland now costs an additional £150.

Bethan Jones, Welsh Government

- WG still working through Brexit legacy issues.
- Involved in preparing the Welsh contribution to the Joint Fisheries Statement.
- Some people have recently left the team, meaning staff resourcing has been a challenge.

Paul Howes, Swansea University

- Continuing delivery of [CSAR projects](#).
- Holding 200,000 lumpfish in the facility which will be delivered to the Scottish salmon industry to be used as cleaner fish in salmon cages.

- Developing several tools to support the salmon sector and the cleaner fish sector in Wales – these tools will monitor and improve the welfare of cleaner fish in hatcheries and also includes online training courses for fish farmers so they can ensure the health and wellbeing of cleaner fish.
- Recently delivered a workshop on aquaculture licensing to help farmers navigate through the licensing application process.
- The Smart Aquaculture project has been extended, looking at non-food aquaculture such as cleaner fish, ornamental fish, pond fish, and microalgae.
- Extension also granted for the WalesACE project, which is using waste from the fish to grow microalgae which in turn will produce feed for fish, thereby creating a circular economy/ self-sustaining aquaculture system.
- Applying for a funding for a PhD training network focussing on fish welfare and in partnership with academic institutions in Spain and Crete.
- The STREAM project tender is almost complete: this project will involve deployment of 24-7 sensor buoys at two aquaculture sites in Wales to monitor the marine environment.
- Currently testing wild sea bass and wrasse to assess the impacts of changes in temperature and PH. This will inform mathematical models aimed at predicting changing species distributions in the Irish Sea as a consequence of climate change.

Jim Evans, Welsh Fishermen's Association

- Support expressed for Julie Hill's comments on market challenges.
- Jim stated that there is a need for SWAC to define the groups destination and ambition now that a new government is in place with new powers under the Fisheries Act. As mentioned in the last meeting, the government programme features no commitment to fisheries.
- He said that it appears that fisheries legal responsibilities, the Joint Fisheries Statement, and species/Several Order legislation are the only current priorities of Welsh Government and whilst the whelk legislation is a valuable piece of work, it could/should be adapted to apply to other species.
- On EMFF funding it was reported that there is a project monitoring committee meeting next month to discuss the remaining funds and establish what is available and what the windows of opportunity for applications are.

Lewis LeVay, University of Bangor

- Currently working on assessing how climate change can affect species distribution in the Irish Sea.
- Partnering with Seafish on Live Bivalve Mollusc work (see Seafish Exec update).

6. Wales safety project update

Jane Devereux presented an update on her work as Welsh Fishing Safety Project Officer, a role funded by Welsh Government through the EMFF (ANNEX 1: Wales Safety Project Update), which in summary included:

- Enhanced engagement with industry and use of social media.
- First aid at sea quick reference guide developed through the Welsh Fishing Safety Committee – currently in production.
- Development of a wheelhouse safety awareness sticker.
- Direct PR and marketing to publicise key health and safety information and messaging.
- Welsh participation in Man Overboard events.
- FishSafe project: 90% grant-aided PFDs with PLBs for intertidal workers in Wales.

Andy Woolmer took the opportunity to thank Seafish for the intertidal PFD-PLB project, saying it provided crucial support to the aquaculture sector which had been overlooked in previous safety initiatives.

Jim Evans expressed gratitude for Jane's efforts on the first aid guide and said that everyone involved is very happy with the product. Jane confirmed the guide is in production and the aim is to distribute before the end of the year.

7. Seafish carbon work programme

Angus Garrett presented an overview of how climate change is affecting the UK seafood industry and how the industry is responding (ANNEX 2: UK Seafood Responding to a Changing Climate). The presentation covered the importance of climate change and the challenges it brings; the impact of climate change on seafood and the positive impact of seafood on climate change; and what is being done to support a UK seafood response.

The Seafish Climate campaign, associated video and other materials for the industry were highlighted - all available on the Seafish website [here](#).

8. Seafish Executive update

Aoife Martin provided an overview of key Seafish initiatives of interest to the Welsh industry:

- *Love Seafood*: Recently commenced year two activity under the theme of “*Bring on Better Living*” with a focus on health and wellbeing and primarily aimed at 2 key audiences stretched families and young people “starting-out”.
- *Skills and labour*: Two primary pieces of work:
 1. Surveying the industry to establish and assess the true state of labour in catching and processing.
 2. Sea a Bright Future pilot campaign in the processing sector in the north east of Scotland – highlighting the career opportunities that exist. Second campaign to begin soon.
- *Fisheries management*: Two pieces of work of interest to SWAC were highlighted:
 1. New Fishing Industry Science Partnership Fund has been made available and Seafish are looking to progress projects with available funding to address deficiencies in data collection.
 2. South West Ecological Risk Assessment, looks to assess data deficient fisheries. Now starting to discuss with the supply chain if this type of work could assist UK retailers to stock UK seafood as an alternative to MSC accreditation, therefore mitigating the MSC cost implications. The ERA framework can bundle mixed fisheries and assess them as one entity.
- *Sentience in crustaceans*: Waiting for DEFRA to release a report on sentience in crustacea (expected imminently), and the expectation is that lobster and crab will be considered sentient beings and subsequent measures are likely to protect welfare. Seafish approaching this in several ways: assessing current practices in the supply chain (handling, dispatch and live transport); working with industry to establish best practice guidelines which are accepted under the Animal Welfare Act and ensuring media responses are available for when the report is released. Further updates will be provided at future SWAC meetings.
- *Live Bivalve Molluscs*: Work is progressing on shellfish water quality to support export trade of live bivalve molluscs. Efforts have been focussed on unpicking the regulations to look for flexibility within the system – 11-12 areas have been identified and will be explored in partnership with Bangor University, Cefas and others.
- *The Seafish Strategic Review*: The Review is ongoing and a paper of recommendations will be considered by the Board and the 4 devolved administrations at the end of November. It is expected that the review will result in changes to the function, form and funding of Seafish. A further update will be provided to SWAC at the next meeting.

9. Wales strategy discussion

A detailed discussion took place about the ownership and relevance of the current Wales Seafood Strategy and alignment of the Strategy to SWAC's remit.

It was agreed that:

1. A seafood strategy for Wales is required but that the Seafish Wales Advisory Committee is not the appropriate "owner" of such a strategy.
2. The existing strategy is not fit for purpose given the momentous changes in the economic and political landscape since it was agreed.
3. The current strategy should be parked and that dialogue should continue with Welsh Government and potentially through a new Cross Party Group (focussing on fisheries and aquaculture) to progress next steps on development of a new Strategy.
4. SWAC will focus on Seafish delivery in Wales and provide a forum to input priorities for Seafish work going forward.

ACTION 03: Seafish will include an agenda item at the next meeting to revisit the SWAC Terms of Reference.

10. Any other business

- Julie Hill asked Seafish for an update on the Wales seafood marketing development project. Aoife Martin confirmed that Seafish has not been involved in this Menter a Busnes- led project for over two years. Bethan Jones informed SWAC members that the project is currently paused and undergoing a review; she said that discussions to establish a future direction are imminent.
- It was noted that the 'Port to Plate' initiative has funding until 2023, Andy Woolmer asked if the funds currently not being used could be mobilised to provide marketing support in the meantime, Bethan Jones agreed to follow up with Andy out-with the meeting.
- Julie Hill asked if SWAC could get an update on the effect of wind farms on crab behaviour. Lynn Gilmore confirmed Seafish has undertaken work in this area – a report on the impact of offshore renewables on crustacean behaviour – and agreed to send to the committee. The summary document and literature review can be found on the Seafish website [here](#).
- It was asked if the presentation on climate change could be shared. Seafish agreed it would be shared along with the safety project presentation.

ACTION 04: Seafish will circulate a link to the report on the impact of offshore renewables on crustaceans.

ACTION 05: Seafish will circulate the presentations given on climate change and the Wales safety work.

11. Date of next meeting

The Chair asked Seafish to arrange the next meeting in approximately six months and thanked everyone for their participation.

ACTION 06: Seafish will arrange the next meeting in March or April 2022.

Action Summary	Assigned to	Timeframe
01: Seafish will upload the approved minutes to the SWAC section on the Seafish website.	Phillip	14.11.2021
02: Seafish will assess the air freight cost issue and inform of any findings or solutions.	Aoife	Next meeting
03: Seafish will include agenda item on future direction of support for the seafood industry in Wales.	Phillip	Next meeting
04: Seafish will circulate a link to the report on the impact of offshore renewables on crustaceans.	Phillip	19.10.2021
05: Seafish will circulate the presentations given on climate change and the Wales safety work.	Phillip	19.10.2021
06: Seafish will arrange the next meeting in March or April 2022.	Phillip	31.01.2022