



North Western Waters Regional Advisory Council

REPORT

Working Group 4 – Irish Sea - ICES Area VIIa BEC Bilbao, 17 April 2013 2-4 pm

Chairman: Alan McCulla
Rapporteur: John Crudden

1. Welcome

The Chairman, Alan McCulla, opened the meeting at 14:00 and welcomed everyone

- Apologies: Apologies were received for non-attendance at the meeting from Iwan Ball (WWF) and Jeremy Percy New Under Ten Metres Fishermen's Association (NUTFA-UK). The full list of participants at the meeting is shown in Annex I.
- Adoption of the agenda: The agenda as circulated was adopted with two additional items. Under Item 1 – Review of the pending actions from the last WG4 meeting and an item under AOB on the use of multi-rig gears.
- Adoption of the report from the last meeting: The report from the last WG meeting held in Paris on 30th January 2013 was adopted without any further comments.
- Review of ongoing action list from the previous WG4 meeting by the rapporteur
 1. Call on the Commission for an audit on Cod and Sole in the Irish Sea.
 2. Write to the Commission and re-emphasise the work done by the NWWWRAC in relation to the Irish Sea.
 3. Initiate a Multi-Annual Management Plan from an Ecosystem-based approach.
 4. Ask ICES to include Irish Sea Demersal stocks on the list of priority stocks to be reviewed (already sent to ICES in March by the Secretariat following consultation and approval by the NWWWRAC).

2. Towards a mixed fishery management plan for the Irish Sea and 3. Review of the Cod Recovery Plan for the Irish Sea

Background and introductory remarks by the Chairman – Pending actions of IS Focus Group

The WG4 Chairman, Alan McCulla, briefed the meeting on the current state of play on the Review of the Cod Management Plan.

STECF is still considering the plan. The catch data is considered as unreliable because of bias and uncertainties in the cod assessment.

The last meeting of the Council recommended an automatic 25% reduction of TAC for Irish Sea cod. The TAC is set on the basis of EC Reg. 1342/2008. The Chairman asked the Commission to explain how cuts in quotas will have any influence in the deterioration of data.

The recent correspondence between the Commission and the NWWRAC has proven not to be efficient and has not helped to develop a more sophisticated thinking. That is the reason why the Chairman had decided to not draft a letter to the Commission as agreed in an action point from the last WG4 meeting in Paris. The Chairman was rather in favour of following the Belgian FSP model as proposed at the last meeting.

Exchange of views from the floor

Barrie Deas: The need for a cod audit has to be addressed first so as to understand what further work needs to be done.

Sean O'Donoghue: The response from the Commission is ambiguous, we are going nowhere unless we get clearer information from it.

Commission: We need to improve the assessment and look at wider management measures that will give a basis for a Management Plan

ACTION: Alan McCulla will develop a NWWRAC proposal on VIIa Sole and Cod stocks in conjunction with the Belgian representatives of ILVO (Hilde van Haecke) and Rederscentrale (Emiel Brouckaert). The proposal should be ready by summer 2013 and presented to the Commission before autumn.



Update on Belgian Fisheries Science Partnership for Irish Sea Sole

Hilde van Haecke (ILVO) delivered an update to the presentation she gave to the last meeting of WG4 held in Paris in January. There was a difference in the perception of the abundance of the stock between scientists and the fishing industry. The scientists believed that the stock was in low levels while the fishermen had a different opinion.

The main aim of the project is to establish a collaborative Fisheries Science Partnership Project with a regional perspective using an ecosystem based approach¹ from a mixed fisheries perspective. The Belgian coordinators will be sending a letter to the Commission to apply for funding for the project.

ACTION: WG4 members to provide feedback and comments to the NWWRAC on the ILVO-Rederscentrale FSP project proposal for improving knowledge and management of VIIa sole.

Data limited stocks: collaboration between stakeholders and scientists - exchange of views from the floor

Alan McCulla: There are many parallels with the cod situation in the Irish Sea. He reminded the meeting of the proposal from Michael Keatinge (BIM-NWWRAC Director) to put together an EFF application to the Irish authorities to apply for funding for a project for the Irish Sea.

