

Meeting Minutes

Area IVc Quota Advisory Group

Monday 1st March 2021 – Online via Zoom – 14:30 - 16:00

Attendees:

Justin Rowley (MMO) – Chair
Catherine Johnson (MMO) – minutes
Sarah Allison (MMO)
Lydia Osborne (DEFRA)
Paul Gilson
Ken Bagley
David Ferris
Lee Doughty
Wayne Brewster
Charles Walker
Unknown

Agenda

1. Introduction

JR. Introduced himself as the PMO (Principal Marine Officer) for the Eastern area and asked that the agenda is followed. Attendees should either raise a hand to ask a question or wait until AOB to discuss a non-agenda item.

SA. Introduced herself, explained her job share with Ed Baker and the format the meeting would follow. SA shared the graphs that would be used to form the quota discussion. As some were unfamiliar to the graphs, SA described what they illustrated and where the data came from i.e. sales notes. SA asked if everyone was happy with her description and continued once all agreed.

2. Update of uptake (Key stocks first quarter 2021)

NS Cod under 10s

SA. Presented uptake figures as per slides.

DF. Noted there was a dramatic reduction in available Cod and asked if SA could explain what happened.

SA. Emphasised the quota allocation is just for Jan-March and the numbers will change once the negotiations have been finalised.

DF. Asked if the change is likely to be an increase as the fishery has a massive value for trade outs.

SA. Recognised that it is a valuable stock, whether it is caught or used for trades, and will utilise its value for trades to a level based on the groups feedback offered next month.

Herring IVc & VIId under 10s

SA. Presented uptake figures as per slides and enquired whether the fishery was seasonal i.e. summer or winter.

KB. Advised it is considered a winter stock and it would be coming to the end of the herring season in this area by end of March but indicated there was no Herring out there.

SA. Asked if the current 15t limit for Area IVc – VIId was therefore adequate.

CW. Thought it was hard to comment as there was no real market for herring.

SA. Asked if the limit was kept as is, would a min-month variation be helpful.

KB. Suggested the limit would be caught in just one day and the should therefore be increased to 25t.

SA. Advised that 25t would not be sustainable.

KB. Asked where had the quota gone as it used to be higher.

SA. Explained the shift in quota allocation would be based on scientific data and advise from Cefas.

NS Mackerel Under 10s

SA. Presented uptake figures as per slides and asked if anyone in the group were targeting the fishery.

KB. Commented it was mostly a rod and line

SA. Therefore, moved on to the next species.

NS Nephrops under 10s

SA. Presented uptake figures as per slides and asked if this was considered a winter or summer fishery.

CW. Advised it was all year round and the current limit was not enough to as much as it could possibly go.

SA. Explained there was 62t to play with and took an action to look into a possible increase.

SA. Explained the Catch Limit Consultation process and recommended the group gave some input on setting the monthly quota limits. SA asked how they would prefer the data to be shared.

CW. Asked that it could be transmitted via email.

SA. To arrange email invitation

NS Skates and Rays under 10s

SA. Presented uptake figures as per slides

KB. Believes the current limit is way too low and more could be caught in one day.

SA. Advised it will remain at the current 2t limit while negotiations are ongoing and will increase as it did in previous years' where the trend was to swap in quota allowing the MMO to increase the limit.

PG. Reiterated that the current system is flawed. The perception is there is an abundance of the stock in the water which is in opposition to the scientific research and criticised there had not been any sensible research in recent years. PG agreed you could catch 4-5t per day. Without the allocation the market for the stock has reduced. What used to attract £2.50 per kilo now only sells for £1 in his area. So new scientific research and proper backing is needed before skates can be marketed correctly.

KB. Believes there is a market for it in Grimsby, however the quota does not allow them to catch enough.

SA. Cefas are best placed to address the comments about their scientific research and as they are expected to attend the next meeting, hopefully those questions can be answered.

KB. The skates and ray season starts in earnest for them around May.

NS Skates and Rays over 10s

SA. Presented uptake figures as per slides and confirmed the same applies for the over 10s as just discussed for the under 10s i.e. the limit will change after the negotiations come to a close at the end of March.

