



CONSEIL CONSULTATIF POUR
LES EAUX OCCIDENTALES
SEPTENTRIONALES

NORTH WESTERN
WATERS
ADVISORY COUNCIL

CONSEJO CONSULTIVO PARA
LAS AGUAS
NOROCCIDENTALES

North Western Waters Advisory Council

Work Programme

Year 16

01 October 2020 to 30 September 2021



1. Introduction

The North Western Waters Regional Advisory Council (NWWAC) was established in accordance with Commission Decision 2005/668/EC on the 22nd of September 2005 as one of the seven Regional Advisory Councils, proposed under Council Decision 2004/585/EC, establishing Regional Advisory Councils under the Common Fisheries Policy.

With the entry into force of Regulation (EU) No 1380/2013, on the Common Fisheries Policy (henceforth, “CFP Regulation”), on the 1st of January 2014 the Regional Advisory Councils changed to Advisory Councils (ACs). The advisory role of the ACs was also enhanced as a constituent part of this change.

Now in its sixteenth year of operation, which runs from 01 October 2020 to 30 September 2021, the NWWAC wishes to apply for grant-aid from the EU Commission, in accordance with the relevant provisions in force.

2. Objectives of the NWWAC

The principal aim of the North Western Waters Advisory Council is to bring together European stakeholders (fishermen, representatives of producers organisations, environmental NGOs, recreational anglers, processors and consumers, amongst others) to provide evidence-based advice to the EU Commission, Member States and the European Parliament, in order to achieve the sustainable exploitation of the fish stocks within the geographical remit of the EC waters of sub-areas 5.b, 6 and 7.

The advice produced by the NWWAC is directed by the objective of the Common Fisheries Policy. The NWWAC also addresses the sustainable - biological, economic and social – management of fisheries in the wider context of the integrated maritime policy.

Given the mixed nature of the fisheries within the geographical remit of the NWWAC, the development of sustainable fisheries management options for the short and long term will remain the foundation for advice. The objectives articulated in the Marine Strategy Framework Directive will also be taken into account.



3. Main topics for Year 16

3.1. Landing obligation (LO)

During Year 16 the NWWAC will continue its collaboration with both the NWW Member States Group and the European Commission to update and further develop the Choke Identification Tool (CIdT). The CIdT addresses potential mitigation actions required in fisheries subject to the landing obligation in all the sub-geographical areas of the North Western Waters. This tool will provide the basis and direction for much of the NWWAC's work.

In Year 16, the NWWAC established its new Focus Group Landing Obligation with the objective of examining and discussing the effectiveness of the LO as well as observing developments regarding related topics, such as the technical measures, the discard plan and the directed fishing definition in order to influence the best possible conditions for fishing in the NWW. In addition, the NWWAC will include the LO in the agendas of internal meetings (e.g. working groups and advice drafting groups) as well as in the agendas of meetings with scientists, the Commission and the NWW Member States Group to find solutions for stocks for which the implementation of the LO incorporates major challenges.

During the successful joint workshop in Year 15 between the NWWAC, EFCA and the NWW Control Expert Group on monitoring, control and enforcement of the Landing Obligation, EFCA and the Irish CEG Chair confirmed that they will actively participate in the next meeting of the NWWAC Focus Group Control & Compliance whose work will be the origin of anticipated advice on the monitoring, control and enforcement of the Landing Obligation and of the follow up of its advice on the revision of the EU Fisheries Control Regulation.

3.2. Technical measures

The NWWAC will continue to provide advice on technical measures, specifically in the context of the full implementation of Regulation EU 2019/1241 and will monitor and incorporate in its advice, where possible, relevant research to improve selectivity and reduce unwanted catches. Also, in year 16 the NWWAC will continue its collaboration with the NWW Member States Group and scientists to coordinate the ongoing work in different Member States. This will allow fishing industry and scientists alike to learn best practices and avoid duplication.

3.3. Development and implementation of multi-annual management plans

The development and implementation of long-term management plans for fisheries in the North Western Waters has been one of the main focuses of the NWWAC's work since its establishment. With the publication of the Western Waters Multi-Annual Plan the focus has shifted to the implementation of the aspects of this plan.

