

## Minutes: *Nephrops* Steering Group, Principles 1 & 3

Meeting Date: 24th February 2022

Location: Online

Attendees	Organisation
AH: Adam Holland	Northern Ireland Fishermen's Federation
AC: Annika Clements	Ulster Wildlife Trust
BC: Ben Collier	Northern Ireland gear trials
CD: Calum Duncan	Scottish Environment Link
CM: Cameron Moffat	Young's Seafood
CMe: Carlos Mesquita	Marine Scotland
CP: Claire Pescod	Macduff Shellfish
DW: Daniel Whittle	Whitby Seafood
EW: Elaine Whyte	Communities Inshore Fisheries Alliance
EB: Ella Brock	Seafish
EB: Ewen Bell	Cefas
FN: Fiona Nimmo	Poseidon
GB: Giles Bartlett	Whitby Seafood
JP: Jo Pollett	Marine Stewardship Council (MSC)
KC: Kenny Coull	Scottish White Fish Producers Association
MS: Matthew Spencer	Marine Stewardship Council (MSC)
EMS: Eva Middleton-Smith	Aldi
MP: Mike Park	Scottish White Fish Producers Association
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 Seafood UK
TH: Thomas Hollick	Tesco

### Purpose of the meeting

The meeting will focus on actions in relation to Principles 1 and 3 of the MSC Fisheries Standard. This is the last Steering Group meeting in Year 3 before the annual review in April 2022. Steering Group members were asked to consider where progress can be made ahead of the annual review to ensure the intended score changes are met.

### 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) intended to move from SG<60 to SG60-79 are: harvest strategy (PI 1.2.1), primary species outcome (PI 2.1.1) (specific to functional units – 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: Stock status**

FN updated the Steering Group on ICES advice for each functional unit (FU), published in October 2021. There are updated assessments for FU 5 or 34. Fishing mortality has reduced across functional units, and FN welcomed insight into the reason for this. FN presented the landings outside functional units, which represent 3% of total landings except in the Irish Sea.

### *Discussion*

GB suggested that fishing mortality dropped in 2021 because the pandemic caused a reduction in processing capacity, and lower prices, leading to reduced fishing activity.

DW and FN discussed the value and consequence of using  $B_{trigger}$  and  $B_{lim}$ . DW suggested using  $B_{trigger}$  until more data is available, which FN supported. DW explored the possibility of gathering data such as catch volumes in order to add FU 22 (Celtic Sea, the Smalls) to the FIP. JP reminded the group that it is a Steering Group decision on whether to expand the scope of the FIP. DW suggested contacting Irish stakeholders Bord Iascaigh Mhara (BIM) and Mike Fitzpatrick on their *Nephrops* FIP's engagement with FU 22. If needed, the Secretariat can contact the new Bangor post-doc student about adjusting the range of his research to include FU22, and FN can include it in the annual review.

DW asked whether the distance of fishing activity from a functional unit boundary is relevant, and the group discussed the upcoming ICES project looking at the location of catches coming from outside functional units. DW asked whether the risk-based framework could be applied in instances of limited data sets.

### *SFSAG Landing Obligations*

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 explained how the PCDR considers the Landing Obligation (LO). As risks of non-compliance exist in the fishery and in lieu of demonstrable LO management measures, PI 3.2.3 (Compliance and enforcement) scored 65 and had a harmonised condition set for EU demersal fisheries in the North Sea. The presentation is available from the Secretariat on request. FN informed the group that there will be a full review of the Principle 2 scores for the FIP at the annual review at the end of March.

### *Discussion*

MP shared his understanding of remote electronic monitoring (REM) roll-out in the offshore whitefish sector under the forthcoming FMP. Cameras will be affixed to a proportion of vessels known as a reference fleet, giving adequate coverage on the catch rates expected. A risk-based management approach should enable accountable recording of fishing activity, under the new FMP.

DW asked if future management could see a change from the LO and how bycatch is managed. MP thought perhaps a partial rollback to legislation that existed prior to the Common Fisheries Policy, whereby accountability will be at source, and quota is not applied. Bycatch would be reported either on deck or on shore.

### ***Actions from Item 2:***

1. Secretariat to:
  - a. Gather information to help inform whether the FIP should extend to, or align with, FU22, including by contacting the Bangor post-doc student about extending the research to cover it, and speaking with BIM and Mike Fitzpatrick about the Irish Sea coverage of that functional unit.
2. FN to:
  - a. look at MMO landing statistics to understand where the landings outside of functional units are coming from.
  - b. ask Paul Medley if RBF could be used to assess the area outside of functional units.

### **Agenda Item 3: Harvest strategy and Harvest Control Rules**

JP provided an update on the regional management group (RMG) discussions that the Secretariat has coordinated and that have taken place since the last Steering Group meetings. The MSC Standard requires stock specific management in place if the fishery falls below agreed reference points. The Steering Group previously agreed that total allowable catch (TAC) and effort management are not appropriate for this fishery, so technical measures have been explored.

