

**Aquaculture Leadership Group
Meeting Minutes – 15 October 2019**

In Attendance

James Fowey, ALG Chair

Kim Cullen, SF2040

Martin Syvret, Dorset Coast Forum

Dr Lewis Le Vay, Bangor University

Roger Covey, Natural England

Sara Catahan, Defra

Kelsey Thompson, Morecambe Bay Oysters

Oliver Robinson, British Trout Association

Guests

Dr Sofia Franco, Scottish Association of Marine Science

Joanna Gosling, ARCH-UK

Dr Helen Smith, Exeter University

Olivia Bennett, Environment Finance

Dr Christine Edwards, Robert Gordon University

James Mansfield, Environment Finance

Apologies

Dr Stuart McLanaghan, Seafish

Michael Gubbins, Cefas

John Holmyard, Offshore Shellfish

David Jarrad, Shellfish Association of GB

Absent

Dr Christopher Sweeting, MMO

Meeting Minutes

Agenda #1

Welcome & Introductions

Agenda #2

17 June Minutes

- ALG accepted the 17 June Minutes

Agenda #3

Seafish Update

ALG read through and briefly discussed the Seafish pdf update emailed on 14 Oct

- One question arose: Why is the 'Size of the Aquaculture Prize' report looking at shellfish only?
 - Response from SM via email: *The size of the prize is not intended to be restricted to shellfish. At the expression of interest stage we invited outline costs for two phases:*
 - *Phase 1 = shellfish*
 - *Phase 2 = finfish; other crustacea / marine gastropod molluscs (e.g. abalone); and macro-algae / seaweed*

Whilst we recognise that running both phases concurrently would have been the preferred option, the indicated outline costs do not make it feasible for Seafish alone to fund both projects during 2019/20. As a result, we have decided to proceed with Phase 1 only at this stage and propose that Phase 2 will be tendered during Q1 in 2020/21.

Agenda #4

Defra Update

SC updated ALG on Defra aquaculture activities

- Upcoming English Aquaculture Strategy will feed into the Defra/regulator 'family' (NE, Defra, IFCAs, MMO, EA and other organisations/areas) and their work plans and vice versa they are keen to feed into the strategy
- Within the Defra Aquaculture there is a:
 - **Regulatory review group**, with membership from Natural England, Cefas, IFCAs, MMO and Defra aquaculture policy team to look at the overall regulatory process. Led by Beccy Redrup.
 - This group is initially focussing on the regulation of marine shellfish aquaculture for new and expanding businesses through a phased approach.
 - Phase 1: clarify the existing complex process – taking info from the [Aquaculture Regulatory toolbox for England](#) and developing a flowchart and supporting notes which set out the regulatory requirements and associated expenditure in a more straightforward and user friendly way.
 - Phase 2: identify opportunities to streamline the existing process and better align regulators. Regulatory review group to work with Seafish ensuring industry stakeholders have opportunity to provide input.
 - Initial output: a multi-year roadmap for regulatory improvement
 - **Pacific oyster policy focus group**, with membership from Natural England, Cefas, Defra Non-native team and Defra aquaculture policy team to clarify our Pacific Oyster Policy. Led by Sara Catahan.
 - Looked at legislation, regulation, policy and evidence relating to Pacific oysters thus aligning Defra aquaculture policy with UK's approach to non-native species - new farms should not be opened where this species doesn't currently exist locally in the wild.
 - Now working to clarify and share the Defra group approach to new Pacific Oyster aquaculture in areas where the species is already present in the wild. Key milestones of this work:
 - Clarify the Defra group's current policy position on the use of Pacific Oysters in Aquaculture by way of a 'Joint Vision Statement' (Winter 2019/20)
 - Build evidence base to allow us to strengthen this position further by:
 - Delivering existing R&D projects to provide evidence relating to the spread and control of this species (including whether control methods are effective in reducing population density or slowing spread).
 - Commissioning further research to better understand how the Pacific oyster interacts with habitats and native species. This research will aim to assess the species holistically, exploring both positive and negative interactions and consider economic, social and environmental impacts.

