

Minutes: Plaice and lemon sole Principles 2 and 3

Meeting Date: 29 June 2021

Location: Teams

Attendees	Organisation
ADB: Anton Dietschel-Buehler	Flatfish
BL: Bill Lart	Seafish
CM: Cameron Moffat	Young's Seafood
HS: Hayley Swanlund	WWF-UK
JP: Jo Pollett	Marine Stewardship Council
KC: Kenny Coull	Scottish White Fish Producer Association
LH: Leendert Hakvoort	Lowestoft Producer Organisation
MK: Michael Kendrick	Hilton Seafoods
MS: Matt Spencer	Marine Stewardship Council
RC: Rod Cappell	Poseidon
RS: Richard Stansfield	Flatfish
Apologies:	
Iain Glasgow	Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
Katie Keay	Marine Stewardship Council
Lisa Ready	Centre for Environment, Fisheries and Aquaculture Science.
William Davies	Hilton Seafoods

Purpose of the meeting

This call was an opportunity for the Steering Group to review progress made against each of the actions under Principles 2 and 3 in the plaice and lemon sole Fishery Improvement Project (FIP) action plan.

Agenda item 1: Annual review for Principle 2

Poseidon recently conducted annual reviews for all Project UK FIPs and RC presented the latest updates for Principle 2 for the plaice and lemon sole FIP.

- Overall, Principle 2 comprises of five conditional pass (SG60-79) performance indicator (PIs) scores and 10 best practice (SG80) PI scores.
- PI 2.1.1 (primary species management) scores SG60-79 due to poor cod stock status in the North Sea and poor *Nephrops* stock status in FU34 Devil Hole.
- The FIP action plan needs to align with the re-certification of the Scottish Fisheries Sustainable Accreditation Group (SFSAG) demersal stocks fishery, which covers the same fishing area and gear type.
 - This applies specifically to the endangered, protected and threatened (ETP) species and habitats PIs.
- It is important the Steering Group finalises the alternative measures report and shares with fishery managers as soon as is feasible.

Discussion

RC said porpoise interactions had been highlighted in the SFSAG re-certification announcement comment draft report (ACDR) but expected the additional information gained from the assessors site visit would demonstrate the lack of interaction in the fishery. RC said this re-certification would take into account priority marine features (PMFs) for the first time in an MSC assessment, and it would be important to see how these are scored during the assessment.

KC noted that PMFs were likely to have greater interaction with fishing gear in the West of Scotland and thought the likelihood of interaction with PMFs in the unit of assessment (UoA) for this FIP to be low. RC said the next step is to review the findings of the SFSAG public comment draft report (PCDR) once it is published in August 2021. In terms of primary species scores, *Nephrops* management is being addressed through the Round 2 FIP, and North Sea cod has recovery measures in place and is a priority for the UK government.

Agenda Item 2: Alternative measures paper

BL, WD, CM and KC drafted a review of alternative measures to reduce catches of unwanted or undersized fish. RC had reviewed the report and provided recommendations for next steps, which BL presented to the Steering Group.

Main updates:

- Mixed fisheries assessment information has been incorporated into the report. As lemon sole has a joint total allowable catch (TAC) with witch its management differs from many other quota species as it is not managed as a single species.
- Osprey's ETP research with Wageningen University has been incorporated into the report.
- The Scientific, Technical and Economic Committee for Fisheries (STECF) landings database of mesh size and catch profiles has been incorporated into the report.
- Minimum conservation reference sizes (MCRS) added to the report for plaice and lemon sole.
- BL still needs to clean the formatting in the report and then share with the Secretariat.

Discussion

KC felt the MCRS sizes for lemon sole were misleading as the report both mentions there is no MCRS for lemon sole, but also stipulates an MCRS of 20cm. RS and LH both clarified that there was no MCRS in the North Sea, and RS added that there is one in for the south coast of 25cm but it is not enforced.

BL and CM agreed to finalise the report and share with the Steering Group and Defra for their review. RC thanked BL drafting a comprehensive review of current measures, and reminded the Steering Group that given lemon sole is a small component of the catch there is only so far any measures can go before they negatively impact the fleet. This is intended to be a working document and will need regular review to include any additional alternative measures that are being developed.

Actions from item 2:

1. BL to finish alternative measures report and share with the Steering Group.
2. Steering Group to review alternative measures report.
3. Secretariat to share alternative measures report with Defra once signed off from the Steering Group.

