

Finfish Industry Advisory Group (FIAG) Inaugural Meeting Minutes

24th March 2022 10:30-12:30

Remote meeting via Microsoft Teams

Chair: Sophie Throup, Morrisons

Attendees:

Name

Adam Wing, Seafood Scotland

Aisling Lannin, Marine Management Organisation (MMO)

Andrew Pillar, Interfish

Aoife Martin, Seafish

Barrie Deas, National Federation Fishermen's Organisations (NFFO)

Bill Brock, Brighton & Newhaven Fish Sales

Chloe Rogers, UK Association of Fish Producer Organisations (FPOs)

Chris Ranford, Cornish FPO

David Winspear, Eastern England FPO

Elizabeth Bourke, NFFO

Felix Ameye, Seafish

Fiona Birch, Mindfully Wired

Freya Mitchison, Defra

Gwladys Lambert, Cefas

Hannah Rudd, Angling Trust

Holly Kaiser, Seafish

Jerry Percy, New Under Tens Fishermen's Association

Jim Evans, Welsh Fishermen's Association

Judith Farrell, North Atlantic (FPO)

Katie McNally, Defra

Lewis Tattersall, Seafish

Martyn Youell, Waterdance Ltd

Ned Clark, Fisher

Neil Whitney, Fisher

Paul Trebilcock, Ocean Fish

Phil McBryde, Defra

Richard Hards, North Sea (FPO)

Richard Stride, Fisher

Simon Macdonald, West Coast Inshore Fisheries Group

Sophie Throup, Morrisons

Tim Dapling, Sussex IFCA

Apologies:

Name

Martin Yorwarth, Thanet Fishermen's Association

Mark Page, Fisher

Carl Davies, Sea Fishing Trips

John Balls, Fisher

Dale Rodmell, Eastern England FPO

Cameron Moffat, Youngs

Richard Hoskin, MMO

Mat Mander, Devon & Severn IFCA

Beshlie Pool, South Devon & Channel Shellfishermen Association

Chloe North, Western PO

Juliette Hatchman, South Western FPO

Sarah Clark, Devon & Severn IFCA

Sarah Ready, Two Brothers Brixham

Mark Gray, The Menai Seafood Company

Welcome and introductions (Sophie Throup, Morrisons (Chair))

1. Sophie Throup (Head of Agriculture, Fisheries and Sustainable Sourcing, Morrisons) will act as interim Chair of the group for the first year of the group's establishment. Following this, FIAG members will have the opportunity to propose and vote for candidates to take on the role.

Purpose & scope (Aoife Martin, Lewis Tattersall, Holly Kaiser, Seafish)

2. The 2019 Future of Our Inshore Fisheries conference highlighted that there was a clear demand and expectation for there to be more opportunities for stakeholders to be actively involved in fisheries management. The conference highlighted the importance of combining science, data and fishers' experience and knowledge to try and find solutions to the complex challenges in fisheries management. The FIAG will serve as a forum through which industry, regulators, and the research community can actively engage and work collaboratively on matters regarding finfish non-quota stocks (NQS).

3. In 2019 the National Federation of Fishermen's Organisations (NFFO) and Seafish set up the Shellfish Industry Advisory Group (SIAG) to tackle overarching issues relevant to all shellfish species. The last year has seen the group make progress on high profile issues, such as Fisheries Management Plans (FMPs) and successfully attaining research funding to support shellfish science initiatives.
4. The experience gained from the SIAG shows how industry, the research community, regulators and the wider supply chain can engage effectively to improve the management of fisheries. The process will be long-term and requires perseverance and commitment from members.
5. Seafish presented the structure of the SIAG and its underlying sub-groups to highlight the potential ways of working for the FIAG. The shellfish sub-groups focus on specific species, regions or priority issues that feed up to the species groups and the overarching SIAG. The SIAG utilises a mix of long-standing species management groups (e.g. Whelk Management Group) and short-term task and finish groups to focus on specific issues (e.g. static gear marking issues).
6. Seafish presented an overview of the potential fisheries in scope of the FIAG, which is included in the annex of the governance proposal circulated to attendees. The table highlighted the top 14 finfish NQS by value for the year 2019 and was collated by the Seafish economics team. The list does not limit the scope of the FIAG, and members will drive the focus. It was acknowledged that whilst the group will not focus on all finfish NQS, some species may benefit from work undertaken on higher profile species. Careful consideration must be given to species which are managed using quotas in some areas but not in others.

