

Minutes: Channel scallop Steering Group meeting

Meeting Date: 8th March 2022

Location: Teams

| Attendees | Organisation |
|--------------------------|--|
| AB: Andrew Brown | Macduff Shellfish |
| AL: Andy Lawler | Centre for Environment, Fisheries and Aquaculture Science |
| BS: Bryce Stewart | University of York |
| CB: Coco Bagley | Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs |
| FN: Fiona Nimmo | Poseidon |
| GC: Gus Caslake | Seafish |
| HG: Hubert Gieschen | Marine Management Organisation |
| JGH: Jan Geert Hiddink | Bangor University |
| JH: Juliette Hatchman | South West Fish Producers' Organisation |
| JP: Jo Pollett | Marine Stewardship Council |
| JPo: Jim Portus | South West Fish Producers' Organisation |
| KK: Katie Keay | Marine Stewardship Council |
| LP: Lauren Parkhouse | Devon and Seven Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority |
| MP: Mike Park | Scottish white Fish Producers Organisation |
| MS: Matt Spencer | Marine Stewardship Council |
| NdR: Nathan de Rozarieux | Falfish |
| RC: Robyn Cloake | Labeyrie Fine Foods |
| RW: Rob Whiteley | Natural England |
| Apologies | |
| Chloe North | Western Fish Producers' Organisation |

Purpose of the meeting

This call was an opportunity for the Steering Group to review progress made against each of the actions in the Channel scallop Fishery Improvement Project (FIP) action plan and discuss the timeline of the FIP in relation to a recently agreed extension.

Agenda Item 1: FIP extension

The Steering Group previously agreed that an extension of the FIP timeline was required due to the impact of covid and Brexit on the progress of some of the FIP actions. The FIP is expected to finish in April 2022, and 13 funders are able to contribute to extend the timeline by two years.

JP highlighted the Fishery Standard Review (FSR) currently underway. The new version of the MSC Standard is expected before the end of 2022. New fisheries entering the MSC program can choose whether to use V2.0 or V3.0 for six months after the release of V3.0, at which point they must be assessed against V3.0. The Steering Group discussed the importance of delivering the FIP actions within the next year to allow the fishery to be assessed against the current standard that the FIP has

been working towards. JP said the Secretariat intends to arrange a pan-Project UK webinar to review the impact of V3.0 on the FIPs. Although the FIP has been granted a two-year extension, with an aim of SG80 scores for each performance indicator; if the fishery reaches a position where it could enter MSC assessment prior to the two-year timeline, with a few SG60-79 scores that would attract a condition, then that is a decision to be considered by any potential client groups.

The annual review is due in April this year and Poseidon will review progress of actions for all relevant performance indicators. They will draft a new FIP Action Plan that only includes remaining actions; all closed actions from the initial five years will not be included. This will be uploaded to FisheryProgress.org with the new extension deadline. Additionally, the MSC as Secretariat will write an online statement to be published on the MSC website, to ensure the extension process is transparent and clearly explained, and this can also be used to support any communications with other stakeholders.

The Secretariat will request extensions for the Round 1 FIPs on FisheryProgress.org with updates on the FIP to continue every six months. The request to FisheryProgress.org for extension will be aligned with a statement for the funders and a blog on the MSC website.

Discussion:

JH asked why some of the original Round 1 funders would not be funding the extension. JP explained that some of the businesses no longer source Channel scallops, or have been incorporated into another business that already funds the project, so it came down to business decisions rather than any suggestion of lack of support for the project.

JPo asked how long information that the FIP has gathered remain valid, as in the absence of any client group forthcoming the work the FIP has done to date may need to be stored until such a time that a client group was willing to take it on. JP said the information would always remain available for Steering Group members but cautioned that data does go out of date and will need updating and reviewing before entering MSC assessment. For example, information from the FIP pre-assessment was already five years old and would need updating through the lifetime of the FIP.

