

Meeting Notes 17th September 2024

North West – 7a

10:30 – 12:30 MS Teams Conference Call

Summary

Meeting title	NW RFG Meeting
Attended participants	18
Start time	10:25
End time	11:36
Meeting duration	01:11:24s

Attendees

Industry	MMO	DEFRA	IFCA
Ron Graham	Steve Johnston	Andrew Carroll	Joseph Moulton
	Daniel Wardle	Phil Green	
MCA	Caley McIntosh	Helen Stevens	
Kate Webb	Katie James		SEAFISH
MCA Surface Hub	Jacob Bestwick		Sheriene Murphy
	Yasmin Tordoff		Aoife Martin
NFFO	Philip Collier		
Mike Roach			CEFAS
			Emily Roebuck

Agenda

1. Steve Johnston, MMO – Welcome & Introduction
2. Katie James & Jacob Bestwick, MMO – Quota Update Q&A
3. Phil Green, DEFRA – EU Negotiations Discussion
4. Sheriene Murphy & Aoife Martin, SEAFISH – NW Initiative
5. Emily Roebuck, CEFAS – Clean Catch Second Trial
6. Steve Johnston, MMO – Any Other Business

Contact details

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Recording

The meeting was recorded and can be viewed at the following link:

<https://youtu.be/Kf6Gld9ihk4>

1. Steve Johnston, MMO – Welcome & Introduction

Steve Johnston introduced himself as the Principal Marine Officer for the North West and the Chair of this meeting. Steve did not receive any objections to the meeting being recorded nor were there any questions prior to the start of the first speaker.

Steve asked Dan Wardle (Northwest RFG Lead) to summarise his coastal visits since the last RFG meeting. Dan stated that he visited Silloth and Workington at the start of this year and was in Fleetwood for the opening of the Neptune Fish Park. He has also had correspondence with the fishers in Barrow and Fleetwood throughout the year discussing key areas of concerns on the coast.

2. Katie James & Jacob Bestwick, MMO – Quota Update Q&A

Katie James introduced herself as part of the quota team and explained that her and Jacob recorded a video presentation of the quota slides which had already been sent out to the group, but she would share some slides in order to aid the discussion.

A copy of the presentation can be found here:



NW 7a Quota Presentation August

Katie presented on Cod 7A available quota and uptake for under 10-meter vessels, comparing years from 2021 to 2024. Katie stated that the quota update advised current allocation is 14.8 tonnes, but she has since managed to secure another 11-12 tonnes since then for the under 10 metre fleet and is currently looking at a cross-year swap for next year. Katie stated that if the fleet are interested in cod, the quota team need to know what a viable amount is and what sort of other stocks industry are seeing so that they can work out where to set the catch limits, so please get in touch. *Please refer to the video presentation for further information.*

Katie presented the same information on Sole 7A and advised that catch limits for this stock have moved back from 400 kilos bycatch to a 2-tonne targetable catch limit. Katie also advised that the information on the gov.uk webpage indicating a 200kg catch limit was because of a human error 'glitch' and has since been rectified. Katie stated that she is looking at cross year trades to try and maintain the 2-tonne catch limit going through January. Although uptake hasn't been significant so far, consistency and support may provide a viable fishery in future. *Please refer to the presentation for further information.*

Katie concluded by urging industry members to get in touch any time if they require any help or have any questions regarding quota. Contact details for Katie and Jacob can be found in the 'Contact Details' section.

Questions, Comments & Answers:

Q: Steve Johnston asked if the quota team were confident that there will be no situation where sole will be classed as bycatch only again, because this caused quite a lot of knock-on effects in the amount of time it took to get rectified.

A: Katie James stated that ultimately this is out of their hands and sits with the ICES advice and what happens at the negotiations, so she could not guarantee what is going to happen following negotiations when the Secretary of State determination is published in late December. ICES advice is currently a 3% cut, so we wouldn't expect a significant change.

Q: Steve Johnston asked Andy Carroll whether there has been any movement on a definition of bycatch regarding catch limits.

A: Andy advised that the negotiations team may be able to answer this, or it can be taken away to be answered later.

Q: Joseph Moulton asked if there is a specific species we were looking at for pressing on a definition of bycatch.

A: Steve Johnston stated that just in general and mentioned that pollack and other stocks have been set to bycatch only. The old catch composition rules were quite clear on, but it's not been clearly defined in the last few years which makes it difficult for fishers to know what the rules are and for us to enforce the rules. Steve stated that there have been discussions around this and he is trying to get a definition.

