

REGIONAL FISHERIES GROUP

Meeting Notes Tuesday 4th May 2021

North West – 7a

14:00 – 16:00 Zoom Conference Call

Attendees:

DEFRA

Phil McBryde
Lydia Osborne
Andy Carroll

MMO

Mark Taylor
Den Fowler
Richard Hoskin
Ed Baker
Sarah Allison
Katie James
Julian Roberts

CEFAS

Carl O'Brien - Cefas

IFCA

Stephen Atkins
Joe Moulton

INDUSTRY

Ron Graham
Brian Phillipson

1. **Chair Welcome & Introductions**
2. **Scene setting and Introductions – Phil McBryde/Richard Hoskin**

There are 6 regional groups; these will be a forum for bringing together policy makers, scientists, fishermen and regulators in order to work together to compliment and deliver an intelligent approach to fisheries management.

This is picking up the Future of Our Inshore Fisheries action plan which came out of the conference. We are trying to move away from top-down one size fits all management as that approach doesn't work.

There are opportunities from having left the EU, we want to listen to your priorities and concerns to see how we can do things differently. These groups are a platform in which to elevate conversations, produce trials, pilots and collaborative science ideas.

There will be an opportunity for 1:1 surgery after meetings when we move into face to face environment.

These won't be perfect to start with and are expected to evolve. It is important that you feedback on these group meetings so we can collectively learn and improve.

Terms of Reference have been drafted and we will send those out after the meeting to be commented on before future meetings are held.

MMO / Defra will chair these meetings and provide a secretariat for the rest of the year but going forward you can recommend/ make suggestions for this role.

The objective is to work together and identify challenges with different regulators which affect your region.

Group suggestion that the Villa area could be better represented by opening up future meetings to all within the fishing industry, both vessel and shore-based interests.

Local difficulties include sustaining business due to the decrease in product price, issues relating to transportation availability and the lack of North West Seafood promotion.

3. Annual negotiations

The UK TAC limits had been extended until the end of 2021 with the EU being extended until July 2021.

Current stocks are being fished at sustainable yield levels and the stocks are significantly higher than expected.

Despite the increase in allocations, the picture looks dire for the industry in the North West.

Current market price weighed up with the geographical location of the industry in the North West and the transport costs makes transporting product to southern markets unattractive.

The issue of vessels fishing in the Liverpool area prior to stocks arriving in the top of the North West may also be impacting on catch opportunities.

Concern from industry that recent funding distribution had not taken the North West into consideration. The application process for funding was described as difficult to follow, time consuming and that there was an overwhelming feeling of disappointment regarding the funding allocations.

Bottom-towed gear vessels feel discriminated against with regards to funding opportunities compared to the static gear / potting sector.

Marine Officers are available to assist with matters such as grant applications.

ACTION: MMO will take back the concerns raised to the funding team.

4. Quota management – Presentation (Katie James)

Katie presented the Quota management presentation; group discussed stock and catch limits (see appendix 1).

5. Collaborative science

Science plays a significant role in the allocation of stocks; regional feedback goes a long way to understanding what is important to the fishing industry in the North West.

Cefas has previously conducted research in the NW region looking into the emergence of cuttlefish, the abundance of skate in the region and how gear selectivity measures could be better used to prevent by catch.

The apparent abundance of bass in the North West was raised with questions about the control measures currently in force. Suggestion for a regional approach to bass control measures. Cefas explained that a good bass stock in one area serves the areas that are more greatly affected as the adult breeding bass do not tend to be transient in nature.

The issue of the Landing Obligation and the discard exemption not applying to VIIa plaice was raised. This was causing issues with a local trawler in a PO running down his quota by landing undersized plaice which did not attract a good price compared to that of sized plaice.

Question about why plaice in the North Sea could be returned undersized due to its survivability but not in VIIa. Why was plaice deemed to have less chance of survival in VIIa? Harbour authorities are likely to run out of space for the storage of undersized species and is not a realistic prospect.

Future meetings should include the shellfish sector following the recent issues the industry faced with the EU re-classification of UK waters.

ACTION: Three issues identified for Cefas to take away and discuss:

- Bass control measures
- Razor clam fisheries
- Funding opportunities

6. AOB

Despite low numbers of industry participants, a good level of relevant industry issues were raised and can be addressed. Greater participation is to be promoted through coastal teams for the next meeting.

Highlighted that fisherman would like results but have experienced a regular turnover of fishing agency staff and feels that this meeting needs to bring about results and is not just lip service to the fishing industry.

Meeting Closed

Appendix 1

Stock	U10's Comments	O10's comments
Cod VIIa	This not viable to fish for a targeted single species in the North West. Nephrops and skate are the only real viable species to target.	-
Herring VIIa	<p>There is no viable fishery in the North West for herring.</p> <p>Suggestion that the first sale of product should take place at Whitehaven to drive down the cost of transportation. In recent years both Donnan's in Whitehaven and the Fleetwood fish auction have gone out of business, which has had a knock-on effect to the industry.</p> <p>Supporting seasonalised quota allocations like the shellfish seasonal calendar and control measures may better serve the industry.</p> <p>There have been recent struggles in the shellfish sector with the departure from the EU and the re-classification of UK waters.</p>	-
Plaice VIIa	No Comments	-
Nephrops VII	No Comments	-
Sole VIIa	No Comments	-