

Aquaculture Common Issues Group (ACIG)

Note of meeting held at Friends House, London. Tuesday 30 April 2019.

For the Aquaculture Common Issues Group minutes and meeting presentations see:

<https://www.seafish.org/article/aquaculture-common-issues-group>

1. Welcome, introductions and apologies

Lee Cocker welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Attendees

Ali Godfrey	Fishermen's Mission
Alicia Gibson	Environmental Finance
Anita Hafner	Vivid Economics
Andy Smith	Iceland Seafood Barraclough Ltd
Ben Coppin	Marine Management Organisation
Cameron Moffat	Young's Seafood
Caroline Roberts	ABPmer
Charles Vander Broek	Knowledge Transfer Network
Charlotte Coombes	Marine Conservation Society
David Cracknell	Food Standards Agency
David Jarrad	Shellfish Association of Great Britain
Dawn Purchase	Marine Conservation Society
Eleanor Adamson	Fishmonger's Company
Elena Piana	Sea Farms
Fingal McKiernan	Northern Lighthouse Board
Heather Conejo-Watt	Cefas
Inge Verwoerd	Agricultural Industries Confederation
James Fox Davies	Fowey Shellfish
James Taylor	ARCH UK
John McGuigan	Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs
Karen Green	Seafish (Minutes)
Keith Jeffery	Cefas
Kim Cullen	Seafood 2040
Lee Cocker	Seafish (Chair)
Lisa Bettington	Natural Environment Research Council
Mark Parry	National Marine Aquarium
Martin Flanigan	Aquaculture Initiative (EEIG)
Martin Lilley	University of Exeter
Martin Syvret	Aquafish Solutions
Mike Berthet	Global Aquaculture Alliance
Mike Gubbins	Defra
Oliver Robinson	British Trout Association
Olivia Bennett	Environmental Finance
Paul Howes	Swansea University
Ruth Allin	Defra
Ruth Hoban	New England Seafoods
Ross Brown	University of Exeter

Sara Catahan
Sofia C. Franco
Yasamin Alttahir
Yvonne Ball

Defra
Scottish Association of Marine Science
Defra
Animal Health and Welfare Board England Consultant

Apologies were received from:

Andrew Rowley	ARCH UK
Aoife Martin	Seafish
Chris Ryder	Lyons Seafoods
Craig Burton	Seafish
David Fletcher	RAS Aquaculture Research Ltd
Jon Parker	Consultant, Seafish Panel Chair
Martin Jaffa	Callander McDowell
Neil Auchterlonie	IFFO
Robert Whiteley	Natural England
Stuart McLanaghan	Seafish

2. Minutes of the previous meeting on 18 September 2018 and outstanding actions. Lee Cocker, Seafish.

The final minutes were accepted as a true reflection of the meeting and have been added to the ACIG 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. Mention was made of the 50th Annual Shellfish Association of Great Britain Annual Conference, Dinner and AGM taking place on 14-15 May at Fishmongers' Hall, London.

3. National Groups – Current Status and Recent Developments

3.1. 'Aquaculture Leadership Group (ALG)'. James Fox Davies, Fowey Shellfish.

https://www.seafish.org/media/ACIG_Apr2019_Seafood2040.pdf

Seafood 2040 is a vision to contribute to the English seafood industry through collaboration, innovation, and best practice to ensure a truly thriving business from sea to plate and an action plan that details 25 recommendations developed by the seafood supply chain to advance the vision. As part of this an Aquaculture Leadership Group (ALG) has been formed. The ALG wants to grow the domestic aquaculture economy by broadening its scope, promoting its values and better demonstrating its contribution to the UK economy, the seafood industry, and the benefits of employment, health and opportunity for communities. The ALG will review and seek opportunities and advancements in technology, investment and intellectual capital. The ALG is responsible for two specific SF2040 recommendations (no's 13 and 14) which relate to aquaculture.

