

**Note of Discard Action Group meeting held at The Wesley Hotel, London.
Friday 25 November 2016**

Seafish discards page – for minutes and further information on discards and the Discard Action Group (DAG) activities see:

<http://www.seafish.org/responsible-sourcing/discussion-forums/the-discard-action-group>

1. Welcome

Hazel Curtis welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Aaron Hatcher	University of Portsmouth
Alex Olsen	Esperson
Alison Stanley	Defra
Andy Hickman	Tesco
Arvind Thandi	Defra
Barry O'Neill	Marine Scotland
Clarus Chu	WWF
David Stevens	Skipper
Dominik Leeson	Defra
Duncan Vaughan	Natural England
Erin Priddle	Environmental Defense Fund
Giles Bartlett	Sealord Caistor
Hazel Curtis	Seafish (Chair)
Heather Hamilton	ClientEarth
James Buchan	Skipper, SWFPA, GITAG
Jamie Davies	Pew Trusts
Jennifer Russell	Andersons Solutions
Jonathan Shepherd	Seafish Board
Ian Kinsey	Norwegian Fisherman's Association
Ian Rolmanis	Sustainable Fisheries Partnership
Jess Sparks	Seafish
Julian Roberts	Marine Management Organisation
Karen Green	Seafish (Minutes)
Kenny Coull	Scottish Fishermen's Federation
Mark Simmonds	British Ports Association
Mike Montgomerie	Seafish
Nigel Edwards	Icelandic Seachill
Stuart Hetherington	Cefas

Apologies were received from

Grant Course	SeaScope Fisheries Research Ltd
Guy Pasco	SeaScope Fisheries Research Ltd
Helen McLachlan	WWF
Jane MacPherson	Marine Scotland
Jennifer Mouat	The Aegir Consultancy, GITAG
Jeremy Langley	Waitrose
Jim Evans	Welsh Fisherman's Association

Jim Portus	SWFPO
Mike Park	SWFPA, Seafish Board (Chair)
Paul McCarthy	Marine Scotland
Pim Visser	VisNed
Richard Slaski	Fisheries Innovation Scotland
Sara Vandamme	North West Waters Advisory Council
Tim Silverthorne	National Federation of Fishmongers
Toby Parker	United Fish Industries

2. Minutes from the DAG meeting held on 21 April 2016 in London.

The minutes from the previous meeting were circulated before the meeting and were accepted as a true reflection of the meeting and have been added to the DAG web page. Attendees were asked to take note of the meeting guidelines. In the following minutes Seafish will provide a link to the various presentations given at the meeting but not summarise the whole presentation. In the main we do not attribute the comments made at the meeting.

There was an action from the 21 April meeting following the presentation by David Parker of Young's Seafood. The action was to form a group to review new and emerging technologies with a view to supporting industry in experimenting to improve gear selectivity where required. It was expected that retailers and processors would be involved, reflecting their interest in securing responsibly caught supply from UK vessels. There was general support at the meeting for an initiative such as this to share knowledge and best practice among vessel owners. There was an action on Seafish to issue a call for expressions of interest to explore what role DAG could play in this. The first proposed step was to convene a sub-group of DAG to explore what DAG's involvement could be and who should be involved, how the group could be developed, its aims and objectives, what format it could take, what funding was needed and the type of projects to be shared. The aim was to engage with fishers, scientists, engineers and the supply chain in order to maximise chances of success in bringing new technologies to enhance selective fishing. Seafish convened this meeting after the Common Language Group meeting on 29 June 2016. The minutes were issued. David Parker has been working with Fishing into the Future on concepts to keep this idea moving forwards towards a framework that is fundable and deliverable.

The latest developments in gear selectivity

3. Gear Innovation and Technology Advisory Group (GITAG) Phase II aims and objectives. Kenny Coull, Scottish Fishermen's Federation.

http://www.seafish.org/media/1667687/dag_nov2016_gitag.pdf

GITAG is an industry-based body established in August 2015 to foster flexible working partnerships between active fishers, industry and public bodies, gear technologists and scientists; the group is aimed at scoping and contracting projects, trialling innovations to existing gear categories, piloting new gear configurations and types with associated data collection and appropriate scientific analysis. New European Maritime Fisheries Funding of £1.08 million has been secured for GITAG Phase II to December 2019. There will be a defined application process with a call for applications. It is likely that a liaison officer will be appointed by GITAG for each project.

