**Project UK Fisheries Improvements Stage One: Monkfish**

**(Facilitated by the MSC)**

Wednesday 4th September 2019 11.00 – 16:30

MSC, 1 Snow House, London, EC1A 2DH

**Attendees**

Theresa Redding Natural England TR

Gus Caslake Seafish GC

Tim Huntingdon Poseidon TH

Edward Baker MMO EB

Jo Pollett MSC JP

Karen Attwood MSC KA

Matthew Spencer MSC MS

## Welcome and Introductions

JP welcomes all to the meeting and thanks them for making the journey to attend. GC ask to receive the Waitrose article on sardines, which KA acknowledges and says she will pass on. GC is also keen to receive the photos from the trip. KA lets GC know about Fishermen’s Voices and GC offers MSC to come down to SW for a launch and to meet local fishermen.

**Action: KA to email over the Waitrose article to GC.**

## Minutes and Action Points

Previous minutes were circulated after the last meeting and no comments were received. These will now be taken as signed off and added to Fishery Progress.

**Action: MS to add previous minutes to Fishery Progress.**

## Action 1 Stock Status and Assessment

JP explains that this section should be receiving an update from Lisa Readdy (LR), and that LR had provided an update by phone of the WGMonkfish meeting. Updates coming out of this work are that there are new reference points for mean length and biomass, but still only as a proxy and only for *L.budegassa*. LR’s work showed that Black monkfish is listed as a Category 3 species – according to ICES advice - and is unlikely to reach a score of 100 regardless, but stocks look good. Black Monkfish were benchmarked last year using a combined benchmark of French and Irish stocks. The SSB has increased with the advice based on the precautionary approach.

White Monkfish is a Category 1 species with fishing effort below Fmsy. SSB is up with more advice due in October. 8

**Action: LR to update the group on latest advice.**

**Action: TH to draft email to Lisa for next steps.**

**Action: Jo to forward group info from Lisa.**

TH recommends to the group that we find the funding to have Paul Medley (PM) to review whether we have achieved this milestone, in terms of confidence levels. He has great experience in this area. TH also states that we will have to have a stock segment in the FMP for both species and believes that Paul Medley could also be the right person to fulfil this role. TH suggests getting PM to complete this work and provide a brief summary of the stock assessment process.

**Action: MSC to findfunding to enable PM to work on this action.**

**Action: PM to review whether we have achieved milestone for Action 1.**

## Action 2 Harvest Strategy

GC states that he has been working on the first point (*update on industry consultation*)and has circulated it to the POs. GC has received two responses (from Andy Pillar and Jim Portus), which both agree that they can’t go much larger with mesh sizes. The static gear segment doesn’t matter as they don’t use it, they are beam trawlers.

GC states that the POs believe the best way to progress this action is through survivability trials. Full trial or square vs diamond as well as trawl time is also worth investigating. GC goes on to state that he has heard fishermen saying that juvenile Monkfish are arriving on board in great condition after only two hours of trawl time. He then goes on to explain the difficulties of a survivability trial on board a vessel; the expense and more importantly the need for space for the fish is important. Monkfish would need space to move and in deep water conditions, the vessels cannot provide that, and alternatives such as tagging would have significant cost implications.

GC states to the group that there is a high survivability in beam trawling, which Jim Portus had seconded (in correspondence). Some work has previously been done to investigate this, although GC states they may be willing to do gear trials, but there is a cost to this. TH states that this might be beyond the remit of the FIP and GC reiterates that the cost might be prohibitive.

TH states that GC has progressed well at that end and wonders if the is any way that the Monkfish can be returned to the water any quicker. GC mentions that the catch now goes on to conveyer belts and not the decking, reaffirms that the best way forward would be a reduction in tow time. Fishermen have already streamlined to this effect - now 1.5 hour (2/2.5 is the maximum), previously it wouldn’t be uncommon to have 3.5 hour tow time. Any shorter becomes uneconomic.

**Action: GC to circulate the survivability data to the group.**

GC believes that – other than reducing tow time – the careful handling of Monkfish could be the main focus. GC reminds the group that we have to take into account that some of the boats are 40+ years old. The vessels are instead retrofitted, scallops in particular – rocks shot straight over the side. GC estimates that approximately 40% of vessels have taken up EMFF funding in order to streamline their systems.

The group questions whether this action is progressed enough to meet the standard, as industry believe they have met the requirements. TH explains that it depends on new gears and trials: if industry have exhausted their options and there are no new gears to trial then TH believes this should be sufficient. GC says he will confirm this again with the POs, and is still awaiting a response from Paul Trebilcock (CFPO). We do need this acknowledgement in writing from industry.

**Action: GC to follow up Paul on his responses to previous questions and feedback to the group.**

TH wonders whether there is a code of conduct that they might be able to sign up to. GC goes on to inform the group about the Channel and West Waters Sustainable Trawling Group (CWWSTG), which consisted of the three POs. GC continues, stating that CWWSTG created a draft good practice guide in April 2016 to address issues with provenance of seafood caught that led to it being set up. They also produced the scallop good practice guide.

**Action: GC to share this good practice guide** **with TH and JP.**

GC mentions that the scallop guide had 3 principles in partnership:

* Compliance with regulatory systems;
* Contribute to science, and;
* Assist in long term maintenance of sustainable scallop stocks.

TH asks whether there could be more traction in this regard, which GC believes there could if industry thought it would help improve the FIP. TH states that if he saw that as an assessor and saw all 3 POs had signed up to it he would be very impressed.

TH wraps things up on this action stating that it is almost singed off, with the action likely scoring above 80%. TH does mention though that a short paragraph on the documents mentioned above will need to be done.

**Action: GC to write short paragraphs on the documents mentioned above and send to JP and TH for inclusion in FMP.**

## Action 3 Harvest Control Rules

JP reminds the group that she had submitted a Fisheries science Partnership (FSP) application which Cefas have run as a priority and need to get industry on board. Andy Pillar said their boats are setting up for this work – in correspondence from Rob Forster (RF), Cefas. Only uncertainties are around adding the correct codes on the electronic log book (elog) and having individual machines for tail weights. Crews will be paid nominal fee to help assist this trial. It is important at this stage to see the willingness of the crews; however, as it is cuttlefish season some believe it is pointless to run the trial whilst the cuttlefish season is running.

JP states that there has been dialogue with both Lisa Readdy and Paul Medley, stating that this action is likely to pass in its current state. TR states that that weight of Monkfish is extrapolated from tail-weight, to which GC concurs, with a 3:1 ratio. Most fisheries have a guts to weight relationship – Monkfish unusual in this aspect. Fishermen are only interested in the landed weight and so have to add the gutted weight (approximately 14x for cod). GC states that it is only in the SW that this is done for Monkfish. Discussion held about how the waste gets around the LO with no conclusive answer as Monkfish are a choke species with Total Allowable catch (TAC) but also have no Minimum Landing Size (MLS).

The conversation moves to the suggested position on AC (advisory council), which TH suggests should actually be focused on engagement with Defra or MMO instead. TH goes on to say that it will be down to whoever is in charge of catch sampling, as the aim is to understand the feasibility of catch counting for *Lophius* *spp*. GC suggest catch sampling would be a Cefas/Defra thing. GC suggests asking Rob Forster (RF) to do the catch sampling for us. For this work GC believes PUKFI wouldn’t have to amend the log book system, just a new table needed for *Lophius spp*. GC states it is important to understand the feasibility of doing it onboard, as direction will come from MMO. Group enquires as to when RF’s project finishes to which no one in the group was certain.

**Action: JP to ask RF for another update and timeline and see if there is scope for him to conduct catch sampling for the group**

**Action: TH to amend Defra/MMO in Fishery Managament Plan (FMP) instead of the AC.**

**Action: JP to send round RF’s email to the group.**

## Actions 4, 5 & 6 Secondary Species

Action 4 was complete from the PSA (productivity, susceptibility analysis) from Cefas and should already be updated in the action plan.

For Action 5, TH was reviewing the report which could be combined with GC’s report. TH states that this might not be necessary given monkfish shape and high survivability. Year four may need a mainstreaming of alternative measures if necessary.

**Action: TH to review documents and confirm next steps to the group.**

Action 6 led to last meetings discussion on the 50kg limit and whether there is a need to record discard if they occur**.** GC states that this is 50kg per trip and that any weight below this won’t need to be recorded. EB confirms, but complexities arise when ascertaining how discards are factored in. Most vessels will not have scales and so is based upon estimation of the skipper.

As Monkfish are a TAC species, fishermen should not be discarding but EB is not entirely sure of whether there is the ability to discard Monkfish. GC asks if there is a different e-log code for a Marine Conservation Zone (MCZ) fishery, and EB states that there wasn’t one a year ago, so fishermen were listing it down as dried, but now there is a tick box.

**Action: MSC to follow up with LR over some of the complexities of discarding monkfish.**

EB explained that all vessels over 10m have to record discards but there is no way of enforcing this. GC believes that if discards are not retained then compliance would be fairly low. TH states the importance of understanding how much is being caught, not what is just being landed.