- **Comment.** I am a passionate supporter of English aquaculture but am frustrated by the sort of discussions around Seafood 2040 and the ALG. The bigger message is that seafood consumption in the UK is declining. The vision of English aquaculture is expansion but the main constraint to this is Government and its agencies. There is a desperate need to expand mussel production but it took 10 years to get Lyme bay approved. Expansion happens in Norway because they have Government support. Even in Northern Ireland DAERA is providing funding. The message from Government in England has always been 'this has to be industry-led'. There is huge frustration from industry – industry knows how to grow the sector but the support is not there.

- **Response.** Defra is engaging on Seafood 2040 and hopefully the ALG will be the hook to remove those barriers to drive growth. The legislative framework needs to support this to provide the right balance.

3.2. 'Welsh Aquaculture: Exploratory Discussions of Welsh Businesses'. Lee Cocker, Seafish and Eleanor Adamson, Fishmongers' Company.

Welsh aquaculture stakeholders recognise that the sector has considerable potential for sustainable and profitable growth, but despite ambitions growth appears to have stalled in recent years.

Nevertheless, Welsh aquaculture businesses indicate a strong and ongoing appetite to see sectoral growth, and an exploratory meeting was held on 28th March to openly discuss and review the recent history of co-ordination between government, academia and industry operators, and the level of interest for collective working to deliver innovative solutions to common challenges.

This meeting gathered industry perceptions and comments on the current state of Welsh aquaculture. The outcome was positive and supportive of collective industry-led action, but recognised more industry input and support was needed. Seafish and the Fishmongers' Company are helping to facilitate this conversation.

Discussion

Question. Given the number who attended the Welsh industry meeting do you think this was representative? **Answer.** Feedback on the meeting has been invited from Welsh businesses that couldn't make it on the day (it was highlighted that more Welsh aquaculture businesses could be found on the England and Wales APB register). It was re-iterated that this initial meeting had been initiated by the Welsh industry, it generated enthusiasm and optimism from attendees, but the conversation has only just started.

Comment. Welsh academia not being represented at the meeting and it was felt they needed to be part of any potential group going forward.

Q. Why should not be left to industry to take things forward / try to sort issues that ultimately are only in the power of Government to solve? **A.** Bringing those who attended the meeting together considered positive as half had never met before. Due to stakeholder disengagement from the current 'Welsh Aquaculture Advisory Group' (WAAG) where is Wales' voice if that group disappears...perhaps industry are the ones best placed to take things forward? Welsh Government are aware of the industry meeting and stated their support to a 'new industry-led aquaculture group' if industry felt that was the best option to support the sector

3.3. 'Aquaculture Representative Group (ARG) in Northern Ireland'. Martin Flanigan, ARG.

https://www.seafish.org/media/ACIG_Apr2019_AqualnitiativeNI.pdf

Aquaculture in Northern Ireland is expanding and changing. To support this is an *ad hoc* grouping, with the Aquaculture Initiative EEIG acting as secretariat has been formed; creating a single, inclusive organisation (the Aquaculture Representative Group or ARG) which is open to all Fish Culture Licence holders. There are three sub-sectors i.e. Mussels, Oysters, Finfish. Each sub-sector nominates representatives, with all members and all sub-sectors of equal importance. ARG is an effective communication tool and has initiated five communications to a Minister or Department and has responded to over 10 consultation responses in total. Further aquaculture expansion in the coming years means representation will be more important for regulators to engage directly with the sector.

The current ARG format has worked since 2012, but the aim is to look at the options available of how to set up a formalised self-sustaining group.

ACTION: Circulate email link.

4. 'Brexit and the regulatory burden' discussion.

The audience was invited to pose questions to Defra. Given the unclear outcome at this time the only issue raised (under a No Deal scenario) was around the ability to export unpurified product for purification abroad. Not being able to export in this situation would be a huge threat. Defra confirmed that this issue was on their radar.

5. 'Seafish Aquaculture' update. Lee Cocker, Seafish.

https://www.seafish.org/media/ACIG_Apr2019_SeafishAquaUpdate.pdf

Areas covered: Seafish support for devolved Aquaculture Leadership Groups and aquaculture and fishing co-existence work; Seafish collaboration on online 'One Stop Shop/s' for Aquaculture; the strategic review of Seafish' role in supporting the seafood industry with training which includes aquaculture; the new Seafish website and Aquaculture Profiles; the publication of the report *Intermittent Microbial Water Quality Barriers to Bivalve Shellfish Production: Improvement and Management Options for Change* in Q1 2019/20; a proposed economic assessment of UK aquaculture to demonstrate its potential size / value under a range of growth scenarios; the Aquaculture Regulatory Toolbox for England which is housed on the Seafish website has been updated; working with onshore training to develop new shellfish purification guidance; and developing an Assurance Scheme for Shellfish and Human Health (DASSHH) and future collaboration with the new SWEEP project.