Discussion

- **Question.** Who is on the GITAG panel? **A.** The Advisory Group, which includes representatives from the partner organisations: Scottish Fishermen's Federation,

- Seafish, Marine Scotland Science, Marine Scotland Policy, Scottish Association of Fish Producer Associations and WWF, will make the decisions.
- **Q.** What does the funding cover? **A.** The gear being tested is fully funded and any modifications, the charter costs following skipper development of the gear, and the scientific trials.
 - **Q.** Are the project ideas that are being developed being scaled up for commercial applicability? **A.** These trials are aimed at large groups of fishermen and economic assessments of fishing using the trialled gears are being or will be made.
 - It is important to produce a business economic assessment of commercial viability based on revenue and costs. Seafish, through UKFEN, is planning to review Best Practice and UKFEN will produce best practice guidance on how to conduct economic analysis to produce a valid economic assessment of trialled new or modified gears. A workshop is planned for April 2017 to develop this guidance.

4. Update on selectivity and UK trials. Mike Montgomerie, Seafish.

http://www.seafish.org/media/1667705/dag_nov2016_seafishgearselectivity.pdf

Mike described work underway through GITAG, by Marine Scotland, BIM, CEFAS and DAERA. Seafish is a partner in the GITAG project, a partner in the Northern Ireland selectivity project, offers gear technology support to CEFAS in Fisheries Science Partnership projects, provides flume tank gear technology and selectivity courses and supports the fishing sector through regional teams. There is a lot happening with some very successful results being demonstrated, and it is important that fishers are completely involved and aware of developments and opportunities.

Discussion

- **Question.** Fishers need to decide whether they need to change gear and, if so, how to go about it. Is there enough information available to fishermen to allow them to make an informed choice? **A.** There is a lot of information available to fishers, such as the Seafish gear database, so they can make informed decisions, but it is important to keep information flowing through various routes to reach the decision makers.

Action: Share links.

5. Skipper perspective on selectivity measures. Jimmy Buchan, Skipper, SWFPA, GITAG.

Jimmy provided his own perspective on measures he has adopted to reduce waste and improve quality on board his vessel Amity II. He highlighted that *Nephrops* are caught in a mixed fishery which means that he has a high risk of catching unwanted bycatch species and that the quality of the fish and *Nephrops* brought on board can be reduced due to damage caused by the different species being caught in the same net. Trials on board Amity II have been ongoing since 2014 and he is working closely with GITAG. His trials since February 2016 with an inclined square mesh net grid and two separate cod-ends have been very exciting. The *Nephrops* falls through the square mesh grid and end up in the lower cod-end while white fish are herded into an upper cod-end. In the event that a vessel had not enough quota for white fish species, the route to the upper cod end could be very large mesh size or open, to allow white fish species to escape and prevent the vessel from “choking”, that is, running out of white fish quota, when fishing under a landing obligation. Jimmy has demonstrated that it is possible to separate the fish from

the prawns. This is not an entirely new net but an attachment to the net and it has taken time to perfect. Derogations have been permitted to allow the trials to run for longer.

Discussion

- It is great to hear that even after 40 years in the business Jimmy still has a drive to make improvements and try new options. This is innovation with real world potential.
- The landing obligation meant that Amity II could not continue as it had been operating – we had to improve our selectivity for the economics to work for us.
- **Question.** A reduction in total catch quantity was mentioned. Could the improved quality of the catch offset the loss of income due to a lower this? **A.** With a better quality catch this could be the outcome.
- **Q.** This sounds like a good business opportunity. Where is the balance between industry funding and grant funding? Does the industry have any options? Is there an appetite for the retail sector to contribute funding towards developing this sort of innovation? **A.** The hope is that the Scottish Fishermen's Federation will support further development and promotion of this emerging gear design. We have had funding for the first phase but this gear does need time for tweaking to determine the critical mesh size and optimum vessel towing speed. There are certainly opportunities for collaboration.
- **Q.** How many vessels could possibly use this type of innovation? **A.** This is a slow and time-consuming process. These trials have only progressed at the speed that funding would allow and in the Fladden grounds. Each fishing area would have different requirements and each vessel would have different requirements. But many fishers could use this and, as they will need to to address the discards problem, this gear design could be a major part of their solution. It is all about improving the selectivity and the quality and value of the catch.

