Minutes: UK Scallop Principle 1 & 2 

Meeting Date: 13 October 2020

Location: Teams

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| Attendees | Organisation |
| AT: Adam Townley | New England Seafood International |
| BC: Ben Collier | Northern Ireland Gear Trials |
| BL: Bill Lart | Seafish |
| BS: Bryce Stewart | University of York |
| CD: Calum Duncan | Scot LINK |
| CM: Carrie McMinn | Agri-Food and Biosciences Institute |
| CMo: Cameron Moffat | Young’s Seafood |
| CP: Claire Pescod | Macduff Shellfish |
| DD: David Donnan | NatureScot |
| EB: Ewen Bell | Centre for Environment, Fisheries and Aquaculture Science |
| EW: Elaine Whyte | Communities Inshore Fisheries Alliance |
| FB: Femke de Boer | Scottish White Fish Producers Association |
| FN: Fiona Nimmo | Poseidon |
| HS: Hayley Swanlund | WWF-UK |
| JP: Jo Pollett | Marine Stewardship Council |
| JPo: Jim Portus | South Western Fish Producers Organisation |
| KC: Kenny Coull | Scottish White Fish Producers Association |
| KK: Katie Keay | Marine Stewardship Council |
| MF: Mairi Fenton | Heriot-Watt University |
| MK: Mike Kaiser | Heriot-Watt University |
| MP: Mike Park | Scottish White Fish Producers Association |
| MS: Matt Spencer | Marine Stewardship Council |
| RG: Roy Griffin | Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs |

Purpose of the meeting

This call was an opportunity for the Steering Group to review progress made against each of the actions under Principle 1 and 2 in the UK scallop Fishery Improvement Project (FIP) Action Plan and agree on next steps.

Agenda Item 1 (Principle 1 – Stock sustainability)

**Action 1: Stock status**

This action addresses stock boundaries and appropriate reference points for the Unit of Assessment (UoA) with a requirement in the Action Plan for further data to support stock definition. Lynda Blackadder (LB) of Marine Scotland Science was unable to attend the meeting and provided a written update to the group confirming that that Marine Scotland Science is close to appointing a shellfish population modeller. This new member of staff will be responsible for scallop stock assessments and appropriate reference points in Scottish waters. This update addresses part of a year 2-3 action, that analytical stock assessments are available from Scotland waters.

***Dogger Bank***

The Steering Group discussed the newly discovered Dogger Bank fishery. So far the Dogger Bank stock has not been included in the FIP UoA, but needs to be considered as there may be impacts on traceability if not included. Cefas has already conducted survey work in the area, focussing on understanding the population densities of scallops, and larval distribution within the North Sea region. The scallop fishery in the Dogger Bank is closed, at the request of industry, until 1st March 2021.

CD highlighted that the Dogger Bank is a Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and will need habitats research as well, something JPo agreed with and said would help understand where sensitive habitats might overlap with fishing activity. Whilst CD was on the call to represent LINK, he did note that Marine Conservation Society’s (MCS) position is to seek a whole site approach to SACs and Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) in regard to bottom contact gears and benthic habitats.

CP believed the Dogger Bank should be included in the FIP and recommend we form a sub-group to understand how the Action Plan might need to be updated. The SICG has already undertaken a lot of work on Dogger Bank, and CP reminded the group that the FIP has an observer position in the SICG to ensure good communication between the two groups. FN said she would welcome joining an SICG meeting as an observer and recommended FB, JPo and CP for the Dogger Bank sub-group.

***Actions:***

* FN to update Action Plan to show Marine Scotland Science has new position due to start
* JPo, FB and CP to join Dogger bank sub-group of the FIP
* Secretariat to:
  1. ask Cefas for scallop survey update for English North Sea
  2. set up call with FN and other interested members to discuss how Dogger Bank developments should be addressed by the FIP and set up the Dogger Bank sub-group

**Actions 2 & 3: Harvest strategy and harvest control rules**

The Year 2 action requires the development of an alternative measures report. FB conducted some of this work for the Channel scallop FIP and presented it to the group. This includes a template of what measures have been tried or could be implemented, along with recommendations that could be useful for this FIP. FB agreed to update the document so it is applicable to the Round 2 scallops FIP.