ACTION: Provide links to various Seafish online resources.

Discussion

- The Food Standards Agency is very keen to develop new shellfish purification guidance and to make this as interactive as possible. The FSA could also potentially support this with some funding.
- **Question.** The mantra in the past with regards to water quality is that the polluter pays. The reality is that the industry pays. How much engagement has there been with SW Water on the water quality issues. **Answer.** They are engaged in the SWEEP project, as is the Environment Agency.
- **Q.** There was mention of E.coli. Is Norovirus being looked at as well? **A.** This will be part of the DASSH project.

What is happening in the UK – initiatives

6. 'Dorset Coastal Forum Update on Aquaculture Activities'.

6.1. 'Cefas Aquaculture Mapping Project'. Keith Jeffery, Cefas.

https://www.seafish.org/media/ACIG_April2019_CefasAquacultureFLAG.pdf

The purpose of this project is to identify and map areas best-suited to specific types of sustainable aquaculture, within the boundaries of the FLAG area (a local larger scale plan). Following consultation with the industry, an in-depth analysis will be produced which should benefit aquaculture interests in the FLAG area and act as an exemplar approach for others to adopt. In consultation with key stakeholders the project will also seek to identify potential management and mitigation measures that may facilitate sustainable aquaculture development in the FLAG area, without unduly restricting opportunities for fishing. The project started in July 2018 and will produce a report including comprehensive literature review and mapping showing areas of aquaculture potential (downloadable maps and GIS shapefiles). In addition there will be online resources (via a FLAG funded Virtual Hub) to support future aquaculture business development and diversification.

6.2. 'Virtual Aquaculture Hub'. Martin Syvret, Dorset Coastal Forum (DCF)

https://www.seafish.org/media/ACIG_Apr2019_DorsetCoastForum.pdf

This is designed to provide targeted business/technical support for the FLAG area and a joined-up marine development strategy or plan covering sustainable development of the sector. An aquaculture film will highlight career paths into the sector as well as the availability of training. The DCF has been identified as a High Potential Opportunity (HPO) - a mechanism whereby the potential for aquaculture within the region will be highlighted and promoted in order to attract overseas inward investment. This project launched in February 2019. In addition under a Local Development Strategy we are developing and setting up a 'Virtual Hub' – an aquaculture information service to complement existing resources. This is being built around the output of the Cefas Aquaculture Mapping Project and links to other existing resources like the Cefas Regulatory Toolbox, Seafish resources, DCF, MMO, TCE etc. Aquaculture Parks are also being looked at as a blueprint for co-location activities (with at least two activities existing in the same space) within controlled water environments.

7. 'SWEEP and Water Quality Management in SW England'. Ross Brown, University of Exeter.

https://www.seafish.org/media/ACIG_Apr2019_SWEEP.pdf

SW Partnership for Environment and Economic Prosperity (SWEEP) is a five year programme of multidisciplinary activities integrated across all environments which focusses on placing natural capital at the heart of business and policy decision making; delivering transformative regional impact from NERC environmental science. Key tasks will look at: reviewing SW shellfish sites; water quality appraisal for selected catchments; linking water quality to existing land use, to shellfish quality and biomass and future land use; and facilitating strategic aquaculture development planning. This SWEEP project will collaborate with the Seafish DASSHH project.

ACTION: Provide link to website.