6. 'Net Positive: Disruptive Seafood'. Alex Olsen, Esperson.

http://www.seafish.org/media/1667690/dag_nov2016_netpositive.pdf

Net Positive is all about what we can take out of the sea with the lowest possible impact on the marine environment. Disruptive technology is all about finding a new way to do it. The design challenge is to ensure the current and future availability of affordable food originating from sustainable fish stocks; to reduce or eliminate the negative environmental impact of bottom trawling, including on the benthos and GHG emissions; to improve the selectivity of wild seafood harvesting to reduce by-catch and protect fish stocks; and to benefit the fishermen. Alex outlined the May 2016 workshop which focussed on innovation and different technologies including: laser nets, lights, sensor and sound herding, seabed impact and pulse trawl, seaborne drones, ultrasound and sonar and underwater fish selector. Three design concepts are being progressed. Alex emphasised the importance of getting fishers involved.

Discussion

- **Question.** This is blue sky thinking. If you had to bet on just one of the innovations which was most applicable to the UK which would it be? **A.** For me it was the underwater hoover, which is scalable and has the potential to change the way we fish.
- **Q.** Is this just about the gear? I can see that Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) could also contribute to net positive fishing in how they are influencing the areas where fishers fish and reducing environmental impact. **A.** This has not been considered within this project.

Action: Share links.

7. Outputs from DiscardLess Project. Barry O'Neill, Marine Scotland.

http://www.seafish.org/media/1667693/dag_nov2016_discardless.pdf

Barry described the DiscardLess project (Strategies for the gradual elimination of discards in European fisheries) and the particular work programme WP3 - Avoidance through technological changes and increasing awareness of existing solutions with a manual of trawl selectivity and online fact sheets of selectivity trials by various institutes or research groups. Each fact sheet provides a brief description of trials, target species, area, vessel modification and results.

Discussion

- **Question.** Is the focus of the fact sheets European or are they applicable elsewhere? **A.** Canadians are involved in DiscardLess and we are hopeful that these fact sheets could be utilised by ICES. We would also like to establish a system whereby other existing information could be re-formatted into our template approach.
- **Q.** How are you going to create awareness of the DiscardLess website and information? **A.** We will inform all the appropriate bodies. It was suggested that this should include the Regional Advisory Councils.
- **Q.** Has there been any feedback from fishers to this? What would success look like? **A.** Success is people using the fact sheets – they must be used to inform choices on how to adapt fishing under the landing obligation. We need to make them as accessible as possible and to this end we have made them all single-sheet A4. We have adopted a basic approach and have included a whole set of signposts.
- **Q.** Were economic considerations taken into account? **A.** For projects that had economic analysis readily available this has been included on the fact sheet.

Action: Share links.

Mapping, modelling and evidencing

8. Updated results on the Seafish economic impact assessment of the Landing Obligation (LO). Jennifer Russell, Anderson Solutions on behalf of Seafish.

http://www.seafish.org/media/1667828/dag_nov2016_seafishbioeconomicmodelupdate.pdf

The Seafish bioeconomic model of the impact of the LO has been updated to provide analysis of the LO to better understand the potential challenges of choke stocks and the potential value of measures to delay or remove potential choke situations. The bioeconomic model now incorporates 2015 data as the baseline year; improves the fit of the model to actual LO implementation, is easier to update in the future, and is more flexible to test mitigation measures. A number of simulations have been tested so far which show choke points for home nation fleet segments in 2019 and the most problematic stocks in 2019. An example simulation was shown using 2015 international trade of hake to increase the total amount available to the UK fleet. The aim is to report on baseline simulations for national fleet segments by the end of December or early January. If interest is shown it is possible to produce reports on baseline simulations for PO fleet segments.