The objectives of the RMGs are to maintain security of the stock and ensure economic sustainability of the fishery. The RMG actions include agreeing on functional unit specific remedial measures and reference points, and clear next steps have been outlined. JP invited further reflections from industry and invited the Steering Group to volunteer to chair the North Sea RMG.

#### *Discussion*

The RMGs had discussed the feasibility of technical measures. FN said that any system put in place would need to show it would be reviewed, and that management measures are appropriate for the fishery and based on reference points and limits. CP noted that the technical measures are adaptive and provide a contingency plan. FN noted the RMGs are also good for engaging with experts and further informing industry, and that it is worth continuing the newly formed RMGs.

GB suggested an additional workshop in Northern Ireland to promote engagement with retailers. JP added it would be opportunity for Producer Organisations to update on sustainability initiatives in their fisheries, and that planning is already underway to set this up.

#### *Fisheries Management and Conservation Group (FMAC)*

DW spoke to John Anderson (Scottish Fishermen's Organisation) to clarify their position on functional unit management, and he asked whether the Fisheries Management and Conservation Group (FMAC) would convene if a fishing ground was heading towards  $B_{\text{trigger}}$  with the intention to apply technical measures that would resolve it. DW asked if the Steering Group knew if this was the case. CP felt this had been discussed when considering the multi-annual plan (MAP) and noted that in any case, the

MSC Standard requires a written process on technical measures. DW suggested asking FMAC on what the measures are for FN to advise whether this would be sufficient. He also suggested that FMAC might be interested in leading or guiding regional management workshops, although acknowledged there is not an equivalent group in England and Ireland.

MP confirmed FMAC only covers Scottish waters and has an inshore sub-group. MP felt that post-Brexit, it is likely that Marine Scotland would contact FMAC, who would discuss any declining stocks in the relevant sub-group. SM clarified role of Inshore Fishery Management Groups as giving a platform for discussion between fishers and Marine Scotland.

CP noted that roles and responsibilities should be defined in the RMG to clarify opportunities and expectations if FMAC is able to participate in the discussions. MP noted the importance of defining roles of the groups while considering role of fishery managers. SM reiterated the importance of maintaining regional groups to ensure management is appropriate to the area.

### ***Actions from Item 3:***

1. Secretariat to share updates in the planning of the Northern Ireland retailer and Producer Organisation workshops
2. Steering Group members who represent industry to engage with Fisheries Management and Conservation Group their members on Project UK and potential management options
3. Open invite to chair North Sea regional management meetings

### **Agenda Item 4: FMP update**

GB is leading on the draft Fishery Management Plan (FMP) with support from MS and summarised:

- All sections have content and the document is now 85 pages.
- Section 4 (harvest control rules, HCR, and harvest strategy) is lacking sufficient information; this will be updated with the outcomes from the regional management groups.
- Section 6 (stock assessments) has recently had additional input from CMe, EB and Mathieu Lundy on ICES advice and methodologies.
- MP, AH and Andrew Brown have contributed to Section 3 (management structure) and EW, Marine Scotland Science and Daera will be approached for further input.
- Section 5 (ecosystem management strategies) requires further input from eNGOs and statutory bodies.

Following an action from the Irish Sea technical measures workshop, GB presented the Whitby Seafood case study on fishing activity, quota and spatial management for *Nephrops* around Porcupine bank (Area 7). Please contact the Secretariat for access to the presentation.

CP asked whether there was a client group already planning to take the fishery into full assessment. GB believed the Irish FIP group is planning to do so.

### ***Actions from Item 4:***

1. GB to send the Whitby Seafood presentation to the Secretariat.

### **Agenda Item 5: FisheryProgress.org social policy**

The status of the social policy requirements are:

1. *Prior social standards*: Complete. The International Labour Organisation's Work in Fishing Convention (ILO 188) comparison study is completed, and feedback from industry is gathered. The Steering Group can contact the Secretariat for a copy of the gap analysis.
2. *Self-evaluation criteria*: Complete. The criteria for needing a risk assessment was met as more than 25% of crew are foreign. Next steps are for the Secretariat to identify a consultant to review the FIP's social dimension in more detail and produce a workplan. Suggested consultants welcomed.
3. *Sign-off of the Code of Conduct*: Pending completion, due on the first FIP update after **May 2022**.
4. *Vessel lists*: Pending completion, due on the first FIP update after **May 2022**.
5. *Grievance mechanism*: Pending completion, due on the first FIP update after **May 2022**. This policy does not require the FIP itself to have its own grievance mechanism. Rather, this policy requires the fishery to demonstrate the existence of one or more grievance mechanisms that cover all fishers in the FIP.

MS is contacting FisheryProgress regarding requests to anonymise vessel lists, which are required by May 2022. Please contact the Secretariat for the full presentation and detail on the social policy requirements.