RW said he had reviewed the proposed changes to the MSC Standard and still has concerns that the footprint of this fishery had not fully considered, particularly in demonstrating were not negatively impacting Vulnerable Marine Ecosystems (VMEs) and sensitive habitats. RW wanted specific action in the new extension workplan and offered to support drafting the text. FN welcomed RW's input and reassured him that his concerns would be the focus of the FIP's MPA subgroup, which RW said he would support.

Actions from Item 1:

1. Secretariat to:
 - a. Arrange a pan-Project UK workshop on proposed changes to the MSC Standard.
 - b. Continue discussions with the MPA subgroup to progress habitat actions.
2. RW to support the drafting of new habitat and ecosystem actions in the extended FIP action plan.
3. FN to update the action plan against V3.0 of the MSC Standard at the first annual review of the extension (April 2023).

Agenda Item 2: Stock status

Improved understanding of the status of scallop stocks in the English Channel will provide the basis for effective fisheries management. AL presented the latest update from Cefas:

The 2021 stock assessment draft report is awaiting Defra sign off before being uploaded to the government website on 1st April. Cefas assess for stocks in the Channel:

- 27.e.I Cornwall Inshore
- 27.e.L Lyme Bay
- 27.e.O Western Channel Offshore
- 27.d.N English Eastern Channel
 - The southern portion is assessed by French authorities.

AL summarised that no concerns were found in the surveys and that stock status indicators were very similar to last year. He noted that there were increases in harvestable biomass in the Eastern Channel and a reduction in Western Channel Offshore.

AL clarified that harvestable biomass is a proportion of the catch against the stock based on international landings. Most of assessment areas are very close or above to fMSY – estimated at 20% of harvestable biomass being harvested in 12 months. However, this information is always retrospective as the data takes a year or two to come through ICES, which makes it unsuitable for management decisions.

Discussion:

AB asked what the likely impacts for the stock would be, if fMSY is 20% of harvestable biomass removed and industry estimates on actual removal were about 4-5%. AL said it would be hard to tell but reminded AB that harvest rate used to be much higher than present, particularly west of Guernsey. AB asked what the condition of the stock was in French waters, which AL said was in good condition based on their most recent assessment report.

JPo said that political decision can directly affect fishing patterns, and that any reduction of effort in the French Baie de Seine could increase pressure elsewhere. JPo added that EU access to UK waters and vice versa are now set in tonnages, and once 80% of the overall tonnage is reached it triggers a meeting of the Specialised Committee of Fisheries (SCF), who inform next steps. Currently there are no individual species limits for non quota species, but there is expected to be a strategy defined by July 2022.

Action from Item 2:

1. AL to notify the Steering Group when the latest stock assessment report is available.

Agenda Item 3: Harvest strategy and harvest control rules

Action 2 and 3 in the FIP's action plan focus on agreeing a harvest strategy that is responsive to the state of the stock and achieves overall management objectives through the use of well-defined harvest control rules (HCRs). The Scallop Industry Consultation Group (SICG) had discussed the need for a suitable harvest strategy and HCRs with Defra, and JPo and CB updated the Steering Group.

JPo supported the decision to extend the FIP, as the fishery witnessed huge events such as Brexit and Covid which inevitably impacted the progress. The Fisheries Act dictates specific timelines for developing a harvest strategy and HCRs and the SICG has been working to deliver these with government, in the new SICG management subgroup. JPo said this group incorporated UK industry and representatives from each of the Devolved Administrations.

CB added that Defra's responses to the recent calls for evidence on latent capacity and management of <15m fleet had collated evidence had just been published. Stakeholder input to these calls for evidence will help frame next steps for the Fishery Management Plan (FMP) that is being co-developed with the SICG. JH added that the basis of the FMP was the SICG management proposals that were submitted to Defra in 2019.

JH confirmed that the aim was still to deliver the strawman FMP in 2023. The scallop FMP is intended to be published in draft with the Joint Fishery Statement (JFS). JPo mentioned that there had been discussions about moving towards management by total allowable catch (TAC). FN asked whether introduction of a TAC would be determined by the timeline for FMP publication, and JH said the FMP would remain a 'live' document and could not confirm whether definitive agreement in management would be met by then.

