

Minutes: *Nephrops* Steering Group, Principle 2

Meeting Date: 23rd February 2022

Location: Teams

Attendees	Organisation
AB Andrew Brown	Macduff Shellfish
AC: Annika Clements	Ulster Wildlife Trust
BC: Ben Collier	Northern Ireland gear trials
BL: Bill Lart	SeaFish
CD: Calum Duncan	Scottish Environment Link
CM: Cameron Moffat	Young's Seafood
CLM: Claire Moore	Hilton Seafood
CP: Claire Pescod	Macduff Shellfish
DD: David Donnan	NatureScot
DW: Dan Whittle	Whitby Seafood
EB: Ella Brock	Seafish
EW: Elaine Whyte	Communities Inshore Fisheries Alliance (CIFA)
FN: Fiona Nimmo	Poseidon
GB: Giles Barlett	Whitby Seafood
JGH: Jan Geert Hiddink	Bangor University
JP: Jo Pollett	Marine Stewardship Council (MSC)
MS: Matthew Spencer	Marine Stewardship Council (MSC)
RH: Rachel Hanbury	Hilton Food group
RG: Roy Griffin	Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs
SM: Simon Macdonald	West Coast Regional Inshore Fisheries Group
TF: Teresa Fernandez	Hilton Food group
TH: Tom Hollick	Tesco
TW: Timothy Whitton	Bangor University
Apologies	
Kenny Coull	Scottish White Fish Producers Association
Barry Harland	Whitby Seafoods
Adam Holland	SeaSource

Purpose of the meeting

The meeting will focus on actions in relation to Principle 2 of the MSC Standard. This is the last meeting in Year 3 of the FIP before the Annual review in April 2022. There is an opportunity of making score changes in some of the actions highlighted today before the review takes place.

Agenda Item 1: Reminder of intended Year 3 score changes

Nine score changes are expected in the next annual review across the three principles, though a delay in progress is anticipated due to the impacts of the pandemic and Brexit. The performance indicators (PIs) expected to move from SG<60 to SG60-79 are: harvest strategy (PI 1.2.1), primary species outcome (PI 2.1.1) (specific to FU 11-15), primary species management (PI 2.1.2) (specific to FU 11, 12, 13), endangered, threatened and protected species outcome (PI 2.3.1) and habitats outcome (PI 2.4.1).

Expected score changes from SG60-79 to SG>80 are: stock status (PI 1.1.1) (specific to FU 6, 34), harvest control rules (PI 1.2.2), information and monitoring (PI 1.2.3) (specific to FU 5,10, 34), and compliance and enforcement (PI 3.2.3).

Agenda Item 2: Review of SFSAG draft Principle 2 scores

The Scottish Fisheries Sustainable Accreditation Group (SFSAG) Public Comment Draft Report (PCDR) for the reassessment of the Northern Demersal Stocks Fishery was published in January. The fishery uses TR1 and TR2 gear in the North Sea and West of Scotland and the *Nephrops* FIP scores could be harmonised with the SFSAG assessment.

FN provided a high-level overview of the SFSAG PCDR. All principles scored an average of ≥ 80 , meaning it would pass the assessment to be certified as sustainable with some conditions over the five-year certificate. The SFSAG PCDR scores were compared with the *Nephrops* pre-assessment scores for trawl gear to give an indication of how the *Nephrops* fishery may score against Principle 2 performance indicators. This presentation is available on request from the Secretariat.

Discussion

Once the PCDR has been through stakeholder consultation the final report will be published. This will be an opportunity to harmonise the actions in the FIP action plan with the conditions for the certified fishery. FN noted that there are reasons why the actions may be more extensive in the FIP, including the use of functional units to manage the *Nephrops* stocks and the inclusion of the Irish Sea area in the *Nephrops* FIP. Differences between the target fisheries in terms of data collection and scope would need to be considered, particularly if *Nephrops* is harmonised with SFSAG at the full assessment. FN suggested a harmonisation meeting before and after the annual review, subject to the availability of the SFSAG assessment team.

RH asked FN to elaborate on the issues associated with using Vessel Monitoring System (VMS) data for PI 2.4.2 (Management). FN explained that as inshore-VMS (iVMS) is not yet used on under 12m vessels, the full extent of the fleet footprint is unknown. The second issue is the access to VMS data for confirming vessel compliance to marine protected area (MPA) management measures, such as distinguishing between transiting and fishing.