Agenda #5

SF2040 Aquaculture Update

KC updated ALG on SF2040 aquaculture activities.

- SF2040 Annual Report
 - Outlines SF2040 programme achievements and highlights from Year 1 and ambitions for Year 2
 - Annual Report captures positive aspects of ALG and aquaculture activities via SF2040:
 - Healthy debate on the future needs of the sector
 - An opportunity for improving the frequency and depth of communication with Seafish, Defra, and other government bodies
 - Good, informative presentations
 - ALG has an important role clarifying and signposting where Defra and the regulators can most efficiently and effectively channel their aquaculture policy activities
 - Defra has increased their aquaculture policy resource and is focusing this resource on key issues as identified within the SF2040 framework
 - Annual Report is clear that sector has ongoing barriers that require addressing:
 - poor water quality
 - unnavigable regulatory framework
 - poor domestic demand
 - challenges of existing alongside other activities and designations within ever increasingly crowded marine and coastal areas
 - Annual Report outlines Year 2 ambitions for ALG:
 - Engage with Defra and regulators to address the regulatory roadblocks
 - Seek opportunities to continue the work within the aquaculture recommendations beyond ALG's short lifespan and continue long-term planning to expand the sector
 - Review the SF2040 recs to test relevance and update them where appropriate
 - Continue to support the progress and findings:
 - Seafish 'Size of the Aquaculture Prize' report
 - Developing an Assurance Scheme for Shellfish and Human Health
 - Two mapping potential aquaculture sites projects
 - MMO Project 1184
 - Cefas and Dorset/North Devon FLAG project
 - Consider the opportunity for regions to have an Aquaculture Development Officer
- English Aquaculture Strategy progress
 - Dr Andy Woolmer has agreed to write the Strategy
 - Project to be approved by MMO-EMFF because work costed through SF2040 surplus
 - Work to begin spring 2020 and strategy be published Sept 2020
 - ALG will provide oversight/direction; Dr Woolmer to attend ALG meetings in 2020
 - Strategy will raise awareness of the potential for English aquaculture, create a broader church of support for realising that growth, generate political support and engage a wide range of relevant stakeholders to grow awareness and understanding
 - Current scope – to be finalised in Feb 2020 at next ALG meeting with Dr Woolmer
 - Contribution of the aquaculture sector to achieve overall seafood consumption growth and meet the increased demand
 - Food production

SEAFOOD

2040

- New food ideas within aquaculture
 - New ideas for using other parts of fin-fish and shellfish (e.g. shells)
 - Eco-systems services
 - Food security – moving aquaculture from an export to a domestic market (requires a stronger consumer demand as well)
 - Population/public health
 - Breadth of species (variety)
 - Animal welfare
 - Promotion of aquaculture
 - Technology/innovation – new species and new techniques
 - Carbon-net zero practices – push the low carbon footprint compared to ag footprint
 - Barriers to growth (water quality, regulatory framework, poor consumer demand, etc.)
 - Jobs/skills/social aspect of aquaculture – the knock-on benefits of aquaculture
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- National Food Strategy – ALG encouraged to submit a note to the Call for Evidence to request the inclusion of seafood and aquaculture in the review and eventual strategy.
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- SF2040 SILG meeting in Nov with Defra Minister – what are the key messages from ALG?
 - Continue the EMFF replacement scheme as it is needed and valued.
 - As aquaculture is a relatively high-risk industry, people need a reason to invest. Therefore, tax breaks, incentives and investment schemes are important.
 - Water quality message – water companies continue to cause problems for shellfish companies
 - Increase/encourage apprenticeships and staff training; add aquaculture in curriculum so people know it exists and is an option
 - Encourage/create more opportunities for interdisciplinary research and joint academic-industry collaborative work
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- SF2040 Recommendations update (of interest to ALG)
 - Recommendation 6: Review the impacts of a population shift to 2 a week seafood consumption to better quantify the substantial socio-economic impacts of improved population health
 - Research is underway; ALG will be provided with the results in spring 2020
 - Recommendation 16: Map skills, recruitment and retention needs and issues across the entire value chain and review best practice with regards to training, skills development and workforce retention
 - EMFF application in progress. IF FUNDED: Industry ALG members will be asked to participate in the research via a short survey or a workshop or a 1-to-1 interview. Questions will focus on skills development, training, recruitment and retention issues faced by the sector and possible solutions.
 - Recommendation 2: Bring academic, private and public sectors together to agree a common approach to research
 - Seafish Experts Panel (SEP) is actively leading Rec 2. This group promotes innovation in the industry and encourages productive partnerships between industry and academia

