

# REGIONAL FISHERIES GROUP

Meeting Notes 10<sup>th</sup> January 2023

## North West- 7a

15:00 – 17:00 MS Teams Conference Call

Attendees:

### **INDUSTRY**

Brian Phillipson  
John McAvoy Senior  
John McAvoy Junior  
Phil Williams  
Steven Brown  
Kevin woodcock  
Simon Ward

### **MMO:**

Rebecca Thomas  
Courtney Inch  
Eleanor Holford  
Daniel Wardle  
Tim Dixon  
Katie James  
Caley McIntosh  
Louise Price  
Steve Johnston  
Lizzie Wyatt  
Dan Howarth  
Kat Wignall  
Jon Parr

### **Defra:**

Andrew Carroll  
Lydia Osborne  
Freya Mitchison

### **Cefas:**

Kieran Hyder

### **IFCA:**

Cristina-Steliana  
Joseph Moulton  
Phil

### **Seafish:**

Rebecca Tracey

## **1. Welcome, Introduction, actions and updates – Steve Johnston (MMO)**

- Introduction to Dan Wardle, the new representative from the MMO for the Northwest region.

## **2. North West Initiative update- Courtney Inch (MMO)**



Executive Summary  
TMFC Ltd report on I

Courtney Inch (MMO) updated on the North West Initiative.

- NW initiative came about from concerns about the future of the North West fishing industry.
- NFFO, Seafish and MMO hired a consultant to review the North West fishing industry and he looked at everything from fishing opportunities, to supply chains, to road networks and market access. From that, the consultant issued 12 recommendations which may improve the prospects of the industry.
- The summary of the report will be available in this meeting's notes.
- At the last RFG, Courtney updated on progress since the report was delivered which included the establishment of the North West cross-supply chain industry group including representatives from this group, government, NFFO and wider industry.
- The group determined what the main priorities from the report are as well as what was needed to deliver those priorities. Out of this, the job of the Regional Manager of the North West was established and a clear outline of the role and requirements for that person were discussed.

The Regional Fisheries Group update is, as of 10<sup>th</sup> January, the role of the Regional Manager for the North West has gone live and will be advertised until 6<sup>th</sup> February. The role is with Seafish for an initial period of 3 years and will be reporting into the cross-supply chain industry group.

You can find out more about the role here: [Regional Manager North West England | Vacancies | Seafish](#)

Please circulate this link to anyone you think would be a great fit. We're keen to ensure that the person is right to fulfil the role and is someone who is knowledgeable of the area and the industry.

Question from industry: *Is there the possibility of an online auction being prioritised?* Something that has been discussed and while it is not a priority identified for the first year of the manager, it is something we think would be good to investigate for following years.

Question from industry: *Degree needed for the role?* Lack of degree would not stop someone with significant relevant experience but was requested to help the post holder meet some of the requirements of the role such as for funding bids and leading science.

### **3. Quota – Katie James (MMO)**

Katie James from the Quota Management team (MMO) updated the group on quota allocations for the coming year. Presentation can be found below:



NW 7a Quota  
Presentation Jan 23.p

Katie gave an update on the uptake of Cod, Plaice, Sole and Nephrops in the area and explained the allocations in 7a.

Question from industry: *Are we still doing international swaps?* Yes we are still swapping when we need to, last year Katie traded mostly through UK PO's but if the uptake suddenly increases she will look internationally for trading if she cannot source the quota inside the UK.

If anyone has any questions surrounding quota in the North West, please contact [katie.james@marinemanagement.org.uk](mailto:katie.james@marinemanagement.org.uk).

#### 4. **Whelk FMP update – Rebecca Treacy (Seafish)**

Rebecca Treacy from Seafish summarised Whelk fisheries management plan process, aims and objectives and what the next steps are.

In March 2022 Seafish was commissioned as the delivery lead on the common whelk Fisheries management plan (FMP) by Defra. The aims of the FMPs are to deliver the objectives of the fisheries act 2020, with specific objectives around managing fishing effort, data gathering and evidence-based management, minimising environmental impacts of fishing activities and climate change adaptation and mitigation.

As part of the FMP development process Seafish is codeveloping FMP objectives, drafting the scientific research plans, drafting the evidence statement, and carrying out stakeholder engagement activities.