Joe advised that bycatch is a word used in the bass statutory instrument and IFCA are likely to set catch composition limits for intertidal commercial fishers for bass bycatch.

3. Phil Green, DEFRA – EU Negotiations Discussion

Phil introduced himself and stated that he works in the Celtic Sea, Irish Sea, and Western Channel team with EU division, and is responsible for the TAC negotiations for quota species each year. Phil stated that we have two zero TAC stocks, cod and whiting, which seem to be driven by low recruitment and so there is no improvement with the two stocks. The consensus that is likely to be approached again for 2025 is to allocate some form of bycatch allocation, with whiting being the more important of the two in relation to the nephrops fishery.

Phil stated that Plaice Irish Sea is experiencing a 21% decrease in advice and is going from 19 or 2 tonnes this year to 15 or 4 tonnes in terms of the ICES headline advice. Haddock Irish Sea is experiencing a 16% decrease in the 2025 advice and is going from 2263 tonnes this year to 1893 tonnes for 2025.

Sole Irish Sea was reopened mid-year on the basis of in-year advice from ICES. Where this was originally a zero TAC advice stock with a bycatch only provision, this was amended in June with the EU to 625 tonnes and the bycatch provision was removed. This has reopened the fishery as a target fishery for the rest of 2024. The advice for 2025 is a small decrease of 3%.

Phil stated that Nephrops 7 advice will come out later in the year. In regard to Herring, ICES did an in-year revision and advised that Herring headline advice should have been 32% less than was originally advised. The minister took the decision not to take action on that new advice this year and ICES aren't going to provide 2025 advice until October, but it's likely that we are going to expect a drop due to the in-year advice of 2024.

There are decreases across the large majority of stocks in the Irish and Celtic Sea. The main aim is to manage the declines of those stocks.

Phil concluded by asking if anyone had any thoughts or questions.

To feed back any views or ask questions about EU negotiations to Phil and his team, please get in touch with the RFG mailbox regionalfisheriesgroups@marinemanagement.org.uk.

Questions, Comments & Answers:

Q: Steve Johnston asked what was the rationale for the Irish Sea Sole stock being bycatch only?

A: Phil stated that ICES determined it should be set at zero advice. Every zero-catch stock has a small bycatch TAC applied because there are mixed fishery interactions with target stocks that need to be accounted for. There was an update in the software assessment and the model assessments which gave a new headline

advice of 625 tonnes. The bycatch provision was applied when it was understood to be zero advice. Because the in-year benchmark set the headline advice to 625 tonnes, it was deemed to be in a state that could be targeted so the UK and EU agreed to remove the bycatch provision.

Q: Steve Johnston asked if there is a chance this could happen again or is it likely that it will be given an allocation for this year and won't be zero?

A: Phil responded saying the headline advice for Sole is 6 or 9 tonnes, it is likely that sole will be given this allocation if they apply the headline advice.

Q: Steve stated that it caused a lot of problems for vessels that wanted to fish for sole at the start of the year when we didn't have a definition of bycatch, so it affected their ability to potentially catch sole. He then asked if Phil knew if there has been any movement on bycatch definition?

A: Phil advised that Zac Nugent and his team have been leading discussions, but there isn't a definition that has been agreed. Currently, the general expectation is that fishers are expected to manage their allocation and not be actively targeting the fishery. The new definition is still being developed.

4. Sheriene Murphy & Aoife Martin, Seafish – NW Initiative

Sheriene Murphy provided an update on the Northwest England Seafood Action plan.

A copy of the presentation can be found here:



Seafish NW Action
Plan Presentation.ppt

Background

In March 2022, a report was commissioned by the National Federation of Fishermen's Organisations on the supply chain of seafood across the Northwest of England, and this was supported by the MMO and Seafish. The report made 12 recommendations with a focus on strengthening the connections in the Northwest to ensure a consistent supply chain. A list of these can be found in the presentation.

Current Priorities

Recommendation 2: Establish a cross-supply chain working group to discuss issues of common interest and develop projects

Recommendation 3: Commission a study of the transport network and make recommendations on logistic solutions to provide access to markets

Recommendation 5: Develop a NW Seafood branding toolkit and support a local fish festival

Recommendation 6: Support fishing trials to promote diversification of species where markets are strong and stock abundance is high

Recommendation 7: Develop digital/social media content

Meetings

In January 2024, a cross-supply chain meeting was held in Whitehaven which focused on looking at supply chain cohesion and which initiatives to take forward. Following this, Seafish revised the list of priorities and research was undertaken to inform decisions on future work streams.