Agenda Item 3: Primary and Secondary Species

Creel

BL updated the alternative measures report to include observations of creel bycatch and ghost gear in several Scottish lochs and the Western Isles, including a summary of interviews with fishermen on large animal entanglement. A high-level summary of the invertebrate, fish, mammal and crustacea bycatch has been added to report, as well as bycatch mitigation techniques. The cause, effect and mitigation of ghost fishing has been updated, with minimal impact reported. The Scottish Entanglement Alliance has produced a comprehensive report on mitigation measures, which BL will add to the alternative measures report before circulating to the wider Steering Group for feedback

Discussion

DW confirmed that the fishing methods included in the FIP action plan include both mobile (trawl) and static (creel) gear. CD requested more information on the response of sea pens to creel fishing activity, which DD explained was already included in the alternative measures report. CD asked how

the MSC assessment recognises the various fishing gears and FN clarified that there is a separate assessment for creel and trawl, hence separate scores in the BMT.

EW noted that the creel bycatch information is from studies in 1990s and 2007, aside from the entanglement data which was published more recently. EW said some fishing groups were reluctant to report entanglements, and so the representation of fishing activity in the Scottish Entanglement Alliance report may not be entirely accurate. DD noted that this concern has been acknowledged in the report.

West of Scotland whiting and cod: discussion

DW raised the reoccurring action to review the stock status of cod and whiting for ICES Area 4, 6a and 7. The West of Scotland (WoS) whiting stock assessment found the stock exceeds the level of recruitment impairment and is fished below MSY, hence scoring >60. FN added that the WoS cod status was covered in last Steering Group meeting when the stock status was reviewed. The WoS cod advice was published, and now scores SG60 -79 (stock is below the level of recruitment impairment, though the management approach in the 'cod box' is acknowledged in the scoring). Under the MSC Standard, cod is a 'main primary' species for the Clyde and Jura functional unit, and a 'minor primary' species for functional units 11 and 12, based on the percentage of cod present in the catch.

FN suggested having a separate BMT for each functional unit to as Cefas provides catch profiles and proportions at a functional unit level. CD and CP supported the separation of BMTs, and CP added that it enables issues to be more specifically addressed in each area. FN clarified that despite cod being a 'main' species within certain functional units, it is still managed at a stock level (WoS) as opposed to at a functional unit level.

Irish Sea whiting: discussion

There is a Steering Group action to monitor the stock status of Irish Sea whiting. In February, BC will conduct a gear trial with a set of *Nephrops* trawls with the front cover removed, as a repeat of a trial that took place in 2020. If the trial successfully replicates the 2020 results, then it could be considered as an approved selectivity device for the *Nephrops* fishery. BC will update the Steering Group with the results at the next Project UK meeting.

DW reminded the Steering Group of the action to implement alternative measures where they are seen to be more appropriate than current measures, and this will need to be revised regularly in light of the gear trials currently underway.

Actions from Item 3:

1. BL to send the alternative measures report on creel with the Secretariat to share with the Steering Group for feedback.
2. BC to provide a Northern Ireland gear trial summary, with analysis from AFBI, to the Secretariat to share with the Steering Group by the end of March for the annual review.
3. BC to update the group on progress with the gear trials underway in February
4. FN to consider using separate BMTs for each functional unit as part of this year's annual review

Agenda Item 4: Primary and Secondary Species

Trawl

BL has compiled a table of management measures for primary and secondary species that interact with the *Nephrops* fishery, based on the list of species provided by Poseidon. This demonstrates that there is partial management strategy in place. FN will cross reference BL's table with the PSA during the annual review, which should complete the action. BL presented a summary of the table, which is available upon request from the Secretariat. A brief summary of the assessment and management information for primary and secondary species, by region, is as follows:

North Sea

A full assessment is available for cod, haddock and whiting (primary species), and for plaice and saithe (secondary species). A data limited assessment is available for anglerfish, lemon sole and cuckoo ray (secondary species).

West of Scotland

A full assessment is available for cod, haddock and whiting (primary species), and for megrim (secondary species). A data limited assessment is available for anglerfish and thornback ray (secondary species).

