

#### Attendees

Alison Austin (AA) (Chair)	Seafish Board
Bob McCoubrey (BM)	Mourne Seafood
Dr Carrie McMinn (CM)	AFBI
Dr Mathieu Lundy (ML)	AFBI
Pieter-Jan Schon (PS)	AFBI
Malachy Mallon (MM)	NFFF
Ben Collier (BC)	Northern Ireland Gear Trials
Dan Whittle (DW)	Kilkeel Seafoods
Jack Cowden (JC)	Kilkeel Seafoods
Rosemary Johnston (RJ)	Kilkeel Seafoods
Andrew Rooney (AR)	Rooney Fish
Ciaran Cunningham (CC)	DAERA
Claire Vincent (CV)	DAERA
Harry Wick (HW)	NIFPO
Terry Massey (TM)	Pye Tait Consulting
Lindsey Carson (LC)	Ulster University

#### Seafish staff

Dr Lynn Gilmore (LG)	Head of International Trade & Regions
Dr Annika Clements (AC)	Seafish Northern Ireland Manager
Hazel Curtis (HC)	Director of Corporate Relations
Fiona Wright (FW)	Head of Regulatory Affairs
Arina Motova (AM)	Interim Head of Economics
Simon Potten (SP)	Head of Training, Safety and Services
Phillip Quirie (PQ) (Minutes)	Regional Project Co-ordinator

#### 1. Welcome and apologies

AA warmly welcomed everyone to the Zoom meeting. Apologies were tendered on behalf of Aoife Martin, Ronnie McBride, Sam Mawhinney, Paddy Campbell, and Alan McCulla.

#### 2. Minutes from the last meeting held on 17 June 2020

AA ran through the minutes page by page, and asked for any comments, suggestions, or discrepancies. No comments were made and the minutes were approved as an accurate record of the meeting.

**ACTION 01: Seafish to upload approved minutes of the June 2020 Zoom meeting to the Seafish website.**

#### 3. Trade in 2021: Beyond the Transition Period

FW gave a presentation outlining the changes in requirements as the UK exits the EU and the Northern Ireland protocol (Attachment: *01 Trade in 2021: Beyond the Transition Period*).

DW asked if seafood being freighted from GB to NI will require labelling on each individual box – FW said each consignment requires a label, but not each individual box within the consignment. CC understood that if a consignment is going into GB from NI for further processing, then a catch certificate surpasses individual labelling. However, if the consignment is going straight into retail, individual labelling is required.

#### 4. Impacts of Covid-19 on industry

AM gave a presentation detailing the [Seafish quarterly reports](#) on the impact of the pandemic on the UK seafood industry (Attachment: *02 Impact of Covid-19 on the UK seafood industry*).

AR is experiencing problems with continuity of local supply of whole prawns due to reduced fishing, which will be compounded by the vessel tie-up scheme, leading to difficulty meeting demand in European markets – particularly Spain. 50% of the *Nephrops* fleet will tie-up, which is not benefitting processors. This may lead to sourcing supply from elsewhere and may lead to Spanish customers ordering from elsewhere.

#### 5a. The future of NI seafood industry – fleet succession planning: key findings

LC presented a summary the key findings from the NI fleet succession planning study, which was commissioned by the committee in 2019 (Attachment: *03 Succession Planning in the NI Fishing Industry*).

LC added that, in March, interviews were halted to avoid responses being skewed by the impact of the pandemic. LC then invited any questions or comments. HW noted the findings accurately reflect what is heard anecdotally, and BC noted that although the sample was small, it contained a good range in terms of age, targeted species, and fishing type.

DW asked if a more detailed report is available – LC confirmed, contact by email: carson-L8@ulster.ac.uk.

