

Minutes: Channel Scallop Steering Group

Meeting Date: 06/09/2022

Location: Online

Attendees	Organisation
AB: Andrew Brown	Macduff Shellfish
AL: Andy Lawler	Centre for Environment, Fisheries and Aquaculture
CN: Chloe North	Western Fish Producers' Organisation
FN: Fiona Nimmo	Poseidon
HG: Hubert Gieschen	MMO
HH: Helen Hunter	Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
JH: Juliette Hatchman	South West Fish Producers' Organisation
JP: Jo Pollett	Marine Stewardship Council
JPo: Jim Portus	Scallop Industry Consultation Group
KK: Katie Keay	Marine Stewardship Council
LB: Lisa Bennett	Marine Stewardship Council
LP: Lauren Parkhouse	Devon and Seven Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority
NdR: Nathan de Rozarieux	Falfish
RW: Robert Whiteley	Natural England
TH: Thomas Hollick	Tesco

Purpose of the meeting

This meeting was to discuss updates from the Scallop Industry Consultation Group and a recent review of the Channel Scallop FMP by Poseidon. The group also discussed recent Cefas stock assessments and surveys, and next steps for actions relating to endangered, threatened and protected species.

Agenda Item 1: Update from Scallop Industry Consultation Group (SICG)

Fishery Specific Objectives and National Fisheries Management Plan

JPo presented the fishery specific objectives drafted by SICG for inclusion in the King Scallop Fisheries Management Plan (FMP) for English and Welsh waters. This is being developed as defined in the Joint Fisheries Statement consultation, and will be published by the end of September 2023 with implementation to follow. A number of tasks related to the FMP are underway or complete including: an FMP program board, led by Defra, has been formed; a draft evidence statement has been developed and must be finalised by January 2023; and a stakeholder engagement plan was initiated in April 2022 with input from the with SIGC working group.

Harvest Strategy and Harvest Control Rules (HCR)

AB, who is leading on the FIP's draft FMP, said the harvest strategy being developed by the SICG, for the national FMP, will be incorporated when ready. Positively, while waiting for this, and resolution of the ongoing UK/EU negotiations to conclude, the science continues to build which will help develop the biological parameters on which to base HCRs.

FN commented that the FIP FMP is based on the MSC requirements and therefore incorporates additional considerations like ecosystem and processes, which may not be included in the national King Scallop FMP. In order to avoid duplication of work, the FIP FMP can signpost to the national FMP on areas like harvest strategy and harvest control rules, and can include more detail on everything else required from an MSC perspective.

JH explained the stakeholder engagement phase for the national FMP, and how the sessions would be held. There has also been the creation of a new Scallop Science Group, made up of independent scientists, which the SICG working group will work with to provide independent advice on management interventions. JH requested Steering Group members share information about the meetings with their networks once dates are confirmed.

JPo acknowledged there are a number of scallop FMPs in development (including two draft Project UK FIP FMPs for Channel Scallops and UK Scallops). The Steering Group agreed it is important to minimise duplication and ensure all groups are aligned and sharing information.

Actions from Item 1:

1. Secretariat to
 - (a) share information on SICG working group stakeholder engagement meetings when dates are confirmed
 - (b) ensure information from this FIP is being fed into the national FMP by continuing to engage with the SICG

Agenda Item 2: FMP review

FN has reviewed the FIP FMP and provided a list of recommended edits and included a map of Cefas stock assessment areas in the English Channel (slides available). FN discussed changing the name of the FIP to reflect the area it covers, as this is an important aspect to consider when the fishery enters MSC assessment. The Steering Group agreed on changing the name to 'UK English Channel King Scallop Dredge Fishery'. FN asked whether the Eastern English Channel South region will be included within the FIP, and all agreed for now it was best to leave it in the FIP. Updated data in the FMP includes landing statistics, landings by stock area (ICES rectangles), Seafish cost and earnings data, landings and days at sea and fishing income. VMS data (footprint of the fishery) was also included for UK dredge vessels >15m only.

Discussion

AL commented that Cefas did review and redefine the stock assessment areas earlier this year and the new stock assessment with the redefined areas would be published in April 2023. JPo commented there appears to be anomalies in the data due to the seemingly high activity of >15m vessels close to shore (which is not an area they are able to fish in). FN and HG agreed that any anomalies in the data could be reviewed and interrogated with a formal data request if necessary.

AB asked if HH could provide a paragraph on the connections between Inshore Fisheries Conservation Authorities (IFCA) and Defra to add to the FIP FMP. AB has also reviewed and summarised Steve Newstead's report on habitat impacts in the English Channel, and asked if AL could check over his summary. The sections of the FMP on fishing performance evaluation and resources are lacking information and will likely only be finalised when the national FMP has been completed.

AB discussed the possibility of splitting scallop catch between UK and EU landing, using new data published by Defra. FN said this could be important when looking at HCR and how that's controlled, but in terms of Principle 1 and stock status, it is important to know total removals from the defined stock area. A number of Steering Group members requested access to the latest version of the FMP. The Steering Group discussed the challenge with version control when sharing documents, and that it is important to find a system that works for everybody. KK agreed and said the Secretariat will consider how to best move forward with document sharing.