Agenda Item 3: Endangered, threatened and protected species

This action was initiated by Emily Gibbs, formerly of WWF-UK, who formulated an ETP list for the Steering Group. Since her departure, WD and KC consulted with industry to scope out species unlikely to be interacting with the fishery in the UoA of this FIP. The latest ETP list includes Scottish Fishermen's Federation (SFF) observer data and PMFs. Overall, there are 49 entries in the ETP list, with 22 likely to be interacting within the UoA of this FIP.

MS informed the Steering Group that the Round 2 FIPs had drafted an ETP interaction log to record, analyse and monitor ETP interactions and outcomes, and were in developing a wheelhouse guide to aid crew with identifying ETP species. This wheelhouse guide will be a useful tool for the plaice and lemon sole fishery to use as well.

Discussion:

BL said he had spoken with Jess Sparks, of Seafish, who previously drafted the skate and ray wheelhouse guide being used by the SFSAG vessels. BL said Jess Sparks still had some of the original files and that Seafish should contribute to the updated wheelhouse guide.

RC said it was good that the Osprey starry ray report had been referenced in the Alternative Measures report, and could be used as guidance if starry ray is identified as an ETP species in the SFSAG PCDR. KC said that under the Landing Obligation starry ray can be discarded as it has high survivability and that the SFF observer data showed low interactions with the species.

KC and BL suggested the Seafish Kingfisher project should be incorporated into the FIP action plan as it will show all UK management measures including PMFs and MPAs, which will be useful for skippers fishing in UK waters. JP informed the Steering Group that the project lead, Eleanor Michie, is already working with the Project UK Round 2 Steering Groups.

Actions from item 3:

1. BL to:
 - a. invite Jess Sparks to participate in the ETP wheelhouse sub-group.
 - b. obtain original imagery used in the skates and ray guide commissioned for SFSAG for use in the Round 2 wheelhouse guide.

Agenda Item 4: Habitats

In 2018 the Steering Group commissioned Cefas to review the impact of the vessels on commonly encountered habitats and vulnerable marine ecosystems (VMEs) in the UoA. The final report was provided in January 2019, but did not confirm whether any additional habitat management strategy was necessary. It was also evident that the VME habitats reported to be over 20% overlap did not correspond to those identified in other MSC assessments, such as the recent Joint Demersal Fisheries in the North Sea. Based on the uncertainty surrounding the original report, Dr Gudrun Gaudian, Principle 2 MSC assessor was commissioned to provide clarity on the issues arising, such as the use of VME terminology, from the Cefas report and advise on the need for a habitat strategy.

This year's annual review scored habitat outcome and habitat management PIs (2.4.1 and 2.4.2) as a conditional pass (SG60-79), and habitat information (2.4.3) increased score to best practice (SG80). The SFSAG PCDR might support a change to the habitat scores for this FIP and will indicate whether further habitat management measures are needed.

KC said marine conservation zone (MCZ) and management proposals were being discussed in relation to Scottish waters and he would feed back to the Steering Group when possible. He said questions during the MCZ discussion with Marine Scotland were to ascertain whether the process would be delayed, or influenced, by the closure to the Dogger Bank. Industry was assured that would not be the case, unlike the English MPA process that had been impacted by the Dogger Bank closure.

Action from item 4:

1. KC to update the Steering Group on Scottish MCZ management measures discussions and timeline when possible.

Agenda item 5: Annual review for Principle 3

Poseidon recently conducted annual reviews for all Project UK FIPs and RC presented the latest updates for Principle 3 for the plaice and lemon sole FIP.

- In April 2021 the Project UK monkfish Steering Group commission an external review of UK fisheries management to address PI3.2.4. This fed a Principle 3 review for all Project UK FIPs.
- The impacts of Brexit on UK fisheries legislation has reduced the scoring for three Principle 3 PIs from SG80 to SG60-79.
- PI 3.2.4 increased from SG60-79 to SG80 as UK Fisheries Act includes review provisions for fisheries management plans and the Trade and Cooperation Agreement has provisions to be re-evaluated after 5.5 years.
- RC expected the scores improve again in the next year once the current management uncertainties had been addressed.
- Key action for the Steering Group is to complete the draft Fishery Management Plan and consider how it sits within the wider UK fisheries management for lemon sole.

Discussion:

JP reminded the Steering Group that the Principle 3 scores RC presented reflected a fixed point in time (April 2021) and that some legislation has already been clarified since then; for example the Select Fisheries Committees have been formed and planned their first meeting in early July. RC reiterated that some of the Brexit processes were not permanent, for example the Trade and Cooperation Agreement (TCA) was only valid for five and a half years and the quota allocation between Devolved Administrations only agreed for 2021.

