



MINUTES

GENERAL ASSEMBLY / AGM NORTH WESTERN WATERS REGIONAL ADVISORY COUNCIL

Erin Room, Dublin Castle

**Wednesday, 27th October 2010
09.30 13.00**

**Chairman: André LeBerre
Co-rapporteurs: Alexandre Rodríguez and Joanna McGrath**

1. Welcome and introductions

- Opening speech from the Honorary President of the NWWRAC, Mr. Le Berre:

André Le Berre, Honorary President of the NWWRAC and Chairman of the General Assembly, welcomed all participants to the 6th Annual General Assembly of the NWWRAC.

Alexandre Rodríguez relayed the apologies communicated to the NWWRAC Secretariat from Michael Keatinge (NWWRAC Director - BIM), Bertie Armstrong (SFF), Arianna Broggiato (EBCD), André Gueguen (OPOB), Sean O'Donoghue (KFO), Richard Pullen (DEFRA), Robert Stevenson (NESFO), Dominique Thomas (CME-EOP), Delphine Roncin (CRPMEM Nord Pas de Calais/Picardie), Jane Sandell (SFO) and Borja Velasco (Secretaría General del Mar – Spanish Government). The complete list of participants is provided in Annex I.

In his opening speech, Mr. Le Berre noted the efforts made by the industry in reducing capacity in order to comply with fisheries regulations. Mr. Le Berre addressed a new challenge concerning the interaction between fishing activity and other marine activities, such as oil and gas extraction and offshore wind farms. Mr. Le Berre also highlighted the fact that fishing businesses should not be unnecessarily penalised by the fact that industrial and environmental projects sharing the same maritime space, could possibly endanger the future viability of the fishing business.

A transcript of Mr. Le Berre's complete speech is provided in Annex II.

- Adoption of the Agenda and Minutes of the last Meeting:

The agenda for the meeting was adopted without changes or comments.



Similarly, the report of the 5th GA meeting, held in Dublin the 28th of October 2009, was accepted as a true record and was approved without comment.

2. Annual report from the Chairperson of the NWWWRAC

Sam Lambourn, Chairperson of the NWWWRAC, commended the Secretariat team for its continuous work and completion of activities thorough the year and, in accordance with articles 19 and 38 of the NWWWRAC rules and procedures¹, presented to the General Assembly the annual report for Year 5 and the annual strategic plan (work programme) for Year 6. Both the annual report and the annual strategic report were approved by consensus by the members of the General Assembly.

The full content of the presentation from the Chairman is available on the NWWWRAC website².

- Overview of the Year 5 work programme

Mr. Lambourn provided a review of the meetings either held by the NWWWRAC or involving NWWWRAC participation. The review also included the actions carried out in accordance with the work programme; and the letters, opinions and advice submitted by the NWWWRAC in year 5. Mr. Lambourn also recognised the amount of time and dedication invested by the members, stressing the good work achieved in the single-topic horizontal working groups, and focus groups on technical issues such as marine spatial planning or Celtic Sea fisheries.

- Presentation of the work programme for Year 6: work priorities and calendar of meetings

Mr. Lambourn stated that the main body of work for the NWWWRAC, in Year 6, will rely on four main priority areas:

- CFP reform; Provides an opportunity for the NWWWRAC to make a thoughtful and valuable contribution to the chapter on governance;
- Elaboration and review of long term management plans: Assessment of single species (e.g. Vlle Sole, Vla haddock, northern hake) and ecosystem-based approach within the context of multi-specific fisheries for some areas (e.g. VIIIfg);
- Work with scientists in identifying and overcoming data deficiencies;
- Stakeholders' participation in national consultations on Marine Spatial Planning.

¹ NWWWRAC Website/About Us/Rules and Procedures:

http://www.nwwrac.org/About_NWWWRAC/About_Us_ENG/Rules_and_Procedures.html

² Link:

http://www.nwwrac.org/admin/publication/upload/FINAL_Report_Chairman_NWWWRAC_Work_Progress_GA_Dublin_Castle_271010_EN.pdf



In relation to the proposed calendar of meetings, Mr. Lambourn suggested that the GA members adopt a preliminary calendar of meetings for the last quarter of 2010 and first half of 2011³. This was approved by the GA members as a part of the annual strategic plan for Year 6.