Agenda Item 4: Information

An action in the FIP action plan is to better understand the larval distribution of scallop stocks in the Channel. This performance indicator currently meets SG80 but the Steering Group previously identified the need for a larval distribution model to support stock assessments.

AL informed the Steering Group that the hydrography models had been initiated with particles representing scallop larvae released into the simulation. AL confirmed that the preliminary results require additional work but the timeline for delivering this has not been confirmed. FN asked for any initial outputs to be shared ahead of the annual review.

Action from Item 4:

1. AL to share initial outputs of the larval distribution analysis with the Secretariat, once available.

Agenda Item 5: Primary and secondary species:

The Steering Group previously commissioned Cefas to undertake a review of scallop catch composition based on observer data. At the last meeting, FN presented this report to the Steering Group. The report provided each species bycatch in weight, but did not contain information on invertebrates.

The lack of invertebrate data might be addressed through catch composition analysis from elsewhere in the UK. AL was not aware of any supplementary qualitative information on invertebrate presence in the catch, but offered to check. AL added that the data provided should address seasonality in the fishery as observer trips ran throughout the year, although this will obviously be skewed towards when more vessels are fishing. AL concluded that despite the small number of observer trips he felt the report was representative of the fishery.

Discussion:

AB highlighted a bycatch paper by Szostec which included invertebrates such as spiny starfish. BS informed the group that in areas with regular dredging activity only resilient species remain. If dredging were removed altogether then different bycatch assemblages would be seen. Starfish and some fish species are adept and resilient in dredge areas and they will likely be the species seen in dredges.

Actions from Item 5:

1. AL to check whether there is any qualitative information on invertebrate catches in the Cefas observer programme, and to share with the Secretariat if there is.
2. Steering Group members to share any other bycatch studies on invertebrate species with the Secretariat.
3. Secretariat to speak with Lynda Blackadder, Marine Scotland Science, for an update on her bycatch paper.

Agenda Item 6: Endangered, threatened and protected species

The Secretariat has been speaking with Cefas about the use of the Clean Catch app to record ETP interactions in the scallop fishery. A meeting has been scheduled between Clean Catch and some Project UK skippers to begin trialling the App in a dredge fishery. FN said that this action is replicated in the Round 2 FIP, and JH flagged that she had members who were also willing to trial the Clean Catch app. RW suggested there should be observer verification to validate data recording through the App.

Actions from Item 6:

1. Secretariat to contact JH when the App is ready for her members to trial.

Agenda Item 7: Habitats

The MMO have set out a timeline for introducing management measures in all English MPAs by the end of 2024. Until these measures are agreed, the Steering Group needs to determine what it could proactively do to manage the impact of the fishery on benthic habitats. MS updated the Steering Group on the outputs from the last MPA subgroup meeting.

MPA network in the Channel

- 11 special areas of conservation (SACs)
- 28 Marine Conservation Zones
- Eight special protection areas (SPA)
- Approximately 20% of the surface area of the Channel is designated for protection

Outputs:

- Timeline for MPA management priorities in the Channel still to formally be announced.
- Complications remain around the use of iVMS data that is currently in operation.
- Unlikely that IFCAs can share iVMS data with other organisations due to original data ownership agreements reached with skippers.
- Further discussion needed with IFCAs and Natural England see where in Channel they see as key to reduce fishing footprint, particularly of <12m vessels.

- Secretariat will schedule another MPA sub group meeting to better understand what the Steering Group can do ahead of official MMO MPA designation rollout.

Discussion:

RW raised concerns around the lack of information available on the impact of the <12m fleet on sensitive habitats, particularly in the inshore area. RW also said there are now legal obligations to adhere to Good Environmental Status (GES) which is enshrined in the ecosystem objective in the Fisheries Act. RW asked how the FIP action plan addresses GES, and the Principle 3 of the MSC Standard required a fishery to demonstrate adherence to national and international legislation. RW said GES was something Natural England were pushing to be referenced in the frontrunner FMPs, to highlight the need to protect seabed integrity. RW acknowledged that a lot of work had already been undertaken but there are still data gaps which could be addressed in the updated FIP action plan.