Therefore the NWWAC established dedicated Focus Groups on management of the following stocks:

- Seabass: Inter-AC dialogue will continue to assist the development of recommendations on specific management and technical measures for the stock concerned.



- Scallop: In Year 15 the NWWAC set up a Focus Group on Scallop. This group continues discussions on a long term regional management plan for King Scallop stocks in the English Channel. The work of this Focus Groups will continue in Year 16 aiming to produce advice on this topic.
- Skates & Rays: In Year 15 the NWWAC and North Sea AC set up a joint Focus Group on Skates and Rays to provide advice on a harmonised management approach to the respective Member States Groups. This work will continue in Year 16.
- Whelk: In Year 15, the NWWAC set up a Focus Group on Whelk aiming at discussing and providing advice on the management of this resource in the Channel.
- Brown Crab: Following the finalisation of the previous NWWAC Focus Group Brown Crab and the advice submission on management opportunities, work will continue in a newly formed Focus Group jointly set up with the North Sea AC and the Market AC to identify common difficulties and possible solutions to supply chain issues, including different regulatory measures between the EU and Asian destinations for brown crab exports.
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Recognizing the importance of targeted fisheries on several non-TAC stocks in the area the NWWAC will continue to identify the necessity to provide advice that contributes to the sustainable management of these fisheries.

Relevant scientific experts and representatives from national and EU administrations, along with the STECF evaluation of proposals, will greatly enhance the structure of these meetings.

3.4. TACs and quotas

As in previous years, the NWWAC will produce advice in September 2021, in response to the EC Consultation on Fishing Opportunities for 2022.

This advice will provide the NWWAC opinion on a number of subject areas, including a review of the state of stocks, the application of MSY, and multi-species considerations. The implications of the Landing Obligation and the mitigation of choke risks will receive significant attention.

The NWWAC advice on TACs and quotas will be submitted in sufficient time to inform the discussions leading to the Commission's proposal to the Council for the Regulation on Fishing Opportunities for species in Atlantic waters in 2022.

In common with previous years, a number of specific requests may also be submitted to the Commission and concerned Member States for some stocks in response to a specific advice request or when identified by members of the NWWAC following the latest scientific developments. If required and in accordance with available resources and budget, the NWWAC will organise specific Focus Groups or Advice Drafting Groups to develop the advice.

3.5. Functioning of the Advisory Councils



Article 49 (Review) of Regulation (EU) 1380/2013 on the Common Fisheries Policy, provides that by 31 December 2022 ‘the Commission shall report to the European Parliament and to the Council on the functioning of the CFP’. In order that the NWWAC may provide useful input to this report, we will continue our discussions on a range of appropriate topics including, *inter alia*, targets for fisheries management in North Western Waters; the requirement for appropriate management measures to reach these goals; the composition, functioning and funding of the Advisory Councils (see also section 5.2); etc. In order to be able to provide timely and relevant advice, we will combine information from (ongoing) scientific projects and other relevant sources where appropriate.

In order to continue monitoring the Brexit process and the consequences this may have on the functioning, both of the activities in the relevant area and of the ACs themselves, the NWWAC established its Focus Group Brexit in year 15 with the aim of assessing changes to fisheries policy and management in the NWW and preparing advice on the new functioning. This work also includes identifying regulatory issues relating to AC set up and functioning under the current CFP in relation to UK withdrawal, as well as identifying practical measures fostering collaboration with UK partners for future AC work. The NWWAC will remain at the forefront of organising events when required, specifically to discuss and achieve a harmonised approach with other ACs.