NS Sole under 10s

SA. Presented uptake figures as per slides. SA confirmed to be aware of the issues. Defra are working towards a solution. It was therefore suggested to keep this discussion during the regional group section of the meeting.

NS Sole Over 10s

SA. Presented uptake figures as per slides and advised the same applies as above.

DF. Asked if there was an early season would there be a move on the current 2t

SA. Explained swaps can happen in earnest after the negotiations have been finalised.

PG. Suggested the over and under 10 stock should be combined.

SA. Took an action to look into this and will get back to the group

PG. Pointed out that last years swaps were drastically different to previous years and asked if SA could offer a reason.

SA. Advised with all changes to quota restrictions there are numerous factors that are at play such as economic link and tradability. SA understands that sole, along with skate, are high on the agenda when it comes to swaps.

NS Sprats under 10s

SA. Presented uptake figures as per slides and asked if there were any vessels targeting the fishery other than the two vessels current aware of.

KB. Quota is requested every year but there is never an allowance agreed. It needs to be bigger to be worth it.

SA. Asked that this was expanded on.

PG. Explained it is currently typically targeted as fish meal. The limit needs to be around 20t for a vessel to economically target sprats.

CW. Expanded that the general public do not eat sprats.

SA. Suggested the discussion be continued with Defra later in the meeting.

NS Whiting under 10s

SA. Presented uptake figures as per slides. There were no comments or questions from the group.

SA. Summarised the main issues to be addressed are:

- The marketability and science behind the skates and rays,
- Nephrops quota being too low and
- The requirement for the under and over 10 Sole quotas to be aligned.

SA. Asked if there was anything else quota related to add

DF. Advised that EB had offered to address the lack of sprat quota in previous meetings but no feedback was offered.

SA. Will discuss this with EB and back to the group

PG. Asked if Spurdogs could be addressed. There is an abundance offshore and are in demand. It would be helpful to the industry if they were also an option to target.

SA. Suggested this be raised at the next meeting when Cefas will be attending.

3. Discussion on Regional Groups

LO. Introduced herself as being a part of the Defra Inshore Reform Team and has worked on Regional Groups (RGs) since the initial proposal workshops. LO emphasised the importance of the RGs and how a collaboration is essential to get the groups established. The RGs will be a way for the frustrations and the desires of the members to be raised.

LO. Explained the feedback from the workshops have indicated the area IVC would benefit from splitting the RG into two due to its size and diversity and therefore the boundaries of this split need to be discussed.

LO. Acknowledged the RGs will evolve over time and may not be perfect from the offset but the sooner they start the sooner discussions can begin.

SA. Reiterated there are two questions initially to address and require the members input to steer the direction they want the group to go.

1. Should the group be split into two?
2. If so, where should the division be?

LO. Explained the North and south boundaries and then opened the discussion of logical division lines.

PG. Pointed out the needs for those in the North are significantly different to those in the South so it would be a good idea to divide it into two regions to make sure both needs are met.

KB. As based in the middle of the region he found it difficult to suggest where the logical boundary should lie.

LO. Asked if the group agreed the size of the region requires two RGs. A unanimous response was yes.

DF. Asked if landing data would be used for dividing the region as targeted fisheries seemed like a factor that should be considered.

Both LO and SA acknowledged this made a great deal of sense and appreciated the point being raised.

PG. Also added there are differences in the gear types used on vessels and therefore targeting different stock. The further North of the region has more vessels targeting shellfish for example.

SA. Suggested a boundary line of Lowestoft and the two RGs would be North or South of Lowestoft.

PG. Agreed that sole is targeted more industrially south of Lowestoft.

DF. Highlighted the main concern would be who would manage the RGs, avoiding conflicting management from IFCA's looking out for the wrong region.

SA. Explained the hope for the RGs is to have a collective of attendees where quota is one of the agenda items but is not the sole purpose of the meeting. Where questions can be captured and having the right people in the right place in the right time would mean those questions would be answered. The RGs will evolve organically, but ultimately the aim is to avoid the MMO taking questions that are intended for Cefas or Defra and therefore cannot answer.