FN said that the post-doc research on the habitat impacts of dredge fishing was a significant deliverable for the FIP, and the data limitations made clear in the report. FN added that the MSC Standard takes into account commonly encountered habitats, vulnerable marine ecosystem species (VMEs) and wider ecosystem impacts, so GES could be incorporated within the FIPs ecosystem actions.

The SG60-79 level for PI 2.4.3 (habitat information) requires that information is adequate to broadly understand the impacts and spatial gear footprints, which is currently met for <12m vessels. For vessels >12m SG80 is met, which requires reliable information on the timing and use of gear. Currently the lack of iVMS information for vessels <12m would attract a condition during MSC assessment, which the fishery would need to address within five years.

RW asked if there was anything the FIP could do voluntarily in the meantime to get better resolution of the fishery footprint of the <12m fleet, which FN said would be difficult owing to the lack of availability of iVMS data for anything other than compliance by the MMO and IFCAs. LP recommended going directly to the MMO for data and said now that iVMS was being rolled out nationally the information might be easier to obtain. The Secretariat offered to follow up with the MMO to determine whether anonymised iVMS information could be accessed.

BS said the post-doc research highlighted the limitations of <12m vessel information in the study, and the level of uncertainty this generates is Steering Group should remain aware of. BS said he would expect objections to the fishery being certified until this information gap can be addressed. JPo acknowledged this data gap but reminded the Steering Group that scallopers will only be active in certain, discrete areas and would not be dredging outside known scallop beds, as that would be a waste of time and fuel for a skipper. JPo said that in areas where both <12m and >12m could access, he would expect them in the same areas particularly the 6nm-12nm. BS agreed with JPo and cautioned it would be within the 6nm, where some of the more sensitive habitats occur, that this paucity of <12m vessel information is most needed.

KK concluded that the MPA subgroup could become a broader habitat focussed subgroup, and aim to meet delivered before the end of the month.

Actions from Item 7:

1. Secretariat to:
 - a. Change the focus of the MPA subgroup to a habitat subgroup.

- b. Arrange for a call with Natural England to discuss how the MSC Standard incorporates requirements for GES.
- c. Contact the MMO about accessing iVMS data.

Agenda Item 8: Ecosystem

Cefas previously undertook a Scale, Intensity, and Consequence Analysis (SICA) for the Channel scallop fishery, which identified functional group composition as the most relevant ecosystem sub-component to be affected by the scallop fishery. The score for the ecosystem action is expected to increase based on the outputs from Action 6 (ETP) and Action 7 (habitats) but is already scoring SG60-79.

The Steering Group agreed to continue to address this action through Actions 6 and 7 and JPo said that a similar approach should be pursued in the Round 2 scallops FIP, to avoid repeating similar requests over different actions.

Action from Item 8:

1. Steering Group to address remaining ecosystem actions through ETP and habitats milestones, and adopt this approach for the Round 2 FIP.

Agenda Item 9: Fishery Management Plan

The Fishery Management Plan (FMP) is a central document that summarises all aspects of management in the fishery. AB is the lead for the Channel scallop FIP FMP, and he provided an update to the Steering Group.

Chapter 1 – Information and description of the fishery:

- Good information across the chapter, although some data beginning to become outdated. GC has shared MMO statistics information with MS which can be shared with a Steering Group member to summarise and insert into the FMP.
- SICG requests data from Seafish annually and AB and JH believed it would be prudent to also request updated information from the Seafish statistics team, for both Round 1 and Round 2 FIPs.
- JH said she had some information relevant to this chapter through SICG which she would share with MS.

Chapter 2 - Goals and objectives:

- Defra have provided material for this section and JH had shared SICG project steering board information with AB.

Chapter 3 - Fisheries management:

- AB said this chapter would remain 'live' until the conclusion of the FIP. The chapter has reflected to evolving management of shellfish in the UK since Brexit, with more changes possible before the end of the FIP extension timeline.
- The response to the recent call for evidence by Defra will need inputting into this chapter as well as the recent changes to the SICG working group.
- CB offered to share information on the working relationship between Defra and the IFCA's.