Pieter Jan Schon: Irish Sea Cod were benchmarked last year. A sentinel fishery is operating this summer looking at improving the quality of data. The main issue with this stock is the unaccounted mortality. ICES scientists are hoping that a tagging study will answer some of the questions on this unaccounted mortality. The Commission has asked ICES to list possible causes of mortality. An application for additional quota for scientific purposes should be made otherwise there is no scope for further surveys.

Colm Lordan: The perceived discrepancies on biomass and abundance for the Irish Sea sole stock between fishermen and scientists is matter of concern and merits reflection. The scientific surveys from the UK Beam Trawl are quite robust. One reason could be that the fishing operators have moved away from traditional areas resulting in different CPUE and trends. This would need to be looked at in a future ICES benchmarking process but there is no scope to do much this year although it could be looked into using an inter Benchmark.

Sean O'Donoghue: We should ask ourselves if we want to influence the scientific advice for next year or for the longer term. We need to produce CPUE figures for Sole in VIIa as well as the trajectory and history and whether they are increasing or decreasing.

¹ See http://www.nwwrac.org/Meetings/Meetings_ENG/Navigation.php?id=651&language=English

ACTION: WG4 will ask the Executive Committee to convene a Focus Group meeting of the NWWRAC sometime in early June. This meeting will involve scientists and national administrators from all the relevant Member States with interests in the Irish Sea fisheries.

ACTION: Alan McCulla and Sean O'Donoghue will draft a discussion document setting out the Terms of Reference setting the framework and objectives for developing a MAMP for mixed demersal fisheries for the Irish Sea.

4. Irish Sea Nephrops

Eibhlín O'Sullivan, in her capacity as NWWRAC Data Coordinator for Nephrops in Area VII, gave a brief report on the outcomes of the recent ICES Benchmark Workshop on Nephrops (WKNEP), held in Sweden the week starting the 11th of February 2013. One of the main conclusions of this workshop was that UWTV surveys were the desired standard for assessment purposes for the various FUs. However, there are significant cost issues involved that need to be considered as well.

5. Proposal on a Fully Documented Fishery for the Irish Sea

The Irish Seal Sanctuary representative (Johnny Woodlock) submitted a written proposal asking the WG4 to consider recommending that the Irish Sea become a Fully Documented Fishery (FDF)². Johnny Woodlock said that everyone wants a future for the Irish Sea. This area is a relatively small one and stocks such as Irish Sea Sole are almost now a fully documented fishery in practice. In view of this, the Irish Seal Sanctuary advocates for full observer coverage on board fishing boats but CCTV would be regarded as well as an alternative option.

Alan McCulla: It is not right to use AIS as an example to measure effort, considering that a significant segment of the fleet is under 15metres and they don't even have VMS devices. Only a small number of vessels have AIS and only one Member State supports the use of CCTV in FDF.

Bertie Armstrong: Based on his experience as Scottish representative involved in fisheries science partnership exploring options for FDF, the observers cannot be regarded as the panacea to solve all problems. They have significant costs attached (it costs about 60,000 EUR a year to train and hire a single observer). The use of CCTV does not identify as well the type of fish or its size. It is used in Scotland as a compliance device to ensure that no discarding of cod takes place and in exchange for that the affected vessels get additional days at sea (fishing effort).

² See: http://www.nwwrac.org/Meetings/Meetings_ENG/Navigation.php?id=651&language=English



Alan Coghill: The number of boats using CCTV has decreased from 26 in 2012 down to 19 in 2013 as the costs involved were not reflected in the value of the catch from the extra effort. Cameras are not the answer for FDF for all fisheries and in all cases.

ACTION: There is not action resulting from this proposal as it was considered not fit for purpose and therefore was not supported by the WG4 members.

6. Update on Skates and Rays: technical measures

Summary of Commission's reply to NWWRAC proposal on a seasonal closure for Skates and Rays

Eibhlín O'Sullivan, acting as Chairperson of the NWWRAC Focus Group on Skates and Rays, briefed the meeting on the response from the Commission on the NWWRAC proposal for a pilot voluntary closure for skates and rays in a part of the Irish Sea. The Commission's reply welcomed the proposal but went on to state that it was difficult to assess the benefits of a voluntary closure and that catch limits remained as the only option to maintain controls over a fishery. The letter also states that the use of binding closures and other technical measures can be taken into consideration provided that they are clearly proposed, assessed and agreed. The Commission also added that voluntary closures should be seen as complimentary or interim measures for helping recovery of the stocks.