So far, stakeholder engagement has been positive from Newlyn to Peterhead and has successfully raised awareness about FMPs and gathered feedback on the draft content. So far, Seafish has engaged with 480 stakeholders from all sectors, including dedicated online sessions for NGO's.

Hoping to formalise the structure of the SIAG to assess the impact of latent capacity in the fleet, to establish stakeholder engagement mechanism on Non-quota species matters, to address marine spatial conflict, to promote the consumption of UK shellfish, facilitate and promote trade opportunities, develop advice on shellfish welfare issues, address human welfare issues in the supply chain, build an understanding of the sectors carbon footprint.

Whelk specific objectives are to develop and implement an improved data collection programme, establish key stock boundaries, establish a reliable CPU assessment method, to develop a method to assess whelk stocks, to minimise impact of fishing activities on the wider marine environment, address interaction with other fisheries and to align fishing effort with actual or likely stocks. These objectives came directly from the FMP working groups and have been added to by industry and researchers.

Stakeholder engagement emerging themes: positive view on collaborative engagement, wanting to improve data collection, having evidence-based management, and industry input in marine spatial planning processes. There were mixed views on regional importance/ relevance of addressing latent capacity and on the climate change objectives given the scale of the sector. Negative concerns of trust issues and bringing in management previously and how these objectives will interact with prior standing laws such as IFCA byelaws.

Seafish are updating the FMP to reflect the feedback that has been received from industry. Seafish are on track to provide the first draft FMP to Defra by the end of January 2023. After this, there will

be a formal public consultation on this draft FMP by Defra April to June 2023. The Whelk FMP aims to be finalised and published by the Autumn of 2023.

Question from industry: *It is very complex for Whelks in the Irish sea as everyone has different rules, getting a joined-up approach to the way new management measures are brought in is important.* These conversations are ongoing, and Defra will move this forward for public consultation. Any thoughts or concerns will be mentioned in that public consultation, look out for the consultation to be circulated in April.

Question from industry: *At what stage do you create manageable measures?* Rebecca responded that Seafish have to ensure that the management measures are correct with regards to what industry and stakeholders want, so after it goes out to public consultation then the management measures will be formed.

If you have any further questions, please contact [fisheriesmanagementplans@seafish.co.uk](mailto:fisheriesmanagementplans@seafish.co.uk)

#### 5. **Queen Scallop proposed closure update – Louise Price (MMO)**



Queen Scallop  
Closure - NW RFG 1C

Louise Price from the Fisheries management team (MMO) gave an overview on queen scallop proposed closures. The closures will be taking place in 6a and 7a from 1<sup>st</sup> April and 30<sup>th</sup> June 2023. This closure is per previous years.

The closure will be exacted by a license variation. This variation will state:

*This licence does not authorise fishing for queen scallops (*aequipecten opercularis*) in ICES area VIa and VIIa between 00 : 01 hours on 1st April 2023 and 23:59 hours on 30th June 2023.*



Queen Scallop  
Closure 6a and 7a FII

A 1 page leaflet giving the reason's rationale for the closure can be found here:

If you have any further questions, please contact [effort@marinemanagement.org.uk](mailto:effort@marinemanagement.org.uk)

#### 6. **Cefas stock assessment sole, bass & Plaice – Kieran Hyder (Cefas)**



Kieran\_Hyder\_NW\_R  
FG\_Jan\_2023\_v0.2.pd

Kieran Hyder from Cefas explained that the International Council for the Exploration of the Seas (ICES) provide advice which is aligned with the science for that fishery and management objectives.

ICES research is independent, it is scientific and repeatable by anyone.

Stock assessments – there are multiple ways to do stock assessments for example, quantitative analytical, qualitative, surveys, catch only, landings only, by catch fisheries. The purpose of stock assessment are to work out the spawning stock biomass (SSB) and the exploitation rate. With this information, ICES can then give advice on the maximum sustainable yield (MSY).

ICES assess all the data that is available and create the best available method. This is then reviewed externally by people who have relevant understanding of the methodologies and test them to see if it is robust. This method is repeated annually.

In summary: Data is collated by ICES -> expert group runs stock assessment -> generates advice -> reviewed by advisory committee.

This then produces advice sheets for any stock that is assessed. There are four different things that are always presented.