Agenda item 6: Fishery Management Plan update

The lemon sole Fishery Management Plan has been led by CM, BL, KC and William Davies and supports the Steering Group in tracking progress and documenting current management measures in the fishery.

Chapter 1: introduces the fishery and the target species, and still needs text on the economics of the fishery to complete section 1.2.4. CM offered to follow up with William Davies and Seafish for more information.

Chapter 2: focuses on the objectives and policy linkages the fishery must adhere to and needs updating to reflect how the UK lemon sole fishery operates post-Brexit. MS agreed to support CM in facilitating Defra's contribution to text in this section.

Chapter 3: is the fishery management structure the fishery adheres to. RC recommended waiting to see how the SFSAG PCDR considers the management structure and legal framework for the mixed fishery in the North Sea. Defra input on this chapter will be useful as they are responsible for the management of the North Sea fisheries. Some of the Project UK FMPs have already had Defra input into the text for section 3 and MS offered to share these examples with CM.

Chapter 4: is where the harvest strategy and control rules should be clearly defined. Some text has been added from BL and KC's hotspot and draft harvest strategy work. This section will need to be reviewed after the harvest strategy workshop the Steering Group has requested.

Chapter 5: documents some of the environmental impact research the Steering Group has commissioned, as well as current and proposed management strategies. The ETP list has already been added and the alternative measures report needs to be summarised and inserted once it is complete. Once the SFSAG PCDR is published, CM agreed to transfer relevant habitat text to section 5 of the FMP. The Seafish Kingfisher project mapping all UK fishing restrictions is due for completion in October and a link to the project and its main outputs will be added to the FMP.

Chapter 6: documents the stock assessment process and new information can be added once the latest ICES report is formally published in June. RC flagged that Giuseppe Scarcella's Principle 1 report can be summarised and inserted into this section.

Chapter 7: sets out what the fishery does in terms of compliance and monitoring. Useful information has already been included but this will need to be revisited to reflect the new processes post-Brexit. MS flagged there was useful MMO text in the monkfish FMP which he would share with CM.

Chapter 8: resources required to implement the Fishery Management Plan are difficult to determine until a client group comes forward. CM hoped that there might be some Defra support with implementing FMPs, which RC said would be worth asking them, as this FMP could be used as a good working example by them.

CM said the FMP was not in a stage to be shared externally but welcomed a discussion with MS to agree next steps.

Actions from item 6:

1. CM to:
 - a. Follow up with William Davies and Seafish for information on the economics of the fishery needed in section 1.2.4.
 - b. Review SFSAG PCDR and added relevant text to the, primarily around chapter 3 (management) and chapter 5 (ecosystem strategies).
 - c. Summarise and insert alternative measures report into the FMP.
2. BL to summarise Giuseppe Scarcella's report and the latest ICES advice, and add both into chapter 6.
3. Secretariat to:
 - a. Arrange an FMP harmonisation call with CM.
 - b. Share FMPs from other Project UK FIPs with CM
 - c. Contact Defra for support with Chapter 2 and 3.

Any Other Business

RC reiterated that the focus of the Steering Group needs to be on the harvest strategy and HCRs as both are within the control of the Steering Group to progress

The next meeting as likely to be in October and the draft minutes will be circulated in a few weeks' time.

Meeting Closes

16.00hr

Actions Arising	Responsibility
<p><u>Alternative measures paper</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BL to finish alternative measures report and share with the Steering Group. • Steering Group to review alternative measures report. • Secretariat to share alternative measures report with Defra once signed off from the Steering Group. 	<p>BL</p> <p>Steering Group Secretariat</p>
<p><u>Endangered, threatened and protected species</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BL to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ invite Jess Sparks to participate in the ETP wheelhouse sub-group. ○ obtain original imagery used in the skates and ray guide commissioned for SFSAG for use in the Round 2 wheelhouse guide. 	<p>BL</p>
<p><u>Habitats</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • KC to update the Steering Group on Scottish MCZ management measures discussions and timeline when possible. 	<p>KC</p>
<p><u>Fishery Management Plan</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CM to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Follow up with William Davies and Seafish for information on the economics of the fishery needed in section 1.2.4. ○ Review SFSAG PCDR and added relevant text to the, primarily around chapter 3 (management) and chapter 5 (ecosystem strategies). ○ Summarise and insert alternative measures report into the FMP. • BL to summarise Giuseppe Scarcella's report and the latest ICES advice, and add both into chapter 6. • Secretariat to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Arrange an FMP harmonisation call with CM. ○ Share FMPs from other Project UK FIPs with CM ○ Contact Defra for support with Chapter 2 and 3. 	<p>CM</p> <p>BL</p> <p>Secretariat</p>