Irish Sea

A full assessment is available for haddock, hake and whiting (primary species). A data limited assessment is available for cod (primary species). A full assessment is available for plaice (secondary species), and a data limited assessment is available for thornback ray, spotted ray and lesser spotted dogfish (secondary species).

Actions from Item 4:

1. BL to share the review of primary and secondary species management with FN and JP.

Agenda Item 5: Endangered, Threatened and Protected (ETP) Species

A sub-group was set up to develop a wheelhouse guide that supports ETP reporting requirements. The guide being developed for this FIP is an update of the one developed by the Sustainable Fisheries Accreditation Group (SFSAG), and the sub-group has requested additional guidance from the Shark Trust. The wheelhouse guide will include more than elasmobranchs as it is based on the list of ETP species and Priority Marine Features previously agreed by the Steering Group. MS requested Steering Group members provide any high quality and detailed imagery of the ETP species on the list. MS shared a draft of a page of the guide, with two species per page, and a QR code that could link to further information.

Discussion

BL has started working on the ETP section of the alternative measures report, and would appreciate feedback from the Steering Group on measures that could be included. This could be a topic to discuss with the environmental sub-group.

PI 2.3.1 ETP Species Outcome

FN clarified that understanding whether any additional ETP management is required would support progress towards meeting the SG80 level of the MSC Standard. The creation of the flapper skate MPA, and roll out of the Clean Catch app will contribute to improving this score. FN requested the Steering Group members send any additional information on ETP species management ahead of the annual

review at the end of March. JP confirmed volunteers to trial the Clean Catch app are welcome, and CP confirmed that she has a MacDuff skipper already engaging in the app development process. Feedback on the Clean Catch trial will be provided by end of March.

Actions from Item 5:

1. MS to arrange a wheelhouse sub-group meeting to finish the guide by April 2022, and to contact Steering Group members with the outstanding images and content needed.
2. BL to review list of ETP species to determine if there are any alternative measures that have been missed in relation to ETP.
3. The Secretariat to set up a call with BL and the environmental sub-group to discuss the ETP section of the alternative measures report.
4. All Steering Group members to submit any supporting information to FN for ETP species outcomes, that will contribute to the annual review scoring.
5. JP to follow up with Mike Kaiser on use of artificial intelligence on vessels to monitor catch composition.
6. CP to share feedback with the Steering Group from the skippers trialling the Clean Catch app.

Agenda Item 6: Habitats

JP introduced Tim Whitton, the new Post Doc researcher at Bangor University, who is undertaking a nine month project '*Determining habitat impact in Nephrops fisheries*', with Jan Hiddink supervising. The aim is to estimate the relative benthic status (RBS) and recovery of benthic communities across the UK. Data required to achieve this includes calculating fishing intensity of trawl and creel gear; depletion of fauna per trawl, and fauna recovery rate. Habitat data, VMEs and PMFs will also be mapped. TW welcomed suggestions of data resources that could support the project.

Discussion

JP noted that new version of the MSC Standard due to be launched in September/October 2022 will include a habitat impact tool for use in as part of the Risk Based Framework. DW reflected on TW's project in relation to which actions it addresses in the action plan, such as Action 9c (*Review VMEs based on knowledge of the historical extent and distribution*) and 9d (*Review status of management measures development and implementation within UK MPA network*). FN felt that 9d has had substantial progress already and will be captured in the annual review. DW anticipated potential legal challenges in meeting Action 9f (*Introduction of inshore-VMS (iVMS), or equivalent, on all vessels <12m in length*).

JGH asked to what extent information supporting Action 9c currently the exists, to which FN suggested connecting with Mairi Fenton, who also requires the information for her scallop research. BL added that MF is also modelling information on VME distribution.

RH offered to address any questions on iVMS and its functionality, as she worked on it while at Defra. CP requested an update from Defra at the next Steering Group meeting on progress with the iVMS rollout in English waters. RH suggested contacting Marine Scotland for their roll out timeline as well.