- 1) Catches (landings and discards)
- 2) Number of recruitment (juvenile fish that are joining the fishery)
- 3) Fishing mortality
- 4) Spawning stock biomass (SSB)

#### **Updates for 7a:**

Plaice 7a:

- SSB increased since 2012, stable at a high level and above biomass reference points.
- Fishing mortality declined since 1992 and below FMSY since 2011.
- Recruitment: phase of reduced recruitment.
- ICES advice: in 2023 catches should be no more than 2039 tonnes (which is lower than 2022 due to a downward revision in stock biomass)
- TAC is 2039 (-26% on 2022) = 1042 tonnes of quota for the UK

Sea Bass 7a:

- SSB: declining from 2009 until 5 years ago.
- Fishing mortality: increased peaking in 2013 before a rapid decline to below FMSY.
- Recruitment: after a period of above average recruitment, recruitment is low, fluctuating without trend since 2008.
- ICES Advice: 2023 removals no more than 2542tonnes. 15% increase from 2022.
- Non-quota (no TAC), so increase in limits:
  - Trawls/seines – 3.8 per year, 5% trip limit
  - Hooks & lines – 6.2t per year
  - Fixed gillnets – 1.6t per year
  - Alignment of closed seasons

Sole 7a:

- SSB: increased since 2014 and is above MSY in 2012.
- Fishing mortality: has been below FMSY since 2013, but increased due to TAC uptake in 2019-2021.
- Recruitment: higher in 2016, 2018 and 2019. A reduction but estimated to be lower in 2021 and 2022.

- ICES advice: 2023 catches no more than 605t. Reduction due to combination of a downward revision of stock size and low recruitments.
- TAC: 605t (-23% on 2022). 140t for UK.

Question from industry: *The assessment in the Irish sea, how much of it comes from landings dating and how much comes from trawl surveys?* Kieran responded that it is a combination of the two that are used, but for sole and plaice it is survey data which tell us what the relevant trend is in the stock over time.

Question from industry: *Raised concern that historical data may not be reflective of what the actual stocks were due to mis recording of landings data?* Kieran responded that the landings data is used to give an indication of what's happening year on year, so if there are mis recording it will have been resubmitted to ICES with the updated and corrected data especially from other data sources such as Ireland and Belgium.

Question from industry: *Regarding Bass stock assessments, you've said recruitment is highly variable, what data is used to estimate annual recruitment?* Kieran responded that Cefas use the Solent Sea bass survey as an index of recruitment – whether this is representative of the whole area is questioned because it is a big stock area. Cefas are keen to therefore include a time series on data collection, there is also information coming in from Ireland which will be considered as part of the benchmark to help with a broader time series in that year.

Question from industry: *With some of the round fish stocks, there are large recruitments coming through e.g cod, haddock, and whiting, where the quota is not matching what we are seeing on the ground. How do you consider the next year class of recruitment?* Kieran responded that it depends how old the fish are when they enter the fishery, for example Sea Bass don't enter the fishery until they are 4 or 5 years old. If there was a strong year class coming through you would see that in the trawl data and in the recruitment information you get in the assessment which is considered when fitting the assessment going forwards. It is important to note that these assessments are very complicated and use all the data that is available, collected by many different countries, it is then brought together by international scientists, and assessed externally so this is not a one size fits all approach. The better the data is the better the output from the models.

If you have any further questions, please contact: [Kieran.hyder@cefas.gov.uk](mailto:Kieran.hyder@cefas.gov.uk)

#### 7. **License uncapping – Andy Carroll (Defra)**

Andy Carroll from Defra updated that last year Defra lifted the cap on licensing for those that are subject to it and placed it back on the 31<sup>st</sup> December – Defra are now reviewing the outcome and taking it to ministers to suggest lifting it permanently. During 2023 there will be a consultation on this, the date is to be confirmed but Defra will work with you all in the conversation period. Andy assured the industry that you will have the opportunity to have your say.

#### 8. **AOB- Steve Johnston (MMO)**

- HMPA consultation has finished now, expecting a summary of responses coming out soon. The next stages then will be Defra will provide evidence to the secretary of state and more info will be coming out soon.