Role and expectations (Phil McBryde, Defra)

7. The collaborative goals of the SIAG and the FIAG are a part of a growing framework that recognises the growing ecological and economic importance of NQS and their sustainable management for the long-term. Co-design and co-management are key factors to help government, fishers, researchers and the wider supply chain, improve the knowledge base of these fisheries.
8. The enthusiasm for a more collaborative way of working between government and industry extends to the Fisheries Minister, who is keen to ensure government is working with stakeholders to enable sustainable management. The FIAG will also serve to develop more respectful and trusting relationships between government and industry.

FIAG membership (Aoife Martin, Seafish)

9. The FIAG takes a UK-wide perspective with the acknowledgement that sub-groups may be developed to progress regional issues. It is recognised that the Devolved Administrations have direct responsibility for the management of their fisheries, but the FIAG will aim to develop solutions to issues that can be applied across the UK. Invitations to all four administrations to join the FIAG is actively encouraged.
10. The FIAG has an open membership policy and welcomes anyone with a direct interest in finfish NQS. It is expected that the membership of any sub-group under the FIAG will be smaller, incorporating particular members of the overarching group.
11. Seafish will facilitate the FIAG and use their own communication channels and projects to promote engagement with the group. Additionally, attendees are asked to communicate the news of the group and to encourage engagement to their contacts. Engagement does not have to be attendance at meetings, and Seafish representatives are happy to take industry views offline.

Governance including sub-groups (Aoife Martin, Seafish)

12. A governance proposal was shared with attendees prior to the meeting. The document sets out the purpose of the FIAG and the envisaged way the group will work. Members of the group are

committed to respect people's views, contribute to discussions, and share the overarching objective of the group.

13. The FIAG will be the overarching umbrella group where broad issues, of relevance to all finfish NQS fisheries, are discussed to help build an understanding of the big picture. Sub-groups will focus on priority areas of work decided by members of the group. Initially, it is expected that some focus will be given to the various FMPs currently underway. An action was taken for Seafish to draft a proposed sub-group structure for review by members at the next FIAG meeting.
14. Comments from the group:
 - a. There was general agreement that the governance proposal document is reasonable in lieu of a formal Terms of Reference.
 - b. It was suggested that the structure of the sub-groups is carefully considered. Finfish species have significant differences to shellfish species and the relationship between the inshore and the offshore (and the mixed nature of finfish fisheries) is more interconnected. Thus, several species may be considered together in a single sub-group.
 - c. Acquiring data from the EU on vessels fishing in UK waters, particularly in the southern North Sea and the Eastern Channel, will be a priority issue for the group. Ensuring the FIAG has access to fishing effort data from all vessels working in UK waters is integral to informing good management decisions.
 - d. It is key to remember that the group is an advisory group and thus should not be tied to artificial management boundaries. Therefore, the group should initially decide on some key issues and species to focus on.
 - e. Members from the group flagged some key species to be considered which do not appear on lists of finfish NQS by value but are considered particularly important, including:
 - i. Spurdog (zero TAC)
 - ii. Smoothounds
 - iii. Squid

Priority issues for the FIAG

Fisheries Management Plans (Phil McBryde, Defra):

15. FMPs will be a priority area for the group. Following the Joint Fisheries Statement consultation there are a list of proposed FMPs. There is the opportunity for the FIAG to use sub-groups to drive forward management processes and provide a forum through which industry can meaningfully contribute to FMP discussions.
16. Defra have commissioned PolicyLab to progress the Bass frontrunner FMP. PolicyLab will undertake a stakeholder mapping exercise and will engage with industry on the ground.
17. Comments from the group:
 - a. Some members were keen to engage in the Bass FMP process and suggested that the FIAG should have the opportunity to feed into this particular FMP.
 - b. Other areas of interest include Defra frontrunner Channel Non-quota Demersal Fisheries and Southern North Sea Mixed Fisheries FMPs.