3.6. Ecosystem based approach to fisheries management

The NWWAC encourages the implementation of the ecosystem approach in the North Western Waters by promoting the development of monitoring programmes and conservation measures. The NWWAC work will focus on three key elements:

- Promoting understanding and acceptance by all stakeholders of the ecosystem approach to the management of human activities (e.g. marine litter, underwater noise), and improving communication among various management authorities in the NWW;
- Acting as a point of contact between policy makers and AC stakeholders in order to facilitate consultation for the designation and management of: Vulnerable Marine Ecosystems, Natura 2000, OSPAR and national marine offshore sites (i.e. MCZ, etc.), where fishing activity by EU vessels takes place in North Western Waters. The NWWAC wishes to contribute to the meetings of the NWW Member States subgroup on Article 11, dealing with conservation measures necessary for compliance with obligations under the EU environmental legislation (e.g. Marine Protected Areas (MPAs)).
- Identify and prioritise the needs by the NWWAC members to protect sensitive species and habitats.

3.6.1. Irish Sea benchmark

Since its establishment in 2014, the ICES Benchmark Workshop on the impact of ecosystem and environmental drivers on Irish Sea fisheries management (WKIrish) has been of great interest to the NWWAC as this workshop not only focusses on the improvement of single species assessments, but aims to incorporate a mixed fisheries



model, to develop the integration of ecosystem aspects and to work towards an integrated assessment and advice for this region.

While the work of this group officially concluded with the 6th workshop in 2019, the members of the ICES working group as well as the NWWAC members are keen, possibly in a different setting, to continue to work with the results and to prepare advice on its eventual implementation.

3.7. Environment

In 2019, the European Commission published the Green Deal, its roadmap for making the EU's economy sustainable. It recognises that climate change and environmental degradation are an existential threat to Europe and the world and proposes new strategies to overcome those challenges. Recognising the influence of environmental policies on fisheries management in the European Union and acknowledging the inter-connectedness of fisheries management and specific and non-specific marine environmental issues, the NWWAC has decided to continue including work on wider environmental issues such as climate change, biodiversity loss, marine plastics, CO₂ emissions, impact of seismic activities on fish stocks, in its work programme for Year 16.

The NWWAC and Pelagic AC set up a joint Focus Group on impacts from seismic activities and offshore wind farms with a view to developing specific research questions for an ICES Special Request Advice on the impact of seismic activities on fish stocks and marine ecosystems in the relevant sea basins taking into account previous AC requests to the Commission.

The NWWAC's Focus Group Marine Plastics successfully concluded its work in Year 15j. Subsequently it was decided to establish a new standing Focus Group Climate Change and Environment, identifying and examining the AC needs in developing advice related to climate and environmental initiatives promoted and adopted by the Commission in the context of the EU Green Deal. These include the EU Farm to Fork Strategy and of the EU Biodiversity Strategy, as well as any DG MARE initiative relating to the implementation of the relevant Sustainable Development Goals, whilst also tracking the IUCN and FAO initiatives in this respect. The work of this Focus Group will continue in Year 16.

3.8. Social Aspects

Over the past years there has been an increasing difficulty to fill vacancies in the seafood sector with qualified employees, and specifically in the catching sector. One of the key issues is a low attractiveness of the catching sector, particularly for new generations of fishermen.



This lack of attractiveness can be linked with the balance between remuneration and hard-working conditions. With the number of jobs depending on the fisheries sector declining in the majority of coastal areas, some coastal communities are at risk of not being viable in the future. The NWWAC recognises that social sustainability is intrinsically linked with environmental and economic sustainability and will continue exploring relevant aspects in Year 16 in order to develop advice based on best practice.

3.9. Control and compliance

The NWWAC will continue to follow the operational activities of the European Fisheries Control Agency (EFCA) in Areas 5b, 6 and 7 and will participate in Advisory Boards and other Monitoring, Control and Compliance fora, when invited.

There is an active Focus Group on Control and compliance in the NWWAC with the objective of preparing further advice on all relevant monitoring, control and enforcement measures. The work of this Focus Group will continue throughout Year 16.

3.10. European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF)

The NWWAC will continue to monitor the discussion and provide advice on the EU legislators' work on the EMFF 2021-2027 regulation.

4. General topics

The NWWAC will continue to work, both on its own initiative and in coordination with other Advisory Councils, on providing advice on the implementation of the core aspects of the legislative package of the CFP Regulations.