Thornback Ray

It was made clear that there were plenty of thornback rays on the fishing grounds in the Northwest and Fleetwood fish market were keen to see a steady supply of skate and premium species. Fisher's stated that they could not get a good price for skate wings and there was also concern that thornback ray was squeezing out other prime fish stocks and predated on nephrops.

When looking into retail, there appeared to be a decline in skate sales. Seafish conducted a survey and spoke with fishmongers who stated that chefs can often be reluctant to buy skates and rays because they are unsure if it is sustainable. They also spoke to a nutritionist who explained the health benefits of eating skate.

In order to highlight the industry in Cumbria and promote thornback ray to consumers, Seafish have been in touch with the celebrity chef CJ Jackson and are currently filming social media pieces in the North West. This will be broken down into 3-4 shore social media pieces, each showcasing the fishing industry, the livelihoods of fishermen, and why thornback ray is a sustainable choice. CJ will be showing consumers how to prepare simple and easy recipes for skate. These videos will be shared on social media and on the Seafish website.

Next steps will look at promoting other northwest seafood to restaurants in the North West to try and encourage more consumption.

Mussels

In regard to mussels, Seafish are supporting producers to explore the feasibility of establishing new relay sites and have connected local businesses in the North West with Bangor University to provide support on the shellfish classification system. Support and assistance for this will be continued.

Whelk

There are quite a few concerns around the minimum sizes within the North West. Seafish are helping to build evidence around what is the best applicable minimum sized, the best reflection of current stocks and the broader needs of the supply chain.

Transport and Logistics

Transport and logistics is the second largest workstream after the promotion and film work. While there is a lot of fish being landed in the North, a lot of the markets are in the South, and there is a disconnect between these two areas.

A meeting was held in April to present an initial proposal of how to better connect these areas. Seafish received constructive feedback on their initial proposal. Further development and engagement with the markets is still required.

Further Comments

There are currently 6 members of Seafish staff coordinating and facilitating on workstreams of the NW Seafood Action Plan and to improve connections through the cross-supply chain group. Another meeting will be scheduled later this year. If you would like to get in touch with Sheriene Murphy or Becca Spain to ask questions or register interest, their contact details can be found in the 'Contact Details' section.

Questions, Comments & Answers:

Q: Dan Wardle asked if there was any consideration for the other recommendations, such as the remote auction.

A: Sheriene replied that the auction was definitely a recommendation that was made but will be worked on further down the line for now.

Q: Steve Johnston asked what has happened with the development officer post.

A: Sheriene stated that she is not sure what the decision has been to replace Kat and so at the moment they are pulling in people from across Seafish to help out.

A: Aoife stated that no decision has been made yet and what to do next. However, there is a lot of other resource from Seafish being put into this project.

Q: Steve Johnston asked if there are any thoughts on how the video could be put across to a wider audience?

A: Sheriene stated they are hoping there will be a lot of shares through social media. There has also been thought into use of an influencer CJ knows to promote this.

A: Aoife stated that the idea behind this is that they are developing collateral for businesses to use themselves to empower the supply chain. Some of it can be promoted by the MMO, IFCA and Seafish, but we would see businesses making as much use of this as anybody else.

Q: Steve Johnston asked if Seafish are engaging with the whelk FMP?

A: Aoife stated that Seafish prepared the whelk FMP on behalf of Defra and are also coordinating the implementation group. They are very much drawing on the knowledge and expertise from the Fisheries Management team who are working on the whelk FMP alongside MMO colleagues and Defra.

Q: Mike Roach (NFFO) commented that the Northwest Initiative is a massive ongoing project and a lot of work has been conducted. He encouraged the people on the call to help spread the word and that we need people to engage throughout this process.

5. Emily Roebuck, CEFAS – Clean Catch Second Trial

Emily Roebuck, a Marine Scientist at Cefas, provided an overview of the clean catch programme. This is a project supported by Defra and is delivered by a consortium of partners listed in the presentation.

A copy of the presentation can be found here:



Clean Catch New
fishery partner search

Clean Catch are establishing a mitigation trial with a new fisheries partner focusing on a potentially sensitive species group. The species include cetaceans, seals, seabirds, turtles and elasmobranchs (sharks, skates and rays).

They are looking for a fishery in England to work collaboratively with industry to look at mitigation methods for one or more of these sensitive species, with on-water trials to ensure the methods are practical to use.