BL has been drafting an alternative measures report, which still has gaps to address. The selectivity of scallop gear is an important component of the work and BL has documented the regulations currently in place for each of the UK Fisheries Administrations. The alternative measures report was already shared with the Steering Group, with the group encouraged by the Secretariat to share any additional papers of research with BL.

FN said the work was a good start and covered useful information on observed mortality and survival rates. FN highlighted that the key points to an alternative measures document are:

* identifying if there are better ways to catch the target stock
* whether the alternative measure will negatively impact other species, or the safety of the crew
* whether the alternative measure are cost-prohibitive to fishers; and,
* whether it is feasible and legal to implement these changes

A report by Catherall and Kaiser 2014 compared the environmental impacts of differing dredge gear – n-virodredge, Oban dredge, Hydrodredge and Skid dredge. The report did not go into the commercial viability of each dredge, but findings from the report showed that the skid dredge is the best alternative gear for reducing habitat interaction; but is currently prohibited from use due to a ban on attachments to dredge gears by Defra.

JPo mentioned that the Scientific, Technical and Economic Committee for Fisheries (STECF) did an analysis on French dredge gear with 92mm meshes that should be incorporated into the alternative measures report. CM didn’t know whether this was discussed in the recent ICES meeting but would be in the report if it had been and JPo offered to send the STECF analysis to BL.

FB informed the group that the SICG presented eight management options to the Devolved Administrations in 2019. So far, the DAs have not provided feedback, but there is a long-term management plan meeting soon between the SICG and the DAs to discuss this further.

At the last full Steering Group meeting the SICG options paper was discussed and a request was made to commission further research into the feasibility of the options. The Secretariat has been working with Steering Group members to draft a Terms of Reference and identify funding for this feasibility study to go ahead.

***Actions:***

* FN to share alternative measures PowerPoint with BL
* FB:
  1. to draft an ETP alternative measures document for the group, based on her previous work in the Channel scallop FIP
  2. update the group on upcoming SICG-Devolved Administrations management options meeting
* JPo to share STECF report on 92mm scallop meshes with BL

**Action 4 & 5: Information and assessment**

This action covers annual stock surveys for areas where stock status did not meet the requirements for SG80 in the MSC Standard. An update is needed on the English North Sea survey but as Cefas was not present to provide this update the Secretariat agreed to follow up with them.

The year 1 task for these actions was around stock surveys and their feasibility of being annual. Marine Scotland Science completed the Shetland scallop survey this year but only managed one day of trialling the n-virodredge due to poor weather. No other Marine Scotland Science scallop survey have been able to go ahead this year – including East, West and Clyde scallop surveys – and the ICES scallop Working Group report due in November will include a table showing what surveys have not been able to go ahead this year.

AFBI conducted a survey in February in nine randomly sampled survey areas – three on the north coast of Northern Ireland and six in the Irish Sea. The results showed that biomass from ICES statistical reporting rectangle 39 e3 were lower this year. Survey results from other areas of the Irish Sea were mixed, some showed increases and two others showed decreases in catches. AFBI don’t currently have a full stock assessment, so base their analysis on trends, which indicate a continued downward trend based on catch per unit effort (CPUE). There will be a section in the ICES scallop Working Group report with these survey results.

CP said that the SICG had asked Defra for an update on the Dogger Bank survey work and had requested the report from Cefas. CP recommended the Secretariat put in a similar request.

BL asked if any Steering Group members had a scale of damage for scallops. CM said that AFBI started recording scallop damage this year and that Marine Scotland Science had been doing it for a while. AFBI results indicated around 95% of scallops were 1 or 2 on their damage scale, implying no damage or a slightly chipped shell, which echoes similar findings across the UK. BL concluded that if a scallop is only lightly damaged it has a high survivability.