4.1. Cooperation with the Member States and the European Commission / Regionalisation

The NWWAC is committed to the current structure of the consultation process, which promotes the collaborative engagement between the Advisory Councils and the North Western Waters Member States Group and other relevant bodies and institutions under the present regional decision-making framework contained in the CFP Regulation.

The NWWAC will continue to endeavour to achieve a good collaboration with the NWW Member States Group and to assist this group, however possible, in Year 16.

4.2. Cooperation with scientists (Improving the quality of scientific and economic data)

In Year 16, the NWWAC will continue its collaboration with ICES and Member States to identify measures to improve scientific assessments. The NWWAC will continue to actively engage with experts and NWWAC members in calls for support to ground-truth and tune data series



and advice documents. The NWWAC is committed to participating in all ICES meetings and benchmark workshops of relevance, subject to invitation.

As part of this, the NWWAC participates in the annual meeting between ICES, Advisory Councils and observers (MIACO). This meeting aims to strengthen stakeholder cooperation by providing the opportunity to communicate about its advisory process and obtain feedback from the participants. In a rotating system, the Advisory Councils organise a MIAC (Meeting ICES & ACs) to discuss pressing matters in more detail.

5. Working procedures

The NWWAC will continue to refine its working procedures to ensure efficient and effective work practices.

The NWWAC will work closely with the fishing industry, Other Interest Groups, the Commission, Member States, Scientists and other ACs to execute the work programmes in order to progress issues of common and specific concern.

5.1. Timetable

Appendix I details the NWWAC meetings timetable for Year 16.

5.2. Role, composition and functioning of the ACs

A delegation composed of the Chair and the Secretariat of the NWWAC will actively participate in the annual coordination meeting to be held in the final quarter of 2020 between the ACs and the Commission.

Having initiated inter-AC discussion on the functioning of the Advisory Councils, the NWWAC will support the continuation of this dialogue within the Advisory Councils and in any forum where this topic is to be discussed.

From its inception in 2017, the inter-AC dialogue meetings have provided a useful forum where the officers and Secretariat of the Advisory Councils can discuss issues of common interest specifically where they are related to the role, composition and functioning of the ACs.

5.3. Operational Structure: meeting types and frequency

The largest budgetary expenditure incurred by the NWWAC is associated with meetings. The NWWAC is often liable for costs associated with meeting room hire, interpretation services and technical equipment, in addition to the travel and accommodation costs of members and experts attending NWWAC meetings. On some occasions, public or private sponsorship may be offered to cover part or all of these expenses as contributions-in-kind (a.k.a. Benefit-in-kind). Such arrangements are duly reflected in the NWWAC accounts.



Due to the impacts of the COVID-19 health crisis during Year 15, the NWWAC switched from holding face-to-face meetings to virtual meetings including the provision of full interpretation support. The costs associated with these arrangements could be accommodated due to the fact that no travel expenses were incurred. The NWWAC will continue to monitor the public health situation regarding COVID-19 during Year 16 and arrange all its meetings according to latest EU and national government advice.

In order to achieve the objectives of the work programme, the operational hierarchy of the NWWAC is organised in the following three-tier structure:

5.3.1. Executive Committee

All decisions relating to the NWWAC are made by an Executive Committee with a maximum of 25 members (i.e. 15 fishing industry, and 10 other interest groups) reflecting the 60/40 balance required. At the start of year 16, there are 17 members of the Executive Committee; 15 from fishing industry organisations and 2 from organisations representing other interest groups.

Executive Committee meetings are held at least three times a year. These meetings normally address high-level policy issues, debate the input from Working Groups, Focus Groups and Advice Drafting Groups or from General Assembly members. The Executive Committee decides on proposed actions from Working Groups and aims to reach consensus in the provision of NWWAC advice and opinion. The Executive Committee also decides on the processes and procedures required to improve the efficiency of the NWWAC, including the Communications strategy.

Each member of the Executive Committee, along with the Chairman of each Working Group presenting recommendations to the Executive Committee, is reimbursed for attending Executive Committee meetings and full interpretation is provided in the three working languages of the NWWAC (i.e. English, French and Spanish).