Chapter 4 – Harvest strategy and harvest control rules and tools:

- Sparse information in this chapter although AB had incorporated Cefas approach to identifying a harvestable biomass, based off international landings.
- AB said this chapter would likely have to wait for developments to be made in the SICG working group with Defra and the Devolved Administrations.

Chapter 5 – Ecosystem management strategy:

- AB has incorporated all off the environmental outputs conducted by the Steering Group to date as well as his own desk-based research.
- Papers summarised and incorporated include Bill Lart’s alternative measures report, Claire Szostec Channel bycatch report, and Femke de Boer’s ETP analysis and recommendations.
- AB said he would summarise the findings of the Cefas bycatch report and the Secretariat offered to follow up with Steering Group members about summarising the habitats post-doc research. FN assured the group that all that would be needed was the abstract and a n explanation for why the research was conducted.

Chapter 6 – Stock assessment and methodology:

- AB said there was good information in the chapter, but Section 6.3 – ETP and bycatch research – could be expanded.
 - No primary or secondary species in the FIP are covered by ICES assessments and FN recommended this section be merged into Chapter 5.
- For Section 6.4 - other relevant research – BS said there could be information from the ICES scallop working group which he could share.

Chapter 7 – Compliance and monitoring:

- MMO contributed content and AB said it was nearing completion.

Section 8 and 9 are yet to be drafted, although there is guidance available in Section 8.

Discussion:

FN said it would be good to review the FMP ahead of the annual review, which AB agreed to and said he would develop the FMP a bit more before sharing it with FN before the end of March.

Actions from Item 9:

1. AB to:
 - a. Request economic data from Seafish, for both Channel and UK scallop FIPs.
 - b. Summarise Cefas bycatch paper and insert into the FMP.
 - c. Share FMP with FN by end of March.
2. BS to share other research information, such as ICES scallop WG material, with AB to add to Section 6.
3. CB to share information on Defra/IFCA working relationship with MS and AB.
4. FN to review FMP before the annual review and incorporate in scoring.
5. JH to share information the SICG had on economic information for scallops in the Channel.

Agenda Item 10: FisheryProgress.org social policy reminder

In mid-2021 FisheryProgress.org introduced social policy requirements for all FIPs reporting on their website. MS provided the Steering Group with an update of progress to date, and upcoming actions and deadlines.

Prior social standards:

- A landscape analysis of social standards that the catching sector members of the FIP already adhere to was previously conducted.
- The Secretariat requested FisheryProgress.org conduct a gap analysis between their new requirements and the content of ILO-188.

Policy statement (ex-Code of Conduct):

- Previously the FIP needed to review and sign up to the FisheryProgress.org Code of Conduct.
- However, this requirement has been revised (March 2022) and now requires a fishery to demonstrate they have a public policy statement outlining a commitment to respect human and labour rights and to provide a description of their policy statement via a template.
- This requirement becomes active in January 2023.

Awareness of fisher rights:

- This requirement has also been revised and requires FIPs to make fishers aware of the fisheries own policy statement.
- This policy statement will be in a template format which FisheryProgress.org will share with FIP implementers.
- This requirement becomes active in January 2023.

Self-evaluation criteria & workplan:

- A general set of risk criteria was listed by FisheryProgress.org which, if met, triggered the requirement of a risk-assessment for the FIP and a workplan to address any issue found.
- The self-evaluation has been completed and a risk assessment triggered due to more than 25% foreign crew in the fishery.
- Next steps are for the Secretariat to identify a consultant to review the FIP's social dimension in more detail and produce a workplan. MS asked the Steering Group to provide suggested consultants.

Vessel lists:

- Key action due in May 2022 is to have accurate vessel lists for each of the FIPs.
- This FIP has had information from the Producer Organisations (POs) and the Steering Group will need to think about how best to get vessel information from any vessels not represented by POs.