#### *Discussion*

DW asked whether the publicly available list of quota owners associated to a vessel be provided that have a fixed quota allocation (FQA) for *Nephrops* in UK. GB asked whether the vessel list should include the gear used.

JP clarified that only the vessels participating in the FIP are required; the skipper's name does not need to be included; and that grievance mechanisms specified within vessel or skipper contracts, such as the ILO 188 will suffice for FisheryProgress.

CP noted a vessel list is a standard requirement for MSC certification and all vessels are defined in the Unit of Certification. CD asked whether the success of this FIP is dependent on sufficient industry representatives wishing to be a part of the MSC certificate. DW said that industry is waiting to see the final management measures before committing to an MSC full assessment to become certified.

KC confirmed SFSAG has a vessel list and plans to provide the list of vessels relevant to each FIP, and that SFSAG is supportive of the fishery moving into full assessment to be certified.

#### ***Actions from Item 5:***

1. Secretariat to find out from FisheryProgress the process for adding vessels later in the FIP.
2. Steering Group to read the Code of Conduct and give preference on whether the Secretariat can sign the Steering Group's behalf.
3. Industry members to confirm vessel lists with the Secretariat before May 2022.

## **Agenda Item 6: Information & Assessment**

### *Scotland*

CM is preparing catch data to present to assessment working groups (April 2022) for North Sea and West of Scotland stocks, ready for the release of ICES advice in October. The *Nephrops* summer survey is going ahead in early June 2022 in the usual Functional Units.

### England

EB said that the Cefas survey plans are proceeding for Farne Deeps (FU6) and noted that despite Botney Gut – Silver Pit (FU5) being within UK waters, Cefas are not requested to survey it, so a data limited approach is being adopted. Surveys will be undertaken to gather stock assessment data for Farn Deeps (FU6) and Irish Sea East (FU14). Issues are expected for sampling Irish Sea East (FU14) as it is a sporadically timed fishery so difficult to sample. EB welcomed any industry suggestions for how Cefas can better define the sampling programme.

Defra has not given Cefas the steer to work on harvest ratio reference points, though JP and DW have submitted a request to Defra to initiate the work. EB will continue providing input on the FIP management options sheet, though due to a busy schedule this may take several months.

### Discussion

KC asked whether the survey vessel be fixed by summer 2022. CM expects it to function by then though there are no contingency plans if it is not yet fixed. FN said that Noup (FU10) and Devil's Hole (FU34) were surveyed in 2019 and asked if these function units would be surveyed in 2022. CME confirmed they are, and said that Devil's Hole (FU34) was surveyed in 2021. If time limited, Noup (FU10) is most likely to be dropped.

DW reflected that it unusual to not sample Botney Gut – Silver Pit (FU5), which is shared and larger than average. EB explained that the Dutch survey it as they are the main fisher in that Functional Unit, and Cefas have not been allocated the funds to survey it. The alternative is to alternate between Farne Deeps (FU6) and Botney Gut – Silver Pit, though this is unlikely to be popular with fishery managers due to the fragile nature of the stock in Farne Deeps. DW suggested the steering group request increased funding allocation for Farne Deeps and Botney Gut – Silver Pit surveying.

### Actions from Item 6:

1. Secretariat to:
  - a. Check with Mat Lundy on the sampling for Irish Sea functional units e.g. Irish Sea East (FU14) where activity tends to be sporadic.
  - b. Check with Ewen Bell on whether there is any external funding available to support more surveys.

### Any Other Business

None.

### Meeting Closes

11:21

	Actions Arising	Responsibility
1	Secretariat to: a. Share updates in the planning of the Northern Ireland retailer and Producer Organisation workshops b. gather information to help inform whether the FIP should extend to, or align with, FU22, including by contacting the Bangor post-doc student about extending the research to cover it, and	Secretariat

	<p>speaking with BIM and Mike Fitzpatrick about the Irish Sea coverage of that functional unit.</p> <p>c. find out from FisheryProgress the process for adding vessels later in the FIP.</p> <p>d. check with Mat Lundy on the sampling for Irish Sea functional units e.g. Irish Sea East (FU14) where activity tends to be sporadic.</p> <p>e. check with Ewen Bell on whether there is any external funding available to support more surveys.</p>	
2	<p>FN to:</p> <p>a. look at MMO landing statistics to understand where the landings outside of functional units are coming from.</p> <p>b. ask Paul Medley if RBF could be used to assess the area outside of functional units.</p>	Fiona Nimmo
3	<p>Steering Group:</p> <p>a. Steering Group to read the Code of Conduct and give preference on whether the Secretariat can sign the Steering Group's behalf.</p> <p>b. Industry members to engage with Fisheries Management and Conservation Group their members on Project UK and potential management options</p> <p>c. Industry members to confirm vessel lists with the Secretariat before May 2022.</p> <p>d. Open invite to chair North Sea regional management meetings</p>	Steering Group
4	<p>GB to send the Whitby Seafood presentation to the Secretariat.</p>	Giles Bartlett