Actions from Item 2:

1. AB to send summary of the Steve Newstead report to AL for review
2. AL to review the summary of the Steve Newstead report from AB and provide feedback
3. HH to pass on request to new staff member Caitlyn to provide AB with paragraph on how Defra and IFCA's communicate and co-manage
4. FN to
 - (a) Note change of name agreed for the FIP of 'UK English Channel King Scallop Dredge Fishery' in the FIP Action Plan
 - (c) Ask GC about Seafish economic data and why there was a significant drop in operating profit in the fishery in 2018
 - (d) Add text to FMP on ecosystem and compliance and monitoring
5. Secretariat to provide link to most recent version of FMP to Steering Group members, and look into the best way to share documents to avoid version control issues

Agenda Item 3: Update on stock assessment and surveys

AL explained that the stock assessments are based on the two dredge survey trips - the main survey was carried out successfully including tows in the French EEZ. The September survey, which is relevant to the Eastern Channel region, covered by this FIP, is underway. He anticipates the stock assessments

will be published in April, on schedule. Under Water TeleVision surveys (UWTV) are due to take place late October and priority areas are in the western English Channel. AL has a link to the 2021 stock assessment if anybody would like to see the results.

Discussion

JP asked if there had been any progress on Cefas developing reference points. AL said they were hoping the national FMP will provide management options to support this, and that reference points need to be based on biomass estimates from dredge surveys. It is very difficult to come up with a plan until they know what the quota limits are for their international partners. The larval distribution work is now finished, and AL can share that as soon as he has final approval, expected imminently.

Actions from Item 3:

1. AL to share larval distribution work with the Secretariat following approval from Cefas

Agenda Item 4: Principle 2

Endangered, Threatened and Protected (ETP) species

The Steering Group is still trying to work with Clean Catch, who have been updating their app to ensure functionality with scallop dredging. Clean Catch are doing final user testing which is expected to finish on the 12th of September and then they hope to roll it out to vessels to use. It is not expected that this fishery will interact with many ETP species, but using the app helps to prove the negative and shows the ability to record data. The Secretariat will continue to communicate with Clean Catch to facilitate access.

Habitats

Following Steve Newstead's report on the impacts of dredge gear on habitats in the English Channel, RW has commented about the lack of information for the footprint of <12m vessels, and historical lack of management that was in place for MPAs. The Secretariat is meeting with Natural England on 10th of October to discuss the implementation of Good Environmental Status and how that overlaps with the MSC requirements. AB requested to join the meeting.

Habitats – Marine Protected Areas (MPAs)

In 2021, the MMO consulted on management measures for four MPAs, one in the English Channel, and these measures were implemented in April 2022. In June 2022, the MMO consulted on management measures for the next tranche of MPAs, including a further two in the English Channel. Management measures are also expected to be rolled out in those MPAs in due course, and full management measures are expected for all currently designated MPAs by the end of 2024.

iVMS rollout

Although this was due to be completed by the end of 2022, there have been some issues with funding and functionality of units, and it is now expected on all vessels by May 2023. The MMO have confirmed

that the Steering Group will be able to access the resulting data through the Freedom of Information process, although it will need to be anonymised so the first few years of data will be limited.

Secretariat to share slides from this section with RW as he was absent for this.

Actions from Item 4:

1. Secretariat to
 - (a) continue to communicate with Clean Catch to get access to the necessary codes
 - (b) send meeting invite to AB for upcoming call with Natural England
 - (c) send relevant slides from ETP and habitats updates to RW

Any Other Business

N/A

Meeting Closes

1515

Actions Arising	Responsibility
Secretariat to <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Share information on SICG working group stakeholder engagement meetings when dates are confirmed 2. Ensure information from this FIP is being fed into the national FMP by continuing to engage with the SICG 3. Continue to communicate with Clean Catch to get access to the necessary codes 4. Send meeting invite to AB for upcoming call with Natural England 5. Send relevant slides from ETP and habitats updates to RW 6. Provide link to most recent version of FMP to Steering Group members, and look into the best way to share documents to avoid version control issues 	Secretariat
Andrew Brown to <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Send summary of the Steve Newstead report to AL for review 	AB

6th September 2022

	<p>Andy Lawler to</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Review the summary of the Steve Newstead report from AB and provide feedback 2. Share larval distribution work with the Secretariat following approval from Cefas 	AL
	<p>Helen Hunter to</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Pass on request to new staff member Caitlyn to provide AB with paragraph on how Defra and IFCA's communicate and co-manage 	HH
	<p>Fiona Nimmo to</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Note change of name agreed for the FIP of 'UK English Channel King Scallop Dredge Fishery' in the FIP Action Plan 2. Ask GC about Seafish economic data and why there was a significant drop in operating profit in the fishery in 2018 3. Add text to FMP on ecosystem and compliance and monitoring 	FN