#### 5b. The future of NI seafood industry – skills, recruitment and retention

TM explained that Seafish (with EMFF funds) commissioned Pye Tait to carry out research on the English seafood industry on issues around skills, recruitment and retention levels; potential skills and training gaps; and employment patterns. Recommended actions are based on the analysis. Seafish commissioned the same research in the NI and Wales seafood industries. TM presented key findings from the NI report (Attachment: *04 Skills, Recruitment and Retention in NI Seafood Industry*).

The report should be published late October and will be shared with SNIAC. Seafish will establish an action plan based on the recommendations, and will seek delivery partners in NI, subject to funding.

**ACTION 02: Seafish to circulate Skills, Recruitment and Retention in NI Seafood Industry report to the committee when published.**

#### 6. Seafish Executive update

HC reported on Seafish activity and projects from the past six months. In summary:

- Seafish has also experienced impacts of the pandemic, and the rapid and substantial drop in levy income has resulted in redundancies, in several areas of Seafish:
  - 9 permanent staff have left.
  - 4 fixed-term contracts removed.
  - Process almost concluded – all but one change has been made.
  - Reduced capacity - will have to reflect reduction in posts in what we can deliver.
- Health and wellbeing for our staff during Covid – both main offices are closed with only occasional visits from staff. Travel is restricted. Meetings with stakeholders can occur outdoors, e.g. on the quayside, or for a walking meeting – but indoor meetings are not encouraged:
  - Likely to stay out of offices until well into 2021.
  - Have successfully transitioned to online working.
  - Still focused and committed to our mission to support the seafood industry.
- Advertisements for a new Seafish Chairperson and four new Board members are still open, with applicants encouraged from all across the UK:  
<https://publicappointments.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/appointment/seafish-industry-authority-board-member/>. If interested, please download the candidate pack, deadline is **6<sup>th</sup> November at 12:00**.
- Seafish Sector Panels: autumn meetings taking place, two done, one to follow. Minutes not published, but any queries can be directed to the relevant Seafish contact in the links provided below:

- [Supply Chain & Consumers](#) and [Processing & Importers](#) done; [Domestic & Exporters](#) to follow.
- Getting vital input from industry to Seafish.
- Key part of our governance processes.
- Panel chairs attend Seafish board meetings.
- Seafish strategic review preparations:
  - Normal to have periodic reviews of non-departmental public bodies.
  - Need a financially sustainable model – review needs to identify most appropriate mechanism. (levy collected at fixed rate on weight of seafood, rates not increased in 20 years).
  - Your views will be essential.
  - Planning underway, meeting four fisheries administrations to design the consultation process.
  - Likely to get underway after elections in Scotland and Wales, in May next year.

HC continued, outlining current three key focus areas of Seafish work:

- Covid issues - quarterly impact assessment report:
  - Initial report [available to read or download on Seafish website](#).
  - Further quarterly reports will follow.
  - Informed by our processing and fleet surveys.
- Brexit support – [resources on our website](#), webinars to follow, helpline service being planned for late December/early January.
- New consumer brand: [Love Seafood](#) – launched 1<sup>st</sup> October 2020:
  - 20 year initiative to influence attitudes and perceptions so that consumers place a higher value on seafood.
  - Key is getting the brand established first.
  - Working effectively with industry businesses to amplify messages.
  - Businesses can sell seafood products to consumers who feel positive about seafood.

Seafish also continues to collaborate with industry on a wide range of projects and initiatives, including:

- [Seafood Issues Groups](#) continuing to take place online, expanded audiences.
- ‘Home and Dry’ safety campaign: very successful, great evidence of engagement and impact – desire to continue. Good use of mix of social media plus physical assets – banners in harbours.
- Examples of ongoing fisheries management support being provided:
  - Scallop stock assessment work.
  - [Future of our Inshore Fisheries](#) conference held in 2019 – follow on work underway.
  - Continue to support [Fishing into the Future](#) which has appointed a new Programme Manager, based in Bournemouth, and has support from Fishmongers’ Company and Seafarers.
  - Mackerel – supporting the [North Atlantic Pelagic Advocacy Group](#) to get better international cooperation on quotas.
- [Young Seafood Leaders Network](#) continues to be popular with over 100 members, and is working well online, with webinars and virtual networking opportunities.

