Finfish Advisory Group (FiAG) Meeting Minutes

16th May 2024
Remote meeting via Microsoft Teams

Attendees:

Chris Collins, MMO
David Curtis, BASS Anglers' Sportfishing Society
David Warwick, Seafish
Isobel Johnston, MMO
James Lamb, Seafish
Joe Cooper, Seafish
Joel Brown, MMO
John Balls, Fisher
Judith Farrell, Humberside FPO Ltd
Juliette Hatchman, SWFPO
Lewis Tattersall, Seafish
Marta Moran-Quintana, Seafish
Martyn Youell, Waterdance
Elizabeth Bourke, NFFO
Felix Ameye, Seafish
Grant Jones, Angling Trust
Harry Owen, Western PO
Mat Mander, Severn & Devon IFCA
Paul Macdonald, SFO
Phil McBryde, DEFRA
Rebecca Spain, Seafish
Richard Caslake, Seafish
Richard Hards, NSFO
Simon Cadman, Cornwall IFCA
Sophie Throup, Morrisons (Chair)
Sterling, Hannah (External)

Apologies:

Chloe Rodgers – UKAFPO
David Rolands - MMO
Hannah Rudd – Angling Trust
Barry Young

Welcome and apologies (Sophie Throup, Morrisons (Chair)

Actions from the December 2023 FiAG meeting were reviewed, and minutes accepted.

Sophie Throup announced that she will be stepping down from the FiAG Chair role and the position was opened to the group for consideration. This will be discussed during the next FiAG meeting scheduled in July.

No additional issues raised by members.

Defra update on finfish FMPs (Phil McBryde & Hannah Sterling, Defra)

- The tranche three FMPs have now gone through approval and should be ready for public consultation. The final tranche four FMPs which include the black bream, wrasses complex, Celtic Sea and Western Channel demersal FMP & pelagic FMP have begun, and evidence workshops have run over the last few weeks.
- Several changes have been implemented including an update to the minimum conservation reference sizes (MCRS) of crawfish (110mm in ICEs area 7), lemon sole (25cm), turbot (30cm), and brill (30cm). There have been further changes to manage fly seining in the channel, including a 221KW engine restriction within 12nm and 100mm min mesh size within Area 7DE. Defra are looking at moving bass catch limits into licences instead of just setting catch limits.

- Defra provided an update on several consultations and have been summarised below:
    - Remote Electronic Monitoring (REM) consultation: Government responses have been released. This consultation launches Defra's vision for expanding the use of REM in English waters. It proposes an approach to the long-term adoption of REM that moves from pilots to fishery wide implementation alongside policy reforms such as Fisheries Management Plans and a new approach to managing discards. It is part of an ongoing package of engagement that will help develop how REM is used in English waters. Defra received 60 responses to this consultation. The UK Government has responded to the views received during this consultation. Defra have now published the summary of responses and government responses.
    - Discard consultation: The discards reform consultation sets out proposals to change the way discards are managed in England. This will contribute to achieving the bycatch objective of the Fisheries Act 2020 and more sustainable fisheries. Defra received 52 responses to this consultation. The UK Government has responded to the views received during this consultation. Defra have now published the summary of responses and government responses.
    - FMP Southern North Sea and Eastern Channel mixed Flatfish Fisheries Management Plan (FMP): The Flatfish FMP applies to lemon sole, witch, turbot, brill, dab, flounder, Atlantic halibut, plaice and sole in English waters within ICES areas 4b, 4c and 7d. Defra received 31 responses to this consultation. Defra will publish the full Southern North Sea and Eastern Channel mixed flatfish FMP and the summary of responses and government response to the consultation in 2024.

Discussion:

- A member asked if the spurdog statutory instrument will be moving to licensing along with bass. Defra responded that it may potentially happen although bass is the standing agenda item for negotiations, as five statutory instruments have already been raised.

Update on Northwest England fisheries project (Rebecca Spain, Seafish)

- In March 2022 a report commissioned by the NFFO, and supported by the MMO and Seafish, reviewed the seafood supply chain in NW England. The report made several key recommendations with a focus on strengthening the connections in the NW to ensure a more consistent supply chain.
- A meeting was held in Whitehaven at the beginning of the year which brought together members of the catching and processing sector to talk about improvements to the supply chain in NW England. Some clear actions and areas to work on included a focus on Thornback rays, transport, and logistics, as well as mussels and whelks.
- Thornback ray was chosen as a sustainable species to promote in the Northwest. Seafish is currently working out a film schedule which will include 3-4 short social media pieces showcasing the Northwest fishing industry, the livelihoods of fishers, and why thornback ray is a good sustainable choice. There will be further content demonstrating how to prepare thornback ray using attractive but simple recipes which the consumer can replicate at home.
- Another short film is being planned to highlight the journey from catch to plate which will hopefully help support, link, and showcase the seafood supply chain in NW England.

Economic analysis of fleet activity and trade for top NQS finfish in 2023 (Marta Moran-Quintana & Joe Cooper, Seafish)

- The Seafish economics team showcased the outputs that can be obtained from the fleet enquiry tool and data from the fleet reports.
- This included an overview of the non-quota species sector which highlighted the landings of NQS species split across the under 10m and over 10m fleet. The data also highlighted a breakdown of various non-quota species and their value and total landings.
- The presentation highlighted the custom outputs that the Seafish economics team can deliver on request. Utilising bass as an example, there are many factors that can be explored for bass dependent vessels such as the specific gear types in reference to the number of vessels. Other options included looking at annual vessel costs, and vessel profits.
- For further details and information contact the Seafish economics team.

Actions:

Action	Description	Responsible
1	Circulate call for Chair nominations to all members and progress discussions, with a concluded before next meeting.	Seafish
2	Re-confirm presenters who were unable to attend for next Finfish group meeting (MOB training and MCA).	Seafish
3	Circulate NW England fisheries project slides to all members and to Sophie Throup to share within the British Retail Consortium.	Seafish
4	Circulate economic data and market insight slides plus contact details for the team around all members.	Seafish