BS highlighted that damage rates to scallops on the seabed reflect what is seen in the catch. For example, if 5% of scallops are observed damage from the catch, there are a further 5% damaged scallops on the seabed. This is a 10% damage rate – 5% observed in trawl, 5% on seabed.

Actions:

* Secretariat to:
  1. request recent ICES scallop Working Group report from LB, when available to understand gaps/delays for the FIP’s timeline
  2. request Cefas’ Dogger Bank survey report from CB
  3. collect more damage data from the Fishery Administration’s science bodies

Agenda Item 2 (Principle 2 – Environment)

**Action 6: Secondary species**

The management and information performance indicators under this action are due to change from <60 to 60-79 before the next annual review, in April 2021.CM began by informing the group that AFBI have a lot of bycatch information going back to 1992, but are working up a paper currently so can’t share all of their data. If there are requests for individual species information, then that could be provided. The paper should be written up within a year and will be valuable in providing quantitative data for the FIP.

FN said that the French scallop report JPo referenced, along with the imminent ICES scallop Working Group report, would strengthen the alternative measures report described for Actions 2 and 3. The Secretariat will speak with Peter Duncan for information from the Isle of Man to contribute to BL’s alternative measures report.

To remain on track the Steering Group needs the alternative measures document and some quantitative data – in the form of Marine Scotland Science’s bycatch report, and AFBI data requests - by the end of year 2 (April 2021). Once the gaps in the bycatch data are clearer, the Steering Group should consider submitting a request to ICES to focus more in this area.

***Actions:***

* BL and FN to circulate information sources used in the alternative measures report with the Steering Group members to provide any additional sources
* CM and FN to discuss AFBI bycatch data further to provide quantitative information on secondary species bycatch
* Secretariat to obtain information from the Isle of Man to inform BL’s alternative measures report.
* Steering Group to provide feedback on BL alternative measures report, with a focus on identifying any research that may have been missed

**Action 7: Endangered, threatened and protected species**

FN provided an update on the latest endangered, threatened and protected (ETP) list for the FIP which incorporated in:

* OSPAR threatened and/or declining species
* UK Biodiversity Action Plan list
* Northern Ireland list of Priority Habitats and Species
* Northern Ireland Species of Conservation Concern
* Nationally Important Marine Features

FN said feedback would be welcome to identify any species missing. A short list will be circulated to industry through a questionnaire over the next two months. This will establish what ETP species interact with the fishery along with developing an ETP recording protocol for fishermen to use, with this questionnaire pending the result of Marine Scotland Science’s bycatch report. FN requested that the Steering Group provide contact details for fishermen that would be happy to be interviewed on this subject.

***Masters review***

The report was a useful platform for future work to build on but there were concerns around the results and conclusions. FN provided a review of Steering Group feedback on the ETP Masters project:

Data:

* The Steering Group felt some key datasets were not included, and admitted some may have been hard to access
* VMS was for >12m vessels only, with information of vessels <12m absent from study
* Some members made remarks on the point data; that a lack of ETP point data records did not mean that there were in fact no ETP species in that areas

Methodology:

* Habitat suitability needs to account for full spatial distribution of ETP species
* Scale of aerial overlap was considered too broad
* No discussion undertaken with catching sector

ETP list:

* ETP list did not adequately consider data deficient and/or low risk species
* Atlantic sturgeon very unlikely to be caught.

In terms of next steps, the group agreed that further sources of data should be collated to inform any follow up research. The group agreed to collate data sources with a list to be drawn up by FN and shared with the group to add to. FN suggested MF’s PhD work could address the habitat suitability data.

***Actions:***

* FN to:
  1. share ETP presentation with Steering Group
  2. contact MMO around sharing Lara Leonard’s MMO VMS data
  3. share ETP list with Steering Group
* Secretariat to:
  1. speak with MF and Mike Kaiser about possibility of MF taking on habitat suitability analysis to support ETP actions
  2. review MSC Shetland scallop fishery’s ETP recording protocol as an example
* Steering Group to:
  1. review updated ETP list for any species or legislation that may have been missed and send any additions to Secretariat
  2. provide list of fishers who would be willing to do an ETP questionnaire

**Action 8: Habitats**

MF is currently undertaking a literature review on global scallop management practices, seabed habitats and benthic interaction. This should be complete by the end of November 2020.