Discussion

- The real message is that the UK fleet segments cannot continue to fish as they have done. There must be changes.
- The previous report is fantastic but as a fisher I can't see how what I am doing now to improve selectivity is going to improve the dire situation with hake. It is

clear that no amount of technological improvements is going to solve the problem with hake, which are in abundance. They are going to be a major choke species.

Action: Share links.

9. Cefas activities. Stuart Hetherington, Cefas.

http://www.seafish.org/media/1667825/dag_nov2016_cefas.pdf

Stuart outlined the work being undertaken by Stuart Reeves at Cefas towards a risk-based approach to identifying choke species in the North Sea. He also detailed the ongoing work under the ASSIST project which includes the dissemination to industry of recent gear trials to modify selectivity in NE England *Nephrops* trawl fishing; beam trawl selectivity data analysis and a survey of current trawl specifications to generate evidence in selectivity improvements in this fleet; sole survival phase II; ray discard survival data analysis – reviewing evidence and enhancing existing data with the potential to support exemption from the LO; the plaice survival model – linking health to survival to facilitate estimating discard survival; and quantifying discarded plaice vitality for the SW beam trawl and NW *Nephrops* trawl fisheries by applying the model to health data to infer survival rates. Finally he detailed a pilot project to develop a real-time Spurdog Bycatch Avoidance Programme.

10. 2017 North Sea and North Western Waters Discard Plans – what do they mean? Arvind Thandi and Dominik Leeson, Defra.

http://www.seafish.org/media/1667699/dag_nov2016_2017demersaldiscardplans.pdf

This provided details on the new species introduced, the extension for existing species and new high survival exemptions under the 2017 North Sea and North Western Waters discard plans. Defra also looked ahead to 2018 and 2019.

Discussion

- **Question.** Has there been any work on the market side of this and how seafood consumption may change? **A.** Yes Seafish has published the results of a study looking into this but there is very little data and evidence.
- **Q.** In 2016 in England, the first 100 tonnes of quota uplift for each landing obligation species and 10% thereafter was directed to the non-sector and under 10m vessels - will this be the same in 2017? **A.** We expect this to be similar.
- **Q.** How will the remaining quota be allocated? **A.** It will be allocated by FQA.

Onshore implications

This section looked at how the onshore management of unwanted catch has gone so far this year? What the challenges have been? And given the additional fisheries coming under the landing obligation in 2017 what challenges are expected?

11. Defra update. Estimates of volumes seen, thoughts for next year. Arvind Thandi, Defra and Julian Roberts, Marine Management Organisation.

http://www.seafish.org/media/1667702/dag_nov2016_defraonshoreupdate.pdf

In 2016 Defra expected a low quantity of undersized (below MCRS) fish to be landed; for one or two species of undersized fish to be landed in individual areas; for selective fishing practices and exemptions to reduce the quantities coming ashore; and for the phased introduction of the discard ban up to 2019 allowing time for areas to develop practical processes to handle this fish (sometimes known as “landed discards”). From MMO data and experience and based on industry feedback received so far this all seems to be the case. The challenges for the onshore sector were highlighted and figures were provided for 2017 projected undersized landings (English ports) in the North Sea and North Western Waters.

Actions

- Defra would find it helpful to hear from industry to understand how things are operating in practice, with the increased number of fisheries coming under the LO in 2017.
- It looks like more of the Northern ports may be affected. The slides will be circulated to the British Ports Association for information.
- BPA members have found registering for Animal By-Product (ABP) approval has been very time-consuming. Defra welcomed this feedback.
- Defra do not want ports and harbours to invest in unnecessary infrastructure but do want them to be ready and for all landings to be properly recorded. EMFF funding can be used for capital investment in infrastructure but not for running costs.

12. Date for the next meeting and AOB

There was mention of a report that has been circulated to retailers by Greenpeace which raises questions about illegality in the retail supply chain as a result of non-compliance with the LO. This report will be circulated.

The date for the next meeting was not discussed but is likely to be April/May 2017.