The group asks EB whether the records show whether anyone has compared discards to total catch. He informs the group that MMO’s Future fisheries team are working on full documentation and thinks this could be useful for PUKFI. They will have data available from observer programmes, GC asks whether Cefas would have access to that? EB confirms that they would have access.

**Action: EB to come back to the group with news on fully documented fisheries.**

TH asks how much observer data there is out there, to which GC says 15 observers in the entire Western Waters area, which should be to species level – and is adequate enough for the FIP. Cefas should have some data available. GC states that – with respect to discards – information being used is coming from Cefas observer programme and not logbooks, as Cefas and MMO are more confident in the observer data.

**Action: MSC to request observer data for monkfish from Cefas.**

## Action 7 ETP

Nathan de Rozarieux (ND) unfortunately wasn’t able to make progress on this action but will update the group at the next meeting in January. GC suggests bringing these steering group meeting to the SW as it will help engage other members of the PUKFI group and increase industry participation.

TH states that the gannet issue has been resolved and now it is a matter of spurdog and ray. TH recommends asking ND if there could be a pilot project of some kind – get ND to run in past industry first. JP asks if there is everything in Adam Townley’s report that is needed which TH believes there is and the report should be integrated into the Fisheries Management Plan (FMP).

**Action: ND to update the group on this work in January.**

## Action 8 Habitat

GC believes that the problem with this type of analysis is its defined over quite a large area – boxes will be roughly 2x3km. GC believes the paper’s authors (Cefas) will define all of the box as a gravel area. If a fisherman strays into the area even slightly, and it might not be gravel, they will still be deemed as fishing in a gravel area. TR concurs that the paper is weak for resolution. GC states the reason for the low count for boats between 15-20m is that over 15m you have to meet the same regulations of a 40+m vessel.

TH has issues with the low Relative Benthic Status (RBS) score for gravel Cefas has given it in annual terms whereas the MSC assessment is 5-20 years, with the report not showing different rates of recovery for different gears. Beam and otter trawl will have different recovery times. Group members have an issue with Cefas comparing it against undisturbed habitat as there isn’t an understanding of what this looks like, the group is uncertain of a baseline level recovery and the group is unsure how the MSC label deals with this level of uncertainty. Members of the group admit there is information from the fishing fleet that is missing if iVMS is stopping this fishery going forward then they are being constrained by regulations. Members of the group recommend looking at work Cefas did with Pat Bream, zone of influence – Pat Bream predicted where these vessels would be going.

The group questions whether to ask Cefas to upgrade or update the report on habitat; however, there are Issues around whether they have capacity to improve the piece. Bryce Beukers-Stewart (York), Jan Hiddink (Bangor) and Mike Kaiser (Herriot-Watt) all recommended as able to undertake this work. In regards to the issue with resolution, EB states that they can increase resolution of VMS data but not retrospectively. Using MMO to look at this data is likely to be expensive, Monkfish isn’t seasonal but as GC points out fishermen have 4 or 5 given spots per month where past experience tells them it’s a good spot – so the group can narrow the observation period. Members of the group also expressed an interest into the resolution – ping rate- of the data.

**Action: EB find out costs of six months of data for 65 vessels.**

**Action: EB to find out if there are already 10 second pings around protected areas.**

PUKFI members state the sediment data exists, we just need to find a way to access it. Some members are concerned about the VMS data, there’s a need to get better sediment data/map then overlap the pings as a start, then when the new (more resolute ping data comes back) use that. EB states that the MMO ops teams will have the 2018 data. Discussions into making this a MSc thesis, the MSc student will need a strong supervisor and PUKFI would have to Freedom of Information (FOI) Cefas to request the data, and vessels would have to be anonymised. Some members believe that having paid for the report PUKFI should be able to request the data from Cefas as an add on. The date of the data is not that important as fishermen don’t break new ground these days, the group just needs to ask for the raw data from which the report was produced.

**Action: TR to draw up new ToR for MSc work - Habitat data, overlap etc, which fleets, which areas.**

**Action: MSC to get observer information from Cefas.**

## Action 9 Ecosystem

Lauren Parkhouse (Devon & Severn IFCA) will provide an update on iVMS and data at tomorrow’s meeting (PUKFI stage 1 Scallops). The group receives the information that iVMS is currently being rolled out in Wales for under 12’s. For the past three years there as still been a wait for formal acceptance and currently the authorities have paused iVMS progression to check the technology, based on consultation reports for boats without engines and without electricity.

Members of the group believe this delay is possibly due to issues of ownership of the project and cost going forward. They believed that the issue for IFCA was that it was driven from EMFF and their ownership; with the group believing that the MMO is taking financial responsibility going forward. EB unsure if the mobile phone technology is going forward.

## Action 10 Fishery Specific Objectives/ Decision making

ND is leading on this action and will tackle it over the next few weeks. MS will support this process and ensure ND is equipped to undertake the work needed.

**Action: MS to work with Nathan to have a draft ready to circulate in October.**

## Action 11 Monitoring and Evaluation

TH enquires when the next benchmarking exercise will be and states that an independent organisation can be brought it to do that; usually consultants or university or even possibly an RFMO to do a review of a fishery. TH believes that ICES themselves could perhaps do it, as long as scientists with an interest in that species are the ones conducting the work. Over the space of this year the group needs to think about who can do the review, the group concur and agree that this action is not a pressing one just yet and that we have time for consideration.

**Action: Group to think about who can do the review and the next meeting.**

## Reminder on action & updates

The annual review has been updated on Fishery Progress but anything that has not yet been signed off by the group has not been uploaded. The next group meeting will be in January, possibly in the South West.

JP states that she has received requests for Dover sole to be included as part of the FIP and opens it up to the group for their consideration. The group believes it is a good idea due to the fishery being being a category 1 species so the data is present, it has a TAC so there are harvest strategies already in place and it is present in the mixed fishery with Monkfish. TH recommends Dover sole to go through its own preassessment or expedited assessment which could be done to a short turnaround time. GC says he will send through the Good Practise Guideline (aforementioned) which has sole as a part of it.

**Action: GC to send dover sole part of the good practise guideline.**

The group begins to wrap things up and EB confirms his questions to follow up to the group with which are as follows:

* iMVS – when is it coming out again, why was it pulled and why did Wales go ahead with phone technology and England didn’t?
* Is there the ability for PUKFI to get 10min and 20min ping data and how much would it cost for 65 odd vessels?
* Does the VMS data include the 10 min data around MPA sites?

EB concludes and states that his manager wants to let PUKFI know that if we want a one on one meeting then let them know. The group acknowledges this and say they will get in contact.

Summary of actions and who is leading on them

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| **Task** | **Action lead** |
| **Action 1 Stock Status and Assessment** |  |
| LR to update the group on latest advice from WGMonkfish  Draft email to LR informing her of next steps  Forward previous email from LR to group  Find funding to enable Paul Medley to work on this action and to review whether we have achieved milestone for Action 1 | LR  TH  JP  MSC |
| PM to review whether we have achieved milestone for Action 1 | PM |
| **Action 2 Harvest Strategy** |  |
| GC to circulate the survivability data  GC to follow up Paul Trebilcock on his responses and feedback to the group  GC to share this good practice guide with TH and JP  GC to write short paragraphs on the documents mentioned above and send to JP and TH for inclusion in FMP | GC  GC  GC  GC |
|  |  |
| **Action 3 Harvest Control Rules** |  |
| JP to ask Rob Forster (Cefas) for another update and timeline and see if there is scope for him to conduct catch sampling for us. | JP |
| TH amend Defra/MMO in FMP instead of AC | TH |
| Rob Forster’s email correspondence to be distributed to the group | JP |
| **Actions 4, 5 & 6 Secondary Species** |  |
| TH to go over the aforementioned documents to confirm next steps | TH |
| MSC to follow up with LR over some of the complexities of discarding monkfish | MSC |
| EB to come back to the group with news on fully documented fisheries. | EB |
| MSC to request observer data for monkfish from Cefas. | MSC |
| **Action 7 - ETP** |  |
| Nathan to update the group on this work in Jan | ND |
| **Action 8 Habitat** |  |
| Ascertain cost of 6 months data for 65 vessels | EB |
| EB to find out if there are already 10 second pings around protected areas. | EB |
| TR to draw up new ToR for MSc work - Habitat data, overlap etc, which fleets, which areas. | TR |
| **Action 10 Fishery Specific Objectives/ Decision making** |  |
| MS to work with ND to have a draft ready to circulate in October | ND/MS |
| **Action 11; Monitoring and Evaluation** |  |
| Group to think about who can do the review. | All |
| **Other:** |  |
| **Previous minutes to be added to Fishery Progress** | MS |
| GC to send dover sole part of the good practise guideline. | GC |
| iMVS – when is it coming out again, why was it pulled and why did Wales go ahead with phone technology and England didn’t? | EB |
|  |  |
| Does the VMS data include the 10 min data around MPA sites? | EB |
| Waitrose article to be passed over to GC | MSC |
| Group to organise meeting with MMO if deemed necessary | MSC |
| Is there the ability for PUKFI to get 10min and 20min ping data and how much would it cost for 65 odd vessels? | EB |
|  |  |