Following outcomes and discussions held at the last Executive Committee in relation to a review of the current structure and functioning of the NWWRAC, Mr. Lambourn announced that a more flexible way of organising Working Groups and Focus Groups would be undertaken to ensure that topics of discussion are relevant and tailored to the specific needs of the NWWRAC. The intention of this re-organisation would be to avoid holding meetings that become “talking shops” with no clear progress on actions forthcoming. In addition to this, Mr. Lambourn advocated that Focus Group meetings should be held, as required according to work priorities and budget availability. Where funding is not available, the Secretariat will seek sponsorship or financial support from public, national, regional and local authorities and/or private organisations in order to support these meetings.

- Report from the Executive Committee concerning the review of structure and functioning of the RACs

Mr. Lambourn referred to the proposal, initially raised by Lorcan O’Cinneide at the Executive Committee meeting held in Paris on the 7th of July⁴, to discuss the current structure and operation of the NWWRAC, as well as options for improving its efficiency. This proposal was discussed in further detail at the Madrid Executive Committee meeting held on the 8th of September⁵.

Mr. Lambourn emphasised that there was a strong perception from the Executive Committee members that the NWWRAC generally works better when dealing with single-based topic meetings rather than when there is a Working Group dealing with several issues. Such a procedure makes it easier to gather scientific knowledge and invite the right people to the meeting. Furthermore, members felt that the NWWRAC must keep its regional base, which is at the heart of its identity. However, it was also noted that, even if the remit of geographical groups should remain, we must have the necessary flexibility to adapt to the real needs of the work programme.

³ The meetings calendar is available together with the Chairman’s presentation (see footnote 2)

⁴ Meeting report:

http://www.nwwrac.org/admin/publication/upload/MINUTES_NWWRAC_EXECUTIVE_COMMITTEE_PARI_S_070710_EN.pdf

⁵ Meeting report:

http://www.nwwrac.org/admin/publication/upload/NWWRAC_Report_Executive_Committee_Madrid_09_0910_EN.pdf



To ensure cost efficiency and best use of available resources, horizontal working groups and focus groups should be organised, whenever possible, around ordinary meetings, in order to save travel costs and time for members.

- Debate and questions from the floor:

Mr. Lambourn opened the floor for comments given the importance of this topic. A lengthy discussion took place and GA members made the following comments:

A majority of the members present advocated keeping the regional identity of the working groups, given the wide geographical area covered by the NWWWRAC and the diversity and plurality of nationalities and fleets they represented. They also pointed out that some topics might not be of strategic interest for all members but they were essential for others and the WGs were the only forum to discuss such topics in detail (e.g. stocks linked to regional areas; management measures for non-Community regulated species in the Channel).

However, they also admitted that on some occasions, geographical working groups were not achieving the objectives they set out to achieve and that a certain degree of flexibility was needed. A suggestion was made to hold the meetings of the four Working Groups on a single day, whereby the agenda would deal only with topics of interest where progress could be achieved.

Some members demanded an increased and continuous participation of scientific experts in the Working Groups. The Secretariat confirmed that they submit invitations to scientists for all RAC meetings where their presence is requested, but due to resource constraints from both ICES (MoU between Commission and ICES allows participation of a maximum of 10 requests to share among all the RACs per year) and national institutes, it was not always feasible for scientific experts to attend. Furthermore, the variety of topics dealt with during a single WG was also identified as a reason for some experts to refrain from participating at such meetings since they might not have expertise in all the areas being discussed and might see themselves as being asked for comment on these areas when they could not.

Lorcan O'Cinnéide suggested undertaking a review of the quality of advice provided by the NWWWRAC and mentioned that shortcomings may not only be due to structural faults but also to the content of RAC advice. He felt that we could improve on the evidence-based advice and recommendations sent to the Commission.



3. Report from the Secretariat on budget and company issues

Padraig Gordon, BIM Financial Advisor to the NWWWRAC and member of the Board of Directors, presented an overall budget update on behalf of the Secretariat, in conformity with articles 38 and 48 of the NWWWRAC rules and Procedures.