Science and research (Lewis Tattersall, Seafish):

18. The SIAG recognised the importance of identifying data gaps and possible solutions which could inform future management decisions. SIAG science sub-groups are working towards ensuring the right data are collected, that industry have a role in identifying their data needs, and that the process is transparent. Work to date has included a review of current data practices, the origins of data, and how data is analysed, which has been used to inform the management objectives for the

species-specific FMPs. The FIAG could adopt a similar approach to ensure that appropriate science and research is undertaken to support the finfish NQS sector.

19. The FIAG will consider how collaboration between the industry, regulators and the research community can fill some of the data gaps in finfish NQS.
20. Comments from the group:
 - a. It was highlighted that some finfish NQS are very data poor, particularly regarding independent survey data and regionally specific data. The industry is already collecting a lot of data through the CatchApp and iVMS and are working towards ensuring this data is relevant for management purposes.

Trade and Cooperation Agreement: implementation and NQS fisheries (Phil McBryde, Defra):

21. The TCA commits the UK to evidence-based, non-discriminatory approaches to fishery management and implementation of an annual tonnage limit on NQS catch UK vessels can take from EU waters, and vice versa. This is based on the reference period 2012-2016. Government is committed to develop multi-year strategies for the conservation and management of non-quota stocks in 2022. It is paramount that the UK ensures the data exchanged with the EU is robust.
22. The FIAG has a role to communicate what is happening on the ground to help inform the UK's negotiating approach with the EU. The group should prioritise what they would like to see happen by the end of the adjustment period and work towards achieving objectives.
23. Comments from the group:
 - a. It was highlighted the industry should remember that the TCA is not here to add more layers of management, but to improve the situation for industry. This should feed into the way we nuance communication from the group and could help encourage more industry operators to engage with the group.
 - b. It was highlighted that EU vessels do not have the same data requirements that UK vessels have (e.g. CatchApp and iVMS). There is growing concern from industry that the EU are not providing the required data for the UK to implement appropriate management measures and that this may have a drastic effect on the sustainability of NQS stocks.

Climate change (Aoife Martin, Seafish):

24. Climate change will be an ongoing challenge for the fishing industry and the rest of the supply chain. The issue has been brought to the group for discussion given the need for the industry to adapt to climate change and contribute to mitigation measures to reduce carbon emissions.
25. The current fuel crisis is impacting the catching sector considerably. Therefore, it is important the group considers ways industry can prepare for this type of crisis in the future. Seafish has recently carried out an economic analysis on the impact of fuel prices on the different sectors within the fleet. To find out more information regarding the analysis please contact Seafish.

Spatial squeeze (Barrie Deas, NFFO):

26. Offshore wind and its expansion have huge impacts on the fishing industry. Spatial squeeze has the potential to displace fishing activities from customary grounds and cause knock-on effects for other fisheries around the UK.
27. Spatial squeeze has the potential to effect fishing opportunities, fisheries management, and fish stock assessments. It was highlighted that a change in mindset is required to progress towards a solution to displacement and spatial squeeze, rather than focussing on mapping.

Next steps

28. The meeting highlighted a wealth of issues that the group could pick up and progress. Seafish will review these and undertake a prioritisation exercise prior to the next meeting (expected to take place in June).

Actions

Number	Description	Responsible
1.1	Circulate meeting minutes	Seafish
1.2	Organise next quarterly FIAG meetings for the remainder of 2022	Seafish
1.3	Prioritise issues raised by industry in the meeting and draft a work programme including a proposed sub-group structure for review by members	Seafish
1.4	Respond to queries raised by industry regarding meeting documents, in particular regarding: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Historic data on fisheries which may no longer appear in most recent datasets • Available information on spurdog • Regional importance of specific fisheries which may be overlooked on a national list of NQS by value of landings • Availability of data on EU vessel activity in UK waters 	Seafish