- To inform all, the second round of the UK Fisheries Fund is open until February 3<sup>rd</sup> 2023 (Please see Appendix 4 for more information on that).
- Question from Industry: Regarding bass authorisation for commercial beach fishermen with IFCA track record, can IFCA/MMO look at changing the regulation include this sector? Steve added that an important point is that when the bass restriction came into place it looked at commercial fishing from vessels but there is other ways that people would have made a living such as netting, so those people using an alternative method can no longer do that because of the way the regulations are written. The RFG team will feed this back. Also, Freya Mitchison stated that she is working on the bass fisheries management plan for Defra and that any changes to regulations would be part of the FMP rather than annual consultations. The FMP will be formed based on PolicyLab recommendations so make sure to engage with the Bass FMP process. Point has been noted and will be raised with relevant bodies.

You can read more about the Bass FMP here:



FAQ-Policy-Labs-rol  
e-in-helping-create-

IFCAs across England are looking to recruit general members. The general member roles are voluntary roles and are appointed from various sectors (commercial fisheries, marine environment specialists, recreational fisheries and anything else i.e. divers). The link to the job role and how to apply can be found here: [Exciting opportunity to participate in the management of inshore fisheries and marine conservation - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/jobs/marine-environment-and-fisheries/2022/02/exciting-opportunity-to-participate-in-the-management-of-inshore-fisheries-and-marine-conservation). If you have any questions about these roles and how to get involved with IFCAs, please contact [leanne.tan@marinemanagement.org.uk](mailto:leanne.tan@marinemanagement.org.uk).

- **The closing date is 13th February.**

Please see below for relevant appendices.

#### **Appendix 1:**

Industry at the NW asked if we could look at introducing an exemption for Plaice 7a. We have decided not to pursue the exemption for Plaice ICES area 7a at this time for the following reasons:

- Science from Cefas shows 'the evidence is there is 'low' survival levels of plaice when caught in Nephrops trawl fisheries.
- Introducing an exemption would reduce the quota.
- Introducing an exemption would not make discards compulsory, so smaller fish could continue to be landed if there is a market for them.
- There is very little evidence from catch app to show the scale of the problem.
- We hope the NW Initiative will support industry, open up new markets for industry and reduce the incentive to catch small plaice for bait.

If you would like more details, please send over any questions you have. Defra are reviewing lots of legislation over the coming years so this will hopefully be reviewed in the future.

#### **Appendix 2:**

The i-VMS project is progressing whilst independent testing is taking place on the 4 type approved devices, fishers can still research and order devices during this period.

The funding for the devices is available until the 4<sup>th</sup> May 2023.

The SI has not been laid or implemented as of yet but with a view towards this being set for later in the year.

Update on IVMS can be found here:



IVMS.pdf

### Appendix 3:

Schemes/ grants which might be useful for the inshore fleet/non-sector.

We've seen a healthy uptake in FaSS2 which opened for applications in April this year and continues to be available for prospective applicants up until March 2025.

If you are interested in applying, please contact the grants team at [FaSS.queries@marinemanagement.org.uk](mailto:FaSS.queries@marinemanagement.org.uk) to discuss their project.

We have 3 confirmed panel dates for 2023 for those projects where the total cost exceeds £150,000, listed below.

Finally, there is a phasing in period for safety rails and non-slip deck which are two common items in Health and Safety apps we often receive. MCA have confirmed that these items will become mandatory on 5<sup>th</sup> September 2023 so for any vessel that isn't classed as new (built after 6 September 2021) applicants can apply for these items until that 5<sup>th</sup> September date.

3 Panels		
Deadline	Panel	Days between
31/01/2023	23/03/2023	51
31/05/2023	26/07/2023	56
30/09/2023	21/11/2023	52

### Appendix 4:

The UK Seafood Fund (UKSF) are providing two rounds of funding.

**UKSF Round 2** is currently open and is focused on infrastructure: The deadline for applications is February 3rd, 2023.