- Proposed budget for Year 6: ratifications of accounts

Mr. Gordon provided an overview of the estimated income and expenditure for the NWWWRAC Financial Year 6 (01 October 2010 – 30 September 2011). The General Assembly was informed that this provisional budget for Year 6 had already been adopted at the Executive Committee meeting in Madrid, 9 September 2010 and was subsequently submitted to the Commission on 30 September 2010. Several points were made by Mr. Gordon as follows:

Year 6 Income

- Membership fees will contribute € 36,850 to the budget, however, € 8,940 will serve to close the deficit of Year 3;
- 50 out of 53 member Organisations have paid their fees for Year 6. Outstanding membership fees need to be paid before the end of October 2010;
- Payment had been received from 3 Member States with payment still outstanding from a further 3 Member States.

Year 6 Expenditure

- Staff costs are considerably higher than last year due to the fact that the secondment of Alexandre Rodriguez ended during Year 5 and the NWWWRAC now fully finances the salary and travel expenses for Mr Rodriguez and Ms Joanna McGrath;
- The implication of these changes is a proportionate movement of operational staff costs from non-eligible to eligible expenditure;
- Interpretation and Translation costs continue to be high.

The ongoing review of the financial rules of the RACs was then mentioned and the question was raised as to whether this review, or indeed the completion of the CFP review, would lead to an increase in funding from the Commission. The overall feeling is that no change will be made before 2013.

- Review of income and expenditure for year 5

Mr. Gordon provided an overview of the current position on income and expenditure for the NWWWRAC Financial Year 5 (01 October 2009 – 30 September 2010).



The main points made were as follows:

Year 5 Income

- The final instalment of the EU grant will be paid in January 2011 and is dependent on the approval of accounts and receipt of the final report;
- The importance of benefit-in-kind cannot be overstated. The NWWWRAC depends heavily on these contributions, which include BIM staff time, office overheads and meeting facilities in international venues.

Year 5 Expenditure

- Staff costs were lower than originally foreseen since Ms Kristel Adriaenssens had left the NWWWRAC in June and was not replaced until September. This effectively saved the NWWWRAC 3 months of an Executive Assistant salary;
- Savings in staff costs were used, in part, to offset interpretation and translation costs, which proved considerably higher than originally budgeted;
- An amendment was approved by the Commission, in September 2010, to reflect several changes between budget headings arising mainly from the above observations.

Mr. Gordon advised the General Assembly of the next steps involved in completing the financial procedures relating to Year 5. These include submitting the accounts for audit and submitting a final report to the Commission by 31 January 2011.

- Final position on the management of the deficit for year 3

Mr. Gordon presented an overview of the resolution of the deficit for Year 3 and explained that the approved recovery method for the deficit had been successful. This method had involved an allocation of 25% of the membership fees in Y5 and a proportional allocation of membership fees in Y6, to the deficit. The deficit of €18,502 has now been cleared.

- Proposals to increase NWWWRAC income in future years

Mr. Gordon began by stating that the NWWWRAC continues to be under-funded, and that we must find ways to increase income in order to advance the work of the RAC. There are many contributing factors to insufficient funding such as; the current economic climate, static membership fees (i.e. unchanged for 6 years) and a significant decline in membership from Years 1-6.



Mr Gordon presented three options available to the NWWRAC to improve the financial basis of operation:

- Reduce services;
- Attract new members;
- Increase membership fees.

In an effort to expand on these options, proposals were then put forward by Mr. Gordon to:

- Increase each membership category by €50 in Year 7 and by the same amount again in Year 8;
- Increase each Member State contribution by €700.

Mr. Sam Lambourn, Chairperson of the NWWRAC, suggested that perhaps the decline in membership was due to a lack of financial resources amongst the fishing industry or even a lack of interest. Several members suggested organisations who may be interested in joining the NWWRAC and asked what the procedure would be. Alexandre Rodriguez indicated that interested parties should contact the Secretariat and that in the meantime the Secretariat would work on producing an updated information package, which could be used to “target” possible future members.

Comments were made concerning the proposed increase in fees. The general feeling of the GA was that such an increase was inevitable and also fair, given the fact that membership fees have been unchanged for 6 years and that the NWWRAC membership provided good value for money. Mr. Gordon pointed out that this is only a first proposal concerning an increase in membership fees for Year 7. Any proposal for a similar increase in Year 8 would be brought to the GA in 2011 for adoption.

Mr. Gordon also spoke about how being a member of the NWWRAC provided good value for money, particularly with respect to reimbursements for meetings, where there was often a 3-1 return in favour of members. The overall feeling from the General Assembly was that this was an accurate assessment and that maybe there are ways to reduce such high reimbursement costs (e.g. organising Working Groups and Focus Groups together).

Several members asked whether or not it would be possible to hold NWWRAC meetings by video-conference. Dr. Conor Nolan of the Secretariat replied that since we work with international organisations we are obliged to provide interpretation services at each meeting and, following enquiries, it seems that multi-language video-conferencing are not yet a feasible option. This remains an area of active interest for the Secretariat.



The presentation ended with a request from Mr. Gordon to the General Assembly that the following two items be adopted:

- Ratification of Year 6 budget.
- Increase in membership fees for Year 7.

Both items were approved by consensus by the GA.

- Report on changes in membership

Alexandre Rodríguez provided the attendees with a brief overview of the variations observed in NWWRAC membership numbers, during its 6 years of existence. The overview provided a breakdown by type of meeting (i.e. GA, ExCom, WGs). The existing distribution in Year 5 of members from the fishing industry and members belonging to others groups of interest was also detailed. Finally, Mr. Rodríguez explained the latest changes occurring in membership for Year 6.

Mr. Rodríguez informed the meeting that there are three vacant seats for “other interest groups” on the Executive Committee and a new seat is now available for “Other fishing groups”, within the 2/3 group, due to the withdrawal of the organisation Mná na Mhara. It was emphasised that the NWWRAC is continually seeking new NGOs to join as they are essential in providing a balance of interests, as well as enhancing the legitimacy of the organisation.

This presentation is available for consultation on the NWWRAC website⁶

- Update on forum website

Alexandre Rodríguez described the NWWRAC website forum as a tool for interactive communication amongst members. He made it clear that this tool had been underutilised so far and that there was a lot of room for improvement, if members so wished. The forum allows members to exchange views on consultation papers and to draft opinions and leave their comments in a private and restricted area.

Mr. Rodríguez encouraged the GA members to read the user’s guide available on the website⁷ and to register with the forum without delay, with the aim of starting discussions on topics of common interest such as the reform of the CFP or data deficiencies, in 2011.

⁶ Report on changes in membership:

http://www.nwwrac.org/admin/publication/upload/FINAL_OVERVIEW_MEMBERSHIP_NWWRAC_271010_EN.pdf

⁷ Members Area: http://www.nwwrac.org/Member_Page/Members_ENG/Members_Area.html



The presentation on the NWWRAC forum can be found in the meetings section of the NWWRAC website⁸

- Call to Member States for a secondee

Dr. Conor Nolan, Executive Secretary of the NWWRAC, addressed the meeting and highlighted the every increasing demand, being placed on the Secretariat, to organise and facilitate meetings and the associated increase in workload that this entails. Given the future challenges contained in the work programme and the demands of members to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the NWWRAC, Dr Nolan advocated that it was an appropriate time to add to the administrative resources of the Secretariat. Such a course of action would significantly improve the output of the RAC by dedicating time and professional ability to important areas of the work programme, such as the development of Long-term Management Plans.

Dr. Nolan called on Member States to consider the provision of administrative assistance to the RAC in the form of a secondee, in the same manner as the Spanish administration had supported the operation of the NWWRAC, in the past.

Action: *The Secretariat will send a letter to each Member State to inform them of this request in detail (resources needed, time, etc.) and will provide a job specification.*

4. Procedures for nominations and election of NWWRAC positions in 2011

Alexandre Rodríguez explained the procedures established in the NWWRAC governing rules and procedures for the nomination and election of the following NWWRAC positions:

- Honorary President / Chairman of the General Assembly;
- Chairperson of the NWWRAC / Chairman of the Executive Committee;
- Vice-Chair persons and rapporteur of the Executive Committee;
- Executive Committee members;
- Chairpersons and Vice-Chairpersons of the sub-regional Working Groups;
- NWWRAC Secretariat.

