



REPORT

Working Group 4 (Irish Sea – ICES VIIa)

Dublin Castle, 6 July 2011

16:00-18:00

Chairman: Lorcan O’Cinnéide

Rapporteur: John Crudden

1. Welcome

The Chairman opened the meeting at 16:00 h and welcomed the WG4 members and observers. He was glad to see some new faces at the meeting especially from other Working Groups but expressed disappointment that some people who have an interest in the Irish Sea Working Group didn’t attend.

Apologies were received from Iwan Ball, WWF.

The list of participants is shown in Annex I.

The agenda as circulated was adopted with some amendments. Item 4 (Proposal for a management plan for Ray fishery) which had been discussed in Working Group 3 was deleted and in its place it was agreed to expand the discussions on the Review of ICES Advice for Nephrops to include the Functional Units outside the Irish Sea geographic area.

The report of the last Working Group meeting of 13th April 2011 held in Bilbao was adopted unanimously without comment.

2. Review of Management measures for VIIa Stocks

2.1. Review of the Cod Recovery Plan for the Irish Sea

The Fisheries Council meeting in December 2010 decided to review all Cod Recovery Plans. Since then two scoping meetings of ICES-STECF on data deficiency and management plan evaluation have taken place.

Report of NWWRAC Working Group 4 Meeting
Dublin Castle, 6th July 2011



Barrie Deas reported on the NWWRAC Focus Group meeting held in Dublin on the 30th May to prepare a position paper to inform discussions at STECF. Two assumptions that the management plans are founded on were refuted, namely:

1. Reducing the TAC year-on-year will aid stock recovery
2. Effort controls will reduce fishing mortality.

A “one size fits all” approach is not workable in this context rather a regional approach is more appropriate. The 21 page document was presented by Barrie to the STECF EWG meeting in Hamburg (20-24 June) and will be included in the annex of the report which will go to before the plenary session of STECF later in July.

Lorcan O’Cinnéide also reported on the meeting in Hamburg. The NWWRAC position paper proved to be very influential in broadening the discussion and he expressed his happiness to see that the RAC ideas would also be contained in the body of the report as well as in the annex.

Since the Focus Group meeting in Dublin the ICES advice for 2012 has been published. The advice of a zero catch in area VIIa linked to the management plan will mean an automatic reduction of 25% in the TAC. The drastic nature of the advice may well lead to a further review in the autumn. The nature of the Management Plan, which is now almost a directed fishery for Nephrops with a by-catch, may also have repercussions for future advice. For the record, the Chairman asked the meeting to note the absence of a representative of the Commission from the meeting

Brendan Price said that the environmental side was not as alarmed as the industry about the proposed 25% reduction in the TAC. The key to changing the situation is to address the information deficit. Misreporting is generally accepted and unaccounted mortality is also a problem. There needs to be an observer scheme for the Nephrops fleet and to address the impact of cod recovery on other species. He proposed that the NWWRAC should take up the call from Kenneth Patterson to force the Member States to address the issue and suggested that the Irish Sea (Area VIIa) become a pilot area for observer schemes.

Sean O’Donoghue said that there was a huge problem with everything to do with cod in the Irish Sea. It was inevitable that there will be similar cuts of minus 25% and it was only a matter of time before we have a total closure. He echoed the Chairman’s opening statement to express his disappointment that people who have an interest in the Irish Sea were absent from the meeting and suggested that perhaps the reason for that was that meetings of Working Group 4 always come at the end of the meetings series.



Caitlín Uí Aodha said that the Cod recovery plan in area VIIa has an indirect effect on other areas because of displacement of effort and a complete closure will exacerbate the problem.

Pieter-Jan Schön said that it was extremely difficult to collect data from the commercial fleet with the restricted fishing opportunities and almost impossible to quantify individual sources of unaccounted mortality in the current circumstances. We need to think of sentinel fisheries and schemes if we are to get that data. He also reminded the meeting that an ICES benchmark workshop for Irish Sea cod has been scheduled for early next year. This meeting will allow scientists to assess and incorporate new datasets (such as discards data) if available, so there is potential for qualitative improvement in advice in the medium term.