## 7. Seafish activity in Northern Ireland: update

AC described the wide variety of work undertaken in Northern Ireland during the past six months (Attachment: *05 Seafish NI Update October 2020*). CV commended the range of outputs and felt encouraged by ongoing engagement between Seafish and NI industry throughout the pandemic.

CM noted that the AFBI scallop enhancement literature review is complete and thanked Seafish for funding (scallop larval modelling is ongoing). The project and report were noted by the ICES Scallop Assessment

Working Group (WGScallop), and fishermen from around the UK have expressed interest – demonstrating that the report will deliver value to other parts of the UK.

#### **8. Roundtable discussion: issues or successes across the NI seafood supply chain in the ongoing global pandemic – an opportunity to feed back to the Seafish Board**

AA invited committee members to share anything they wish, a summary of which will be relayed directly to the Seafish Board to help understand what is of particular importance throughout the NI seafood supply chain.

MM said their food service outlet has successfully adapted to the covid-19 environment, condensing business activity into fewer days and fewer hours and embracing ‘click & collect’ technology. Fish sales at the outlet have increased as they promote offerings on social media platforms and local press. This is not happening across the board in food service - many outlets are struggling to adapt and many may not survive into 2021.

BM agreed many food service and hospitality outlets are struggling to adapt to social restrictions. Some are unlikely to survive another extended period of restrictions. Brexit complexities and additional requirements in the seafood supply chain will increase fish prices, which will affect the takeaway and hospitality sectors.

AR noted that the China market has almost reached a standstill, Beijing has effectively been closed for 3 months, and government has advised against eating raw seafood, which has directly affected oyster exports to China. Brown crab orders have also dropped significantly, previously exported 600-800 tonnes of brown crab, but now only a fraction of that.

DW said the ‘Eat Out to Help Out’ campaign during August enabled them to clear stocks due to increased sales. Since then, operating at 60% pre-pandemic revenue. Focus has shifted to scampi products in retail sector, but at lower prices. RJ added that Brexit labelling and certification requirements and the Northern Ireland Protocol are a challenge for NI processors who source and sell outside NI. Much work and effort is required to understand the requirements, implications and implement any necessary changes to operations.

HW revealed that Northern Ireland producers’ organisations successfully lobbied for a second round of government support to assist the fleet during the pandemic. The scheme is worth £1.7m, and mobile-gear vessels can claim up to 50% of average earnings if tied-up for a six week period (a condition of the European funding). Static-gear vessel operators wanted to continue fishing to meet the Christmas market, and will receive only fixed costs from a UK pot of money without the need to tie-up. These vessels will receive approximately £10k per vessel, which compares favourably to the situation in other devolved administrations.

#### **9. Any other business and date of next meeting**

LG wanted to highlight forthcoming international trade webinars:

- Japan webinar – 26 October 2020 (a registration link will be emailed following the meeting).
- UAE webinar – 18 November 2020.
- China and USA webinars are currently being planned and will follow thereafter.

**ACTION 03: Seafish to circulate the Eventbrite registration page for the forthcoming Japan trade webinar.**

The next meeting will be arranged in approximately six months, and AA thanked everyone for their valued participation before closing the meeting.

**ACTION 04: Seafish to arrange the next meeting in spring 2021.**

Action Summary	Assigned to	Timeframe
01: Seafish to upload approved minutes of the June 2020 Zoom meeting to the Seafish website.	PQ	Next meeting
02: Seafish to circulate Skills, Recruitment and Retention in NI Seafood Industry report to the committee when published.	AC	When report is published
03: Seafish to circulate the Eventbrite registration page for the forthcoming Japan trade webinar.	AC	Post-meeting
04: Seafish to arrange the next committee meeting in spring 2021	AC/PQ	Feb/March 2021