⁸ Update on forum website:

http://www.nwwrac.org/admin/publication/upload/FINAL_UPDATE_FORUM_WEBSITE_GA_DC_271010_EN.pdf



Mr. Rodríguez explained the following issues: terms of mandate; criteria for eligibility of candidates; decision making; timeframe; and proposed procedure to be followed.

This presentation is available for consultation in the meetings section of the NWWRAC website⁹.

Action: *The Secretariat will launch a general call of interest for the positions mentioned above on the 1st of December and will invite members to submit their application within a period of 6 months.*

5. Presentation of the Horizontal WG meeting on CFP reform: NWWRAC contribution to debate on regionalisation and governance

This item was deemed to be not relevant for mention at this meeting and therefore removed.

6. Official closure of the meeting

The Chairman of the General Assembly, André Le Berre, thanked the NWWRAC Secretariat, Bord Iascaigh Mhara, the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food of the Government of Ireland, the staff of Dublin Castle, the interpreters and sound technician, for contributing to the success of the meeting.

The meeting was closed at 13:00.

⁹ Presentation available in meeting site:
http://www.nwwrac.org/admin/publication/upload/FINAL_PROCEDURE_ELECTION_NWWRAC_Position_2_011_EN.pdf



Annex I. List of members and participating observers

André Le Berre

General Assembly Chairman

Sam Lambourn

NWWRAC Chairman

Fishing sector

Víctor Badiola
Jacques Bigot
Emiel Brouckaert
Richard Brouzes
Tom Bryan-Brown
Alan Coghill
Luc Corbisier
Juan Carlos Corrás
Bruno Dachicourt
Barrie Deas
Caroline Gamblin
Hugo C. González García
Béatrice Harmel
Daniel Lefèvre
Joe Maddock
Kevin McDonnell
Eduardo Míguez
Lorcan O'Cinnéide
Eibhlin O'Sullivan
José Luis Otero González
Jacques Pichon
Jim Portus
Mercedes Rodríguez Moreda
Paul Trebilcock

Other Interest Groups

Iwan Ball
Kara Brydson
John Crudden
John Daly
Brendan Price
John Woodlock



Secretariat

Dr Conor Nolan (Executive Secretary)

Alexandre Rodríguez

Joanna McGrath

Christine O'Connor

NWWRAC Board of Directors

Sam Lambourn

Pádraig Gordon

Observers

Clara Fernández

Isabelle Viallon

Community Fisheries Control Agency

DG MARE - European Commission



Annex II. Opening Statement from the President of the General Assembly, Mr. André Le Berre
At the Annual General Meeting of the North Western Waters Regional Advisory Council
Dublin Castle, the 27th of October 2010

Mr Chairman of the Executive Committee,
Mr Director of the RAC,
Representative of the European Commission
Members of the Advisory Council,
Dear Colleagues,

It is with great pleasure that I welcome you to Dublin for the sixth Annual General Meeting of the North Western Waters Regional Advisory Council.

For five years we have been working together to improve dialogue between us and Community authorities. You will see later on today and tomorrow that there are many subjects programmed on the agenda.

I have acquired the habit of developing a specific theme each year and today, I would like to share with you a subject that is dear to my heart as I live with it everyday in Brittany.

While we can hope for improvements in relation to fisheries resources due to the reduction in the number of vessels, a more rigorous enforcement of fisheries regulations and therefore to the efforts of industry professionals, the European fisheries sector already has to face new challenges.

Indeed, fishery territories are becoming more and more coveted and fishermen are being asked to give way to other activities, such as the installation of wind farms, material extraction areas, or discharge areas for harbour sludge, or even protected marine areas, where fishing is longer desirable.

Taken independently, these issues do not lead to major consequences, but when presented everywhere at the same time, they constitute new concerns for fishery businesses, whereas I have just said, we were finally able to hope for medium and long term economic visibility.

It is not a question of going against the spirit of our time, but I think that we need to deal with these subjects in the RAC and join our efforts so that fisheries are not systematically penalised by these industrial or environmental projects.

Before handing over, I would like to thank the NWWWRAC Secretariat team who keep us informed everyday in relation to Community developments. I thank you for your attention and I hope that each and every one of you has an excellent day.