**UKSF Round 3** is not yet open, but it will be focused on fleet modernization and engine replacement for the SSCF. Defra held an industry webinar recently and have circulated a Q&A document about Round 3 which can be found here:



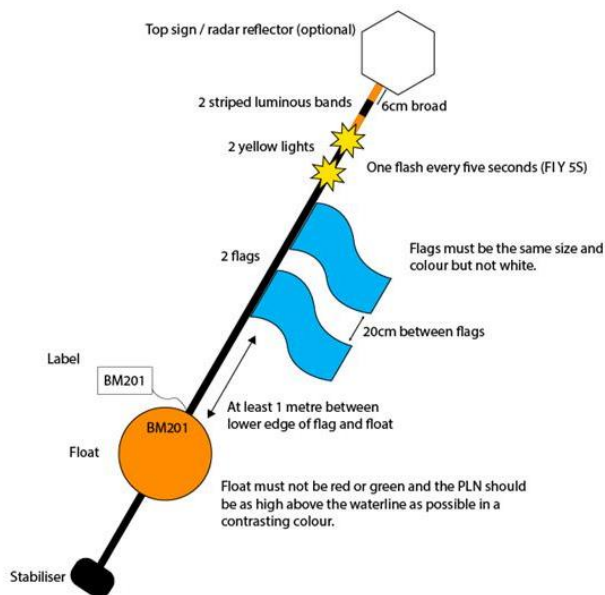
Fleet Modernisation  
QA.pdf

If you would like to ask further questions you can register and submit questions on the system here:  
<https://scis.marineservices.org.uk/workbench.ofml>

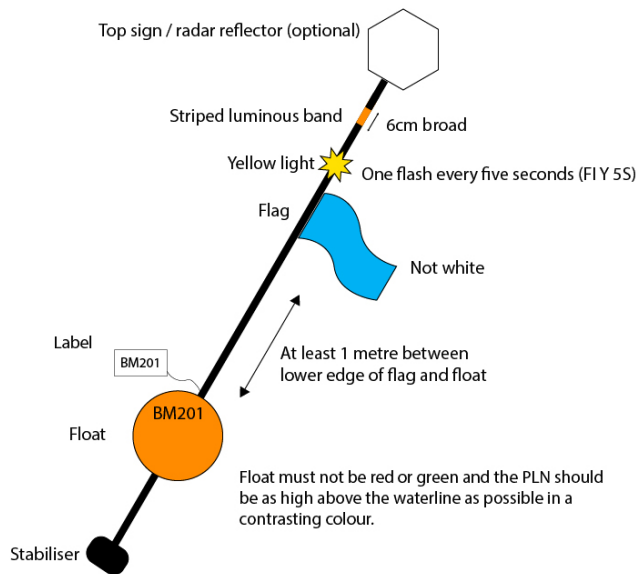
## Appendix 5:

### Guidance on marking of fishing gear, retrieval, and notification of lost gear

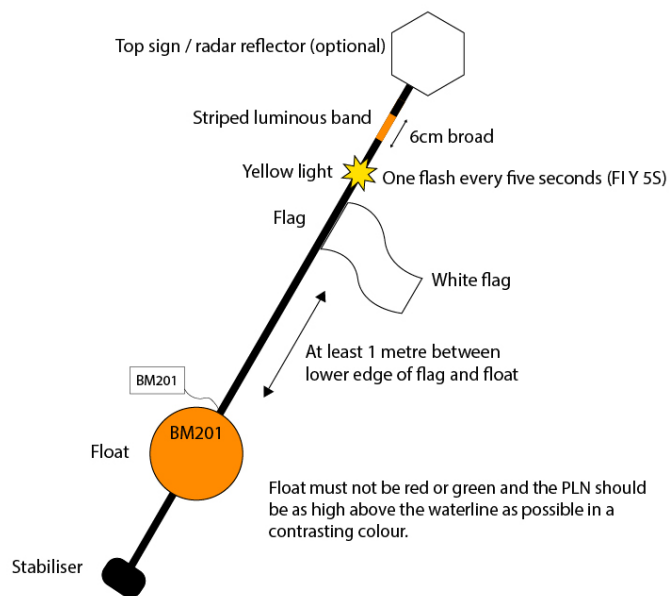
Information can be found here: [Marking of fishing gear, retrieval and notification of lost gear - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk)



**Figure 1:** Diagram of a western sector marker buoy



**Figure 2:** diagram of an eastern sector marker buoy



**Figure 3:** diagram of an intermediary marker buoy

Other useful resources:

[How to Label \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk)

[Boarding Ladder infographic \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk)

[Electronic Logbook V5 \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk)

[How to complete a Paper Log Book \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk)