

Crab & Lobster Management Group (CMG) Meeting

27 April 2021

Remote meeting via Zoom

Attendees

Claire Pescod, Macduff Shellfish (Chair)	Jim Evans, Welsh Fishermen's Association
Amber Knight, MacNeil Shellfish	Jim Portus, South Western Fish Producers Organisation
Andrew Brown, Macduff Shellfish	Jo Pollett, MSC
Andrew Rooney, Rooney Fish	Joanna Messini, Defra
Andrew Wheeler, North Eastern IFCA	John Balls, North Devon Fishermen's Association
Aoife Martin, Seafish	Juliette Hatchman, SWFPO
Barrie Deas, NFFO	Leanne Stockdale, MMO
Beshlie Pool, South Devon and Channel Shellfishermen's Association	Les Lawrence, Dorset Fish and Shellfish Ltd.
Carl Davies, Gwen Paul M BS115	Lewis Tattersall, Seafish
Chloe North, Western FPO	Mark Moore, Dartmouth Crab Company
Colin Bannister, SAGB	Matthew Johnson, Defra
Emma Plotnek, Fishing into the Future	Mike Roach, Holderness Fishing Industry Group
Ewen Bell, Cefas	Patrick Smith, DAERA
Gary Hodgson, Venture Seafoods	Paul Brown, Brown & Bright Shellfish Ltd.
Hannah Fennel, Orkney Fisheries Association	Rachel Irish, MMO
Harry Wick, Northern Ireland Fish Producers' Organisation	Rosslyn McIntyre, Cefas
Helen Downie, Marine Scotland	Sarah Clark, Devon and Severn IFCA
Helen Hunter, Defra	Sarah Horsfall, SAGB
Hubert Gieschen, MMO	Sarah Hussey, Sea Farms
Jennifer Mouat, East Coast RIFG	Stuart Reeves, Cefas
	Trevor Bartlett, Devon Crab

Apologies:

Martyn Youell, Waterdance
Nigel Favis, Favis of Salcombe Ltd.

1. Update on the National Shellfish Fisheries Plan (Aoife Martin, Seafish)

Work on both the National Shellfish Fisheries Plan (NSFP) and the crab and lobster specific chapter of the plan, developed via the CMG, is ongoing.

The crab and lobster chapter will be structured as follows:

- Purpose of the plan including CMG ambition;
- Scope including target species and relevant bycatch species;
- Overview of the current status of crab and lobster fisheries, including biological, social, and economic data;
- Objectives, both statutory (aligned with the Fisheries Act 2020) and non-statutory objectives which reflect the priorities of the CMG;
- Duration of the plan, and;
- Tracking overall performance.

Next steps in this work are to:

- Finalise first set of actions from the CMG scientific research plan, via the CMG science sub-group;
- Agree upon a first draft of objectives to be circulated to CMG members;
- Establish a CMG working group focused on developing the crab and lobster chapter, and;
- Finalising a first draft of the chapter by September 2021 for review by CMG members.

2. A review of management regimes for crab fisheries (Stuart Reeves, Cefas)

Cefas has undertaken work to review management measures used in crab and scallop fisheries around the world. The research was funded by Defra and will be used to inform future work around exploring alternatives to the Western Waters effort regime.

The research draws upon 11 case studies from around the world and has compiled a description of the fishery, the types of management measures used, and approaches used in science and policy.

Final reports from this work can be found on [the Defra science portal here](#).

Discussion session

- It was noted that the predominance of female crabs in landings from some English fisheries should be taken into account, particularly in light of the “3-S” approach (limiting catches based on size, sex and season) used in management of crab fisheries in other areas.
- Most of the case study fisheries assessed have not seen such significant changes in stock status that the impact of individual management measures can be appraised. In most cases a suite of management measures are used. It was also noted that the majority of case study fisheries were MSC (or otherwise) certified meaning that they can be viewed as examples of best practice.
- In any future discussions around management of crab fisheries it is important that lobsters are also taken into account.
- This is the start of the discussion process, further meetings will examine which measures/changes will be taken forward in the UK as an alternative to the WWER

3. Science updates

3.1 Update on the progress of the CMG science sub-group (Mike Roach, Holderness Fishing Industry Group)

A CMG science sub-group was formed in January and the group has met monthly; the aim of the group is to:

- Assess and understand the current status of research related to crab and lobster fisheries;
- Identify current knowledge gaps that exist that may inhibit meeting the management directives of the CMG, and;
- Develop a scientific research plan to address these gaps and ensure information is available to guide the discussions surrounding management of the crab and lobster fisheries.

The group has identified a number of key research questions surrounding crab and lobster fisheries and is in the process of detailing discrete research activities that could be taken to provide answers to these questions. The group will develop a research plan, based on the priorities and objectives of the CMG, and will present a draft plan to the CMG for review at a future meeting.

3.2 Project UK SW England crab and lobster FIP (Jo Pollett, MSC)

Project UK is a collaborative stakeholder partnership working towards an environmentally sustainable future for UK fisheries. To date Project UK has had two rounds of Fisheries Improvement Projects, one of which is a SW England crab and lobster FIP.

An update on the work of the FIP was presented showing the fishery’s pre-assessment scoring against MSC certification principles which highlighted where improvement was needed. Work is ongoing to improve the SW crab and lobster fishery, particularly around fishery management and interactions with ETP species.

Project UK produces annual reports detailing the progress of the FIPs, this report will be circulated to CMG members when it is available. There are a number of CMG members also on the FIP, it is useful to maintain good links with the FIP and learn from their work and vice versa.

4. Latent capacity in the shellfish fleet

Following initial discussions on latent capacity at the January meeting of the CMG, Defra prepared a non-paper on the topic posing a number of questions about the definition of the issue, options for addressing the issue, and what next steps CMG members would like to take.

Discussions on latent capacity have also been held with the Scallop Industry Consultation Group (SICG) and the SICG has requested that Defra undertake a call for evidence (likely to happen in summer 2021) to gather information on the topic. It is possible that the call for evidence could cover both scallops and crab/lobsters.

All CMG members were asked to review the Defra non-paper and submit responses to the questions posed in the paper to Seafish to be collated and passed to Defra.

Discussion session

- Latent capacity is an overarching issue in shellfish fisheries and as such should be tabled for discussion at the next meeting of the Shellfish Industry Advisory Group.
- The group agreed that latent capacity and the need to address it remains a priority for the CMG.
- Any action on latent capacity would have implications for other areas of fisheries management and should not be progressed in isolation, for example it is important to take the issue of latent capacity into account in discussions regarding future fishing opportunities of non-quota stocks to be determined through the trade and cooperation agreement.
- Latent capacity is a UK-wide issue, whilst this initial session was focused on English fisheries, there is a need to raise the discussion with all devolved administrations while acknowledging that work on latent capacity has taken place already in Scotland.
- Whilst latent capacity in the fleet is seen as an issue it was acknowledged that measures to address the problem may reduce fishers' flexibility and/or lead to unintended consequences such as displacement of fishing effort.

5. AOB

Issues around landing white or poor-quality crab

Concerns were raised about the landing of white (soft) and/or poor-quality crabs, often to be used as whelk bait. This topic was subsequently raised at the Whelk Management Group meeting on 29 April. It was acknowledged that this is a complex issue spanning both groups and as such a short-term cross-CMG/WMG working group will be established to explore the topic further. To initiate discussions Seafish and the CMG science sub-group will prepare a short discussion paper focused on defining the problem and posing questions that need to be answered.

Decapod sentience

London School of Economics has undertaken research on decapod sentience, commissioned by Defra. The final report on this work is currently in peer review and will be published in mid-2021. CMG members will be kept up to date with this work. The Seafish review of current practice in the industry is in draft form and should be published relatively soon.

Linking with the Regional Fisheries Groups

There is a need to ensure that the SIAG/CMG maintain lines of communication with the RFGs on all shellfish related items. The roles and responsibilities of the RFGs was clarified. A standing agenda item will be included in future CMG meetings to provide an update from the RFGs.

Actions

Action no.	Action	Responsibility
4.1	Establish a CMG working group to develop the crab and lobster chapter of the NSFP	Lewis Tattersall, Seafish
4.2	Circulate the following reports when they are published: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PUKFI annual report; • LSE report on decapod crustacean sentience (plus invites to any end of project workshops that are held) 	Lewis Tattersall, Seafish
4.3	Send SIAG meeting (5 May 2021) joining details and agenda to all CMG members	Lewis Tattersall, Seafish
4.4	Brief Defra Access Team on discussions held at the CMG prior to the SIAG meeting on 5 May	Helen Hunter, Defra
4.5	CMG members to submit responses to Defra latent capacity discussion document and questions (prepared by J. Messini). Responses to be send to Lewis by Friday 14 May	All CMG members
4.6	Plan and hold focused and structured discussion sessions on both the Western Waters alternatives and latent capacity work, with a view to establishing CMG sub-groups of interested stakeholders for each activity	Lewis Tattersall, Seafish
4.7	Add standing agenda item to CMG meetings to provide regular updates on work of the RFG's	Lewis Tattersall, Seafish
4.8	Expand on crab quality/landings of soft ("white") crab in the CMG work programme and research plan as a priority area of interest for members	CMG science sub-group
4.9	Explore options around launching a joint call for evidence regarding latent capacity, in which the SIAG functions as a co-management partner with Defra	Helen Hunter, Defra