8. 'Integration of Fisheries with Aquaculture'. Cefas project. Keith Jeffery and Heather Conejo-Watt, Cefas.

https://www.seafish.org/media/ACIG_Apr2019_AquaFisheriesIntegration.pdf

Over the past two years this project looked at integrating aquaculture and fisheries into a more holistic food production chain; looking at case studies of those who have switched from fishing into aquaculture, combined fishery activities with aquaculture, or had used aquaculture technology for their benefit within the capture fishery area to identify potential barriers/chances. This literature review was followed up with interviews to identify the socio-economic barriers for the UK under 10m fishery fleet to integrate with aquaculture. As a result they have identified the socio-economic barriers, financial help and the need for the development of a skill set for a certain population of the English inshore fleet.

9. Aquaculture Safety and Health Awareness Day (AquaSHAD). Fingal McKiernan, Northern Lighthouse Board (NLB).

https://www.seafish.org/media/ACIG_Apr2019_AquaShad.pdf

The NLB is a statutory consultee for all marine licence applications, and is responsible for ensuring every aquaculture site in Scotland does not pose a hazard to navigation and ensuring active industry presence to promote better working relationships between regulators and producers. They also plan, organise and co-ordinate the annual AquaSHAD event which is designed to bring delegates from all sectors of the aquaculture industry together and provide them with up to date training to reduce risk and improve safety at work. There has been significant expansion over the last three years and the event now attracts 125 delegates.

10. Fishermen's Mission support for aquaculturists. Ali Godfrey, Fishermen's Mission.

https://www.seafish.org/media/ACIG_Apr2019_FMission.pdf

The Fishermen's Mission is a national charity that provides financial, practical and pastoral support to both active and retired fishermen and their families. As a result of a review of their services in 2016 they are extending this to aquaculturists and their families.

Question. Is support only for those who are marine-based or is there an intention to provide support to freshwater aquaculturists, e.g. trout farmers?

Answer. There is the intention to explore and possibly expand support to freshwater farmers.

ACTION: Provide link to website.

Looking ahead

11. 'ARCH UK Progress and Activities / Knowledge Transfer Network Background and Concept for New Online Aquaculture Landscape Tool'. James Taylor, ARCH UK and Charles Vander Broek, KTN.

https://www.seafish.org/media/ACIG_Apr2019_ARCHUK.pdf

https://www.seafish.org/media/ACIG_Apr2019_KTN.pdf

ACTION: Provide link to website.

Looking ahead

11. ARCH UK progress and activities/Knowledge Transfer Network background and concept for new online aquaculture landscape tool. James Taylor, ARCH UK and Charles Vander Broek, KTN.

https://www.seafish.org/media/ACIG_Apr2019_ARCHUK.pdf

https://www.seafish.org/media/ACIG_Apr2019_KTN.pdf

ARCH UK is an academia-led aquaculture network which represents the whole of the UK working at a national level. It focusses on fundamental and basic research issues that are preventing the sustainable development of UK aquaculture. As at February 2019 there were 480 members made up of 282 academia, 94 industry, 104 other. Consideration is being given to the production of an annual or bi-annual 'research update' publication with updates on each of the BBSRC/NERC aquaculture initiative projects. ARCH UK asked for feedback on what you would you like to see from such a publication? What could be achieved?

ACTION: Email your thoughts and feedback to James Taylor j.w.d.taylor@swansea.ac.uk

Innovate UK and KTN landscape 'maps' are available online for various sectors. ARCH-UK and Seafish have proposed an aquaculture specific map to help connect/inform the community. There is no impartial continuously updated 'snap shot' of UK Aquaculture activity or way of clarifying/keeping track of who is currently undertaking what aquaculture research. An aquaculture map would show who constitutes the sector across the UK; it could also potentially help highlight gaps in current research and help focus funding bids, prevent duplication of work and help collaboration/relationship building between researchers and industry. KTN is asking for feedback on what the proposed aquaculture specific map could include. Options are: inclusion of food and non-food aquaculture filtered by regional/national, food/non-food, onshore, inshore and offshore; current relevant funding; and previously funded research projects.

ACTION: Email your thoughts and feedback to C Vander-Broek charles.vanderbroek@ktn-uk.org

12. Date of the next meeting.

Lee thanked all the speakers for their insight, and the attendees for their participation. Discussion about the aquaculture industry always raises passionate interest and the speakers all presented inter-linked ideas. The next meeting is currently set for Wednesday 18 September 2019 at Friends House, London.