WB. Asked if the RGs are going to address issues that lie with IFCA, such as the current problems ongoing in the Wash.

LO. Explained the Quota Advisory Group won't be disbanded. The RGs are an opportunity to bring together everyone in one room to have a collaborative discussion. Defra are aware of the problems in the Wash and are hoping to work with the IFCA to address the situation. IFCA will be included in the RG meetings, all of which will be minuted and therefore the onus is placed on the right body to resolve.

WB. Expanded how the fishermen feel bypassed in the Wash by the IFCA and hopes the RGs will give them an opportunity to have their voices heard.

LO. Agreed the RGs will allow for the focus to be on local specific issues and the correct resources allocated to them. The RGs should be a two-way conversation.

WB. Appreciated the aim for the RGs as it would go a long way to have an input on the management of the fisheries.

LO. Acknowledged WB's specific situation and knows who the contact is within Defra relating to the matter.

LO. Took an action to pick this up offline

PG. Raised the main concern is to avoid having opposing management of the RGs (MMO/Defra opposing IFCA). PG reiterated WB's thoughts that the working relationship with IFCA has soured and would be keen to avoid affecting the improvements that have been made in working closer with MMO and Defra.

DF. Also reinforced PG and WB's feelings that the IFCA are not seen in a great light by the industry and it would be unfortunate to invest into an RG for the IFCA to "take over"

WB. Claimed the IFCA are blaming the MMO and Defra for the difficulties they cannot solve.

SA. Hopes the RG will myth-bust these matters and acknowledged this is highlighted an issue that obviously needs addressed.

JR. Suggested that the group await the outcome of an imminent meeting before the matter is discussed further in this forum.

WB and DF agreed they are experiencing similar problems with different IFCAs and have only learned this by having the opportunity for an open discussion within this meeting.

SA. Suggested that the IFCAs need to attend RG meeting in order for these difficulties to be addressed and asked if the RGs should become more established before they are invited.

LD. Feels that IFCAs do not know enough about the fishing industry and are focused more on conservation. LD. Went on to explain the system for complaining to an IFCA is biased and imbalanced as there is no recourse. The grievance is ultimately re-directed back to the councillor it is aimed at. LD feels the IFCA would benefit from an independent governing body to have oversight of fishing matters.

PG. Advised that fishermen's membership upon the IFCA committees have reduced in recent years from around eight to just two and that the RG should follow suit by having two IFCA members (one from Kent and Essex and one from Eastern). This would ensure a voice with proper management of our regions are maintained. A conservation agenda does not consider fishing. There should be a focus on fisheries to ensure its future.

LO. Thanked everyone for their input and suggested the representation of the group should be the first agenda item for discussion.

SA. Summarised the comments have suggested the logical boundary is North and South of Lowest and should also take into account target species.

LO. Asked if anyone had thoughts on who should chair the RG meetings. Would it be beneficial to have an independent as chair?

DF. Suggested whoever was chair should be someone based within an authority like Defra or MMO rather than from the industry, but the emphasis should be to have a balanced committee.

PG. Suggested someone from Defra would be best placed. They would have the relevant knowledge but are clear enough of the current affairs in the industry.

The majority agreed.

SA. Enquired how the MMO should advertise and invite other members of the industry to join the RGs.

DF. Suggested a word or "nudge" from an Enforcement Officer at the coast would work.

WB. Suggested emails

JR. Agreed to both

PG. Pointed out that using social media can often attract negative input.

SA. Asked that contact details are passed on for any interested parties that have been missed in the invites.

4. AOB

WB. Asked JR when they could pick up the conversation relating to the Wash.

JR. Agreed to call WB on 03.03.2021 to discuss and arrange a meeting if need be.

DF. Asked that WB share the outcome of the pending meeting with the IFCA.

5. DONM

SA. Advised the date of the next meeting is pencilled in but will be firmly set following the negotiations being finalised at the end March as the conversation will then be based on firm knowledge.

JR. Thanked everyone for their attendance and input and drew the meeting to a close