Actions from Item 6:

1. JGH to connect with Mairi Fenton on data to support Action 9c (*Review VMEs based on knowledge of the historical extent and distribution*)

2. RH to coordinate an update from Defra at the next Steering Group meeting on iVMS rollout in English waters.

Agenda Item 7: Ecosystem

FN requested any further feedback from the Steering Group on the Scale Intensity Consequence Analysis (SICA). CD reflected on two aspects relevant to the *Nephrops* ecosystem SICA exercise that he felt were underrepresented; the degree to which shifting baselines may be guiding management decisions, and the overlap of native oyster restoration projects with historical fishing grounds. CD was concerned about the impact of historical scallop fishing on Priority Marine Features (PMF) comprised of burrowing fauna, the tall seapen (*Funiculina quadrangularis*) and fireworks anemone (*Pachycerianthus multiplicatus*). CM suggested proceeding with caution unless a more robust analysis of trawling impacts in areas included in the historic range of PMFs is available, including whether there is evidence that the seafloor can recover to a natural state. FN noted that the SICA report can be updated to include further Steering Group reflections.

Actions from Item 7:

1. Secretariat to arrange a meeting with FN and CD for his SICA feedback.

Any Other Business

- DW asked the Steering Group for their thoughts on meeting in person for the next Steering Group session and the group agreed to add this to the Doodlepoll for the next meeting.
- CP asked about the impact of the Fisheries Standard Review (FSR) on the Project UK FIPs. She suggested a webinar for all Project UK stakeholders to attend. JP offered to circulate more information and the FSR consultation currently underway, and agreed that a webinar would be useful once the new version has been finalised. The Fishery Standard v.3 is expected to be public in September/October, with a six month grace period for new fisheries entering the programme to decide whether they would like to be assessed on v.2 or v.3, after which v.3 becomes compulsory.
- GB asked if Project UK is submitting a response to JFS, to ensure alignment with the Devolved Administrations so that we stay relevant and engaged. JP intends to submit high level response to the consultation based on the content of the Project UK action plans.
- GB suggested that secondary to the vessel list required by the new Social Policy, information on gear and rigs could also be gathered, which BL seconded in the context of calculating habitat impacts. JGH noted that it is already possible to distinguish between gear types on the seabed, though it needs to be linked to effort data. DW suggested it could also support alternative measures, if a selected device is impacting ETP, primary or secondary species.

Actions from AOB:

1. JP to:
 - a. provide the option for an in person Steering Group meeting in the next Doodlepoll.
 - b. circulate a link to Fisheries Standard Review, and consider hosting a seminar for all Project UK FIPs once the revised Standard has been finalised.

- c. circulate JFS response to the Steering Group once submitted.

Meeting Closes

12:00

Actions Arising		Responsibility
1	BL to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) send the alternative measures report on creel with the Secretariat to share with the Steering Group for feedback. b) share the review of primary and secondary species management with FN and JP. c) review list of ETP species to determine if there are any alternative measures that have been missed in relation to ETP. 	Bill Lart
2	BC to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) provide a Northern Ireland gear trial summary, with analysis from AFBI, to the Secretariat to share with the Steering Group by the end of March for the annual review. b) update the group on progress with the gear trials underway in February 	Ben Collier
4	FN to consider using separate BMTs for each functional unit as part of this year's annual review	Fiona Nimmo
5	All Steering Group members to submit any supporting information to FN for ETP species outcomes, that will contribute to the annual review scoring.	All Steering Group members
6	JP to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) follow up with Mike Kaiser on use of artificial intelligence on vessels to monitor catch composition. b) provide the option for an in person Steering Group meeting in the next Doodlepoll. c) circulate a link to Fisheries Standard Review, and consider hosting a seminar for all Project UK FIPs once the revised Standard has been finalised. d) circulate JFS response to the Steering Group once submitted. 	
7	CP to share feedback with the Steering Group from the skippers trialling the Clean Catch app.	Claire Pescod
8	JGH to connect with Mairi Fenton on data to support Action 9c (<i>Review VMEs based on knowledge of the historical extent and distribution</i>)	Jan Geert Hiddink
9	RH to coordinate an update from Defra at the next Steering Group meeting on iVMS rollout in English waters.	Rachel Hanbury

10	Secretariat to: a) arrange a wheelhouse sub-group meeting to finish the guide by April 2022, and to contact Steering Group members with the outstanding images and content needed. b) set up a call with BL and the environmental sub-group to discuss the ETP section of the alternative measures report. c) arrange a meeting with FN and CD to discuss his SICA feedback.	Secretariat
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