Representatives of the European Commission, the European Parliament, European Fisheries Control Agency and Member States, as well as relevant experts or presenters from EU projects or scientific institutes, also attend Executive Committee meetings as observers.

5.3.2. Sub-regional Working Groups

There are currently 4 sub-regional Working Groups in the NWWAC, which are geographically based. Working Groups are held up to 3 times each year (depending on budget and agenda items) and are important drivers of the NWWAC. Experts, as well as Commission officials, are normally invited to attend and make presentations.

The four Working Groups are:



1. West of Scotland (5.b and 6);
2. Celtic Sea (7.f to k);
3. Channel (7.d and e);
4. Irish Sea (7.a).

Membership of Working Groups varies from 25 to 50 participants depending on the subject matter and full interpretation is provided for WG 1 and 2 (i.e. English, French and Spanish). WG 3 operates in English and French and WG4 operates in English only. All 4 Working Group meetings are normally held over a period of 1 to 2 days.

5.3.3. Focus Groups, Horizontal Working Groups and Advice Drafting Groups

Focus Group and Advice Drafting Group meetings are specialist meetings, which are convened when issues of urgent concern require an immediate and technical response from the NWWAC.

Focus groups and Advice Drafting Groups are formed from within the general membership and generally consist of a small group of members (i.e. 8 to 15) with specific professional experience and expertise.

Additionally, Horizontal Working Groups are convened, as required, to discuss issues of common interest to all NWWAC members.

Interpretation services for these meetings will be provided, if required, and contributions-in-kind will be sought from Member States and relevant projects to minimise costs and maximise efficiency. Where possible these meetings will be convened via web-meeting.

Focus Groups or Horizontal Working Groups are planned to work on the following topics in Year 16:

- ;
- i. Management strategies for specific stocks, for example seabass, scallops and whelk;
- ii. Impacts of seismic activities and wind farms (joint with the Pelagic AC)
- iii. Control and Compliance;
- iv. Landing Obligation
- v. Brexit
- vi. Climate Change and Environment
- vii. Brown Crab supply chain issues (joint with the North Sea AC and the Market AC)

To improve the efficiency of the meetings and the quality of the advice, the Secretariat would like to organise tailored workshops for NWWAC members. The focus of these workshops



would lie on chairing meetings effectively in order to facilitate productive discussion, make more decision and achieve greater consensus and support positive dissent.

6. Communications and Outreach

In Year 15 the level of communication and outreach has increased and will continue to do so in Year 16.

The NWWAC website remains the main communication tool between the NWWAC Secretariat and NWWAC members, European Commission, Member States, European Parliament, scientific observers and the general public. The website contains up-to-date information on membership, legislation, administration, meetings, publications, consultation and advice, and includes all relevant correspondence generated between the NWWAC, the Commission, Member States and other parties.

To enable the Secretariat to keep up with the increasing workload of meetings and communication, the NWWAC switched to:

1. An electronic system for meeting registration;
2. Online reimbursement system;
3. Online web meeting facilities including interpretation services where possible.

It also invested in adding a membership page to its website to enable detailed information access to all work processes being carried out within the AC for all its members.

In addition, a new Communication Strategy was developed and adopted in Year 15 and its effectiveness will be monitored and assessed during Year 16.

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Appendix I

To be submitted in September 2020

**The proposed schedule of meetings to achieve the objectives
of the NWWAC work programme**

Year 16

(1st of October 2020 to the 30th of September 2021)

The information presented below is indicative of NWWAC operations in Year 16 and has been adopted by the members of the General Assembly, which met in Dublin on the 04 September 2020.

All dates and topics for discussion are subject to change and will be directed by the requirements of the Commission and proposals originating from NWWAC members and endorsed by the Executive Committee.



SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS (YEAR 16)

NORTH WESTERN WATERS ADVISORY COUNCIL

Indicative Schedule of meetings in Year 16 (01 October 2020 – 30 September 2021)

Meeting Type	Proposed dates/duration	Venue	Work Priorities
			•
			•
			•
			•