Barrie Deas said that we were tied into a management plan that is going nowhere and continuing with the plan will not achieve the desired result. A new governance structure is urgently needed. This is something that was tried at the Irish Sea Focus Group meeting in Belfast in September 2009. We will have the outcome from the Hamburg meeting in August and this could possibly serve as a starting point.

Álvaro Fernández reported on a laboratory study led by Keith Brander in CEFAS Lowestoft (England) in the 1970's which concluded that Cod were eating the same amount of their own species as were being caught by fishing.

ACTION: It was agreed to draft a short paper noting the various initiatives currently in place and suggesting a combined alternative approach for the Irish Sea fisheries highlighting various lines of enquiry and actions that need to be pursued by the Commission and the Member States.

2.2. Nephrops in all Functional Units

An extensive discussion took place on the subject of Nephrops in all FU of ICES area VII. It was stated quite strongly that the industry accepts that assessment by functional unit is acceptable but not management by functional unit. The aggregate advice is that the species will be subject to a further cut in the 2012 TAC.

Sean O'Donoghue stated that there were 3 issues with the advice:

1) It was difficult to make a comparison of the advice between 2011 and 2012 but he estimated that there was an overall 3% increase with respect to the TAC for 2011.



ACTION: It was agreed that when the list of co-coordinators was finalised it would be circulated first to the members of the NWWRAC and then to ICES, the Commission and the Member States.

4. Proposed Management Plan for Rays in Area VII

Caitlín Uí Aodha had earlier delivered a presentation to Working Group 3 for a proposed management plan for Rays. In the discussions held in Working Group 3 it was proposed to broaden the proposal to include sharks and skates as well.

ACTION: It was agreed that Working Group 4 would support the initiative from Working Group 3 for a proposed management plan for Sharks, Skates and Rays and would also support the request to the Executive Committee to establish a Focus Group on this subject.

5. Irish Sea Marine Conservation Zones Project

Lorcan O’Cinnéide made a brief announcement on correspondence received from JNCC by the Secretariat earlier in the day. A new iteration had been announced for the establishment of two new proposed MPAs in the Irish Sea, one to be established east of the Isle of Man and the other off the coast of County Down in Northern Ireland.

The consultation period was open up to 29th September. The meeting was reminded that an action point from the last meeting of Working Group 4 for the establishment of a GIS of all MPAs in the NWWRAC area had not been progressed but it merits to be explored in the near future.

6. Closing Remarks

In his concluding remarks, Lorcan O’Cinnéide announced that he would not be a candidate for the position of Chairman of Working Group 4 following the General Assembly in October.

Having no further business to discuss he closed the meeting at 18:10 h



ANNEX I. LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

<u>MEMBERS</u>		
<u>Name</u>	<u>Surname/s</u>	<u>Organization</u>
Lorcan	O’Cinnéide	IFPO - WG4 Chairman
John	Crudden	European Anglers Alliance - Rapporteur
Bertie	Armstrong	SFF
Thomas	Bryan-Brown	Manx Fish P.O.
John	Daly	Irish Seal Sanctuary
Barrie	Deas	NFFO
Sean	O’Donoghue	Kyllibegs F.O.
Brendan	Price	Irish Seal Sanctuary
Caitlín	Uí Aodha	Irish South and East FPO



OBSERVERS		
<u>Name</u>	<u>Surname/s</u>	<u>Organization</u>
Maurice	Clarke	Marine Institute - Ireland
Lindsay	Clements	Coastwatch
John	Daly	Irish Seal Sanctuary
Karin	Dubsky	Coastwatch
Alvaro	Fernández	Scientific advisor MARM
Caroline	Gamblin	CNPMEM
Hugo	González	ANASOL-ARVI
Meredith	Hayes	Coastwatch
Sam	Lambourn	NWWRAC Chairman
Dara	McHugh	Feasta
Eduardo	Míguez	EAFPA
Eibhlín	O'Sullivan	Irish South and West FPO
Jim	Portus	UK South & West FPO
Pieter-Jan	Schon	ICES/AFBINI
Paul	Trebilcock	Cornish Fish PO
Héctor	Villa	MARM - Spain



NWWRAC SECRETARIAT		
Conor	Nolan	Executive Secretary
Alexandre	Rodríguez	Executive Assistant, Policy Coordinator
Joanna	McGrath	Executive Assistant, Administration - Finances