- SEP is asking industry for the top 10 technical challenges and then will connect “challenge owner” to an innovation team and a funding body to help solve it
- ALG was asked for their opinions of the top 5 technical challenges in aquaculture
 - Food ingredients
 - Offshore cage technology
 - Effluent and disease control in RAS
 - Sea lice
 - Noro-virus removal in shellfish
 - Technology how to ship shellfish for exports
- KC to pass on the comments to SEP

Action Point: (KC) Email entire SF2040 Annual Report to ALG.

Action Point: (KC and JFD) Develop key ALG messages for SILG-Minister meeting in November.

Action Point: (KC) Forward ALG comments on top technical challenges in aquaculture to SEP.

Agenda #6

Break

Agenda #7

ARCH-UK

Joanna Gosling, ARCH-UK project manager discussed the programme.

- ~£5.1 million for aquaculture research for 2017-2021
- Academia-led aquaculture network that engages with the whole of the UK working at a national level
- Direct contact with research councils who are interested to know where funding should be placed
- Focusses on fundamental and basic research issues that are preventing the sustainable development of UK aquaculture
- Aims of ARCH-UK include:
 - Develop a UK aquaculture community drawing in new researchers
 - Increase and strengthen UK capacity for aquaculture innovation and cutting-edge research to address key knowledge and skills gaps identified in the [ARCH-UK Research Priority Reports December 2017](#)
 - Help to foster a UK wide aquaculture ECR community, providing opportunities for training and career development
 - Create mechanisms for the translation of fundamental science and innovative technologies working with existing aquaculture organisations to synergise efforts
 - Improve the influence of the UK aquaculture industry to national food security
- Coming soon: Knowledge Exchange Seeding Award
 - £190k available for projects which enhance UK wide knowledge exchange
 - Workshops / Training, feasibility studies and work placements
- ALG and ARCH-UK had a discussion about improving the comms and alignment with English industry and research projects

- ALG is one way ARCH-UK can disseminate information across the English aquaculture industry
- ARCH-UK was encouraged to visit England aquaculture sites
- ALG members were encouraged to sign up to ARCH-UK newsletters

Research funded through ARCH-UK

1. Dr Helen Smith, Exeter University, presented on her research: *Off-Aqua: Evaluating the Environmental Conditions Required for the Development of Offshore Aquaculture*
 - For more information please see her presentation emailed 23 Oct
2. Dr Christine Edwards, Robert Gordon University, presented on her research: *Safe and Sustainable Shellfish: Introducing local testing and management solutions*
 - Presentation is very large - if interested in accessing the file please contact KC

Agenda #8

Dr Sofia Franco, Scottish Association of Marine Science

Dr Franco presented the preliminary findings of her research: *Towards improved communication in aquaculture: Exploring consumer's perceptions and attitudes to aquaculture and its products*

- For more information please see her presentation emailed 17 Oct.
- For any ALG member interested in contacting Sofia for further discussion: sofia.franco@sams.ac.uk

Agenda #9

James Mansfield, Environment Finance

James presented *Introduction to Environment Finance*

- Environmental Finance is an FCA regulated impact investment fund manager and investment adviser
- It is an employee owned social enterprise working with a diverse group of clients to design and implement innovative financing solutions for environmental and conservation projects.
- For more information please see his presentation emailed 17 Oct.