Grievance mechanism:

- The fishery needs to have a publicly available grievance mechanism in place for fishers and crew to report human rights abuses.
- This policy does not require the FIP itself to have its own grievance mechanism. Rather, this policy requires the FIP to demonstrate the existence of one or more grievance mechanisms that cover all fishers in the FIP.
- This requirement becomes active in May 2022.

Discussion:

JH said there was a grievance mechanism already in place under ILO-188, although cautioned that ILO-188 did not cover all segments of the fleet. JPo agreed and said he would follow up to understand the grievance mechanism that is built into the ILO-188 and whether that would cover the FP.org requirements. MP said he previously considered conducting a Human Rights At Sea (HRAS) assessment, but was quoted over £100,000 for this audit, and could not go ahead with the assessment due to the significant costs. RC said Rob Greenwood was conducting social assessments for Seafish and had not costed them anything to date.

Actions from Item 10:

1. Steering Group members to share vessel list with Secretariat.
2. JPo to review ILO-188 to determine whether grievance mechanism built into ILO-188 address the new requirements from FisheryProgress.org.
3. RC to share Rob Greenwood's contact details with the Secretariat.

Any Other Business

JP announced that the Secretariat was drafting a response to the Joint Fishery Statement (JFS) consultation on behalf of Project UK. The response will be based on the content of the signed off FIP action plans.

Meeting Closes

12.30

| Actions Arising | | Responsibility |
|-----------------|--|-------------------------------------|
| 1 | Actions from Item 1: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Secretariat to: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Arrange a pan-Project UK workshop on proposed changes to the MSC Standard. b. Continue discussions with the MPA subgroup to progress habitat actions. 2. RW to support the drafting of new habitat and ecosystem actions in the extended FIP action plan. 3. FN to update the action plan against V3.0 of the MSC Standard at the first annual review of the extension (April 2023). | Secretariat RW FN |
| 2 | Action from Item 2: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. AL to notify the Steering Group when the latest stock assessment report is available. | AL |

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| 3 | <p>Action from Item 4:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. AL to share initial outputs of the larval distribution analysis with the Secretariat, once available. | AL |
| 4 | <p>Actions from Item 5:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. AL to check whether there is any qualitative information on invertebrate catches in the Cefas observer programme, and to share with the Secretariat if there is. 2. Steering Group members to share any other bycatch studies on invertebrate species with the Secretariat. 3. Secretariat to speak with Lynda Blackadder, Marine Scotland Science, for an update on her bycatch paper. | AL Steering Group Secretariat |
| 5 | <p>Actions from Item 6:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Secretariat to contact JH when the App is ready for her members to trial. | Secretariat |
| 6 | <p>Actions from Item 7:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Secretariat to: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Change the focus of the MPA subgroup to a habitat subgroup. b. Arrange for a call with Natural England to discuss how the MSC Standard incorporates requirements for GES. c. Contact the MMO about accessing iVMS data | Secretariat |
| 7 | <p>Action from Item 8:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Steering Group to address remaining ecosystem actions through ETP and habitats milestones, and adopt this approach for the Round 2 FIP. | Steering Group |
| 8 | <p>Actions from Item 9:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. AB to: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Request economic data from Seafish, for both Channel and UK scallop FIPs. b. Summarise Cefas bycatch paper and insert into the FMP. c. Share FMP with FN by end of March. | AB |

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| | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. BS to share other research information, such as ICES scallop WG material, with AB to add to Section 6. 3. CB to share information on Defra/IFCA working relationship with MS and AB. 4. FN to review FMP before the annual review and incorporate in scoring. 5. JH to share information the SICG had on economic information for scallops in the Channel. | <p>BS</p> <p>CB</p> <p>FN</p> <p>JH</p> |
| 9 | <p><i>Actions from Item 10:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Steering Group members to share vessel list with Secretariat. 2. JPo to review ILO-188 to determine whether grievance mechanism built into ILO-188 address the new requirements from FisheryProgress.org. 3. RC to share Rob Greenwood's contact details with the Secretariat. | <p>Steering Group</p> <p>JPo</p> <p>RC</p> |