Being a partner will involve a 2-year collaboration with Clean Catch to co-design a trial early in 2025, run the trial for 12 months and provide feedback at the end.

The closing date for expressions of interest is 20th September. The first expression of interest is to gather information on who has interest to be a partner.

Shortlisting will take place in October and Defra will make a final decision in November.

Link to Expression of Interest:

https://forms.office.com/pages/responsepage.aspx?id=DQSIkWsW0yxEjajBLZtrQAAAAAAsAAAAA0_VzVnlhUOE8yMVdJUUXMQjJCUVhRQ0s2OExTSEIUQS4u

For more information, visit: <https://www.cleancatchuk.com/fisherytrial/>

If you would like to ask any questions about the trial, Emily and Joanna can be contacted using the details in the 'Contact Details' section.

20th September is a 'soft deadline', and they are happy to extend the deadline by a week or so to allow those who are interested to apply, these submissions will still be considered for the fully funded programme.

Questions, Comments & Answers:

Q: Steve Johnston asked if the focus is on fixed nets or does this extend to other gear types as well?

A: Emily stated that it doesn't have to be a specific gear type, and they are more than happy to hear from anyone who believes there is a problem with sensitive species bycatch.

Q: Steve Johnston referred to the use of pingers and asked if smaller vessels have problems with the charging of pingers.

A: Emily stated that they haven't had any issues so far, but they are trying to implement some new ways of checking that the pingers are working and whether they can be swapped out quickly if they are not. The project uses Banana Pingers from Fishtek Marine and the trial was simplified to only use pingers, rather than lights as well. The premise of the trial is to implement bycatch mitigation during fishing activities that is practical for industry.

6. Steve Johnston, MMO – Any Other Business

Steve Johnston provided a couple of updates:

In terms of I-VMS, there has been no decision as to when the Statutory Instrument (SI) will come into place, this was postponed due to the general election and would need to be signed off by the minister.

In terms of grant funding, both the UK seafood fund (UKSF) and the Fisheries and Seafood Scheme (FaSS) are closed, but there will potentially be a new grant funding scheme opening up next year.

In terms of capped licences, the cap was lifted this year but there has been no decision as to whether this will be permanent or not. Andy Carroll advised that Defra are intending on raising this with ministers this month and apologised for the delay on behalf of Defra.

For catch recording, there have been quite a few issues with the system recently whereby rebooting or reinstalling the app should help resolve the issues.

Dan Wardle raised awareness regarding some of the new FMPs that the MMO are currently working on. The MMO are currently leading on developing 3 new FMPs – the Celtic Sea and Western Channel Demersal FMP, the Wrasse Complex FMP, and the Black Sea Bream FMP. The FMP team have created some short surveys to allow stakeholders with an interest in these FMPs to feed into the plans. You can access the surveys via the QR code and link at the end of this document.

If there are any industry members that would like to have a port visit from Dan Wardle and Members of MMO or external teams such as Defra, please get in touch with the RFG Team using the details provided in the 'Contact Details' section, and we can try to arrange a time and date that would suit you.

The next meeting will be held in winter, either in December or January. Once a date has been set you will be notified by email.

Questions, Comments & Answers:

Q: Steve Johnston enquired about spurdog and stated that it looks as though the stocks are recovering and vessels are catching spurdog. However, it is a quota species that it is not under the landing obligation exemption. Therefore, this could

cause some problems for vessels catching it if they cannot discard spurdog, even though they could potentially have a high survivability.

A: Andy Carrol stated that there is a maximum landing size for spurdog rather than a minimum size, he will pass this on to negotiations to find out if there will be considerations for next year.

The meeting was concluded at 11:36.

FMP Online Survey

The MMO's FMP Team are currently leading on developing three new FMPs; The Celtic Sea and Western Channel demersal FMP (that covers species such as Pollack, Cod and Nephrops), the Wrasse Complex FMP and the Black Seabream FMP. To help with the development of these FMPs, the team have created short surveys for any stakeholder with an interest in the FMPs to complete. The link to the Wrasse and Bream surveys can be found here [Wrasse and seabream views vital - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk).



Marine
Management
Organisation

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Thank you for attending this Regional Fisheries Group meeting. If you would like comment on these or previous minutes, be added to this groups contact list or contribute in any other way please contact the MMO Regional fisheries Mailbox: regionalfisheriesgroups@marinemanagement.org.uk or find out more at the Regional Fisheries Groups webpage: Regional Fisheries Groups - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)