MF can access >12m fleet VMS data from Marine Scotland but the <12m fleet mapping will be done using social science techniques. Covid-19 dependent, this work should start in Spring 2021. By end of Year 2 of the FIP MF hopes to have initial analysis of footprint >12m fleet overlapped with VMEs, some habitat suitability mapping and some relative benthic status mapping.

FN asked MF if she had received Lara Leonard’s MMO VMS data, which was for all >12m vessels. MF had not and believed she would have to contact them directly as there might be data protection act around sharing VMS data. MF and FN agreed to go through the habitat actions in the Action Plan further offline.

***Actions:***

* MF and FN to arrange a call to discuss habitat actions further

**Action 9: Ecosystem**

FN and BL circulated a draft questionnaire for a Scale, Intensity, Consequence Analysis (SICA), and the feedback will be used to update the document. FN proposed that the SICA would be done through a webinar and would require a separate workshop for each of the Round 2 FIPs.

FN reminded the group that a SICA analysis is used for data deficient stocks and so the group should not delay it to wait for more data to become available. Any delays may risk not having time to address the issues flagged by the SICA.

Actions:

* Secretariat to plan and deliver SICA workshops in Spring 2021

Any Other Business

Draft minutes will be circulated in two weeks’ time

Meeting Closes

11.30

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| Actions Arising | Responsibility |
| **Action 1: Stock status**   * FN to update Action Plan to show Marine Scotland Science has new position due to start * JPo, FB and CP to join Dogger bank sub-group of the FIP * Secretariat to:   1. ask Cefas for scallop survey update for English North Sea   2. set up call with FN and other interested members to discuss how Dogger Bank developments should be addressed by the FIP and set up the Dogger Bank sub-group | **FN**  **JPo, FB, CP**  **Secretariat** |
| **Actions 2 & 3: Harvest strategy and harvest control rules**   * FN to share alternative measures PowerPoint with BL * FB:   1. to draft an ETP alternative measures document for the group, based on her previous work in the Channel scallop FIP   2. update the group on upcoming SICG-Devolved Administrations management options meeting * JPo to share STECF report on 92mm scallop meshes with BL | **FN**  **FB**  **JPo** |
| **Action 4 & 5: Information and assessment**   * Secretariat to:   1. request recent ICES scallop Working Group report from LB, when available to understand gaps/delays for the FIP’s timeline   2. request Cefas’ Dogger Bank survey report from CB   3. collect more damage data from the Fishery Administration’s science bodies | **Secretariat** |
| **Action 6: Secondary species**   * BL and FN to circulate information sources used in the alternative measures report with the Steering Group members to provide any additional sources * CM and FN to discuss AFBI bycatch data further to provide quantitative information on secondary species bycatch * Secretariat to obtain information from the Isle of Man to inform BL’s alternative measures report. * Steering Group to provide feedback on BL alternative measures report, with a focus on identifying any research that may have been missed | **BL, FN**  **CM, FN**  **Secretariat**  **Steering group** |
| **Action 7: Endangered, threatened and protected species**   * FN to:   1. share ETP presentation with Steering Group   2. contact MMO around sharing Lara Leonard’s MMO VMS data   3. share ETP list with Steering Group * Secretariat to:   1. speak with MF and Mike Kaiser about possibility of MF taking on habitat suitability analysis to support ETP actions   2. review MSC Shetland scallop fishery’s ETP recording protocol as an example * Steering Group to:   1. review updated ETP list for any species or legislation that may have been missed and send any additions to Secretariat   2. provide list of fishers who would be willing to do an ETP questionnaire | **FN**  **Secretariat**  **Steering Group** |
| **Action 8: Habitats**   * MF and FN to arrange a call to discuss habitat actions further | **MF, FN** |
| **Action 9: Ecosystem**   * Secretariat to plan and deliver SICA workshops in Spring 2021 | **Secretariat** |