Ms. O'Sullivan said that it was disappointing from the industry perspective that the Commission did not seem to be very supportive or encouraging about the effectiveness of this initiative as a management measure.

Exchange of views from the floor

Emiel Brouckaert: This was not the first voluntary closure in the Irish Sea. There had been one introduced by the Anglo Belgian fleet for ray fisheries in Lundy (VIIIfg).

Sean O'Donoghue: He was not directly involved in Skate and Ray fisheries. He was highly critical of the response given by the Commission as it was a genuine proposal made by the NWWRAC in terms of conservation and recovery of these stocks. He believed there was no point in making proposals of similar nature (i.e. industry-led closures) in the future.

Roy Griffin: The Commission needs to have robust scientific advice on the benefits of any closure. The Commission is willing to evaluate the effectiveness of this proposed closure but not incorporate it into legislation in the short term. The Commission can request STECF to evaluate the closure this year, although it may be difficult to determine the impact from a voluntary local closure.

Action: Alan McCulla and Eibhlín O’Sullivan, with the assistance of the Secretariat, will draft a NWWRAC response to the Commission’s reply setting out the two questions that the Commission should put to STECF to assess the efficiency of the closure.

7. AOB

The topic of multi-rig fishery in the Irish Sea was brought up by the member Johnny Woodlock.

Alan McCulla said that the minutes of the last meeting states that that ANIFPO has made a proposal to the Northern Ireland Administration calling for a ban on the use of more than three multi rig at the one time. ANIFPO does not advocate a ban it was in fact asking for an opinion on the use of these multi-rigs.

Johnny Woodlock: These multi-rigs are so efficient that they will catch so many nephrops that prices will drop and stocks will suffer.

Alan McCulla: Landings are managed by quota allocations and all fleets have to abide to them. He clarified that he is neither for nor against the use of these rigs.

Action: The Secretariat will amend the minutes of the last WG4 meeting under item 6. AOB accordingly and upload the amended version to the website.

8. Close of the meeting

With no other business to discuss the Chairman thanked everyone for their participation.

The meeting was adjourned at 16:00h.



ANNEX I. LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

MEMBERS		
<u>Name</u>	<u>Surname/s</u>	<u>Organization</u>
Alan	McCulla	ANIFPO – WG4 Chairman
Thomas	Bryan-Brown	Manx FPO – WG4 Vice Chairman
John	Crudden	EAA – WG4 Rapporteur
Bertie	Armstrong	NWWRAC Chairman
Luc	Corbisier	Stichting voor Duurzame Visserij
Barrie	Deas	NFFO UK
John	Lynch	Irish Fishermen’s Organisation
Francis	O’Donnell	Irish Fish Producers Organisation
Sean	O’Donoghue	Killybegs Fishermen’s Organisation
Caitlín	Uí Aodha	Irish South & East FPO
John	Woodlock	Irish Seal Sanctuary

OBSERVERS		
<u>Name</u>	<u>Surname/s</u>	<u>Organization</u>
Emiel	Brouckaert	Rederscentrale
Alan	Coghill	Scottish Fishermen's Federation
Grant	Fulton	European Fisheries Control Agency
Roy	Griffin	DG MARE - European Commission
Ian	Humes	DARD Northern Ireland
Colm	Lordan	Marine Institute (Ireland)
Laurent	Markovic	DG MARE - European Commission
Michael	McLeod	Marine Scotland - Scottish Government
Jennifer	Mouat	Scottish Whitefish FPA
Eibhlín	O'Sullivan	Irish South & West FPO
Norah	Parke	Killybegs Fishermen's Organisation / ACRUNET Project
Jacques	Pichon	ANOP – Pecheurs de Bretagne
Jane	Sandell	Scottish Fishermen's Organisation
Pieter-Jan	Schon	AFBI (Northern Ireland)
Declan	Tobin	Joint Nature Conservation Committee
Paul	Trebilcock	Cornish FPO
Hilde	Vanhaecke	ILVO Belgium - Presenter



NWWRAC SECRETARIAT		
Michael	Keatinge	NWWRAC Director
Conor	Nolan	NWWRAC Executive Secretary
Joanna	McGrath	Executive Assistant, Administration and Finances
Alexandre	Rodríguez	Executive Assistant, Fisheries Policy and Communication