

**North Western Waters Regional Advisory Council  
Executive Committee Meeting  
Dublin  
27<sup>th</sup> of September 2007**

**Welcome**

The Chairman welcomed the participants to the meeting and stated that he looked forward to a fruitful meeting. The minutes of the last meeting in Paris (17 April 2007) were adopted without comment. The Agenda was adopted with the following items included under AOB: Pingers, Static Gear Marking, and a proposal for a scientific secondee to assist the work of the RAC.

**Report from Working Groups Meetings - 12 and 13 June 2007 - Belfast**

**Working Group 1**

Bertie Armstrong (Chairman WG1) reported:

1. Ernesto Penas Lado of the Commission presented a Policy Statement on Fishing Opportunities for 2008.
2. Work was proceeding on Blue Ling Management and noted that, Member States had provided data to the Commission to assist in identify possible management measures for this stock.
3. The area VI initial scoping project on Long-Term Management was due to be completed very soon. This would be reported in the next WG1 meeting.
4. Members of WG1 were due to meet on crab management at a trans-national meeting.

**Working Group 2**

Hugo Crisanto Gonzalez Garcia (Chairman WG2) reported:

1. A request to assess the current cod recovery measures in the Celtic Sea (the Trevoise Closure) had been sent to the Commission (June 2007) but that no response as yet had been received.
2. WG 2 has mooted the possibility of forming a Hake Focus Group. Also the Spanish Ministry of Fisheries (MAPA) is currently preparing a 1-day workshop on Hake, which maybe this NWWRAC could attend.
3. In addition an agreement was made at this working group that a letter should be sent to the Commission on the issues surrounding the 8% Margin of Tolerance Log Book requirement. This was endorsed by the Executive Committee via electronic means and was sent to the Commission (September 2007) The NWWRAC are still awaiting a response.

**General Comments**

A number of comments were raised regarding the issue of a focus group for Hake. Whilst it was felt that it could be a useful process, it was noted that the NWWRAC are funding only 6 focus group sessions this year and it is necessary to decide where these resources are best allocated. It was also suggested that rather than focusing on one species- a focus group be established to discuss demersal species issues in general.

It was agreed that this be further discussed with the other priorities of the NWWRAC in the General Assembly on the 28<sup>th</sup> of September.

**Action:** the Chairman WG2 drafts a letter on Hake management with the assistance of the Secretariat to be circulated for comment in the coming weeks. The proposal for a focus group for Hake will be discussed amongst the general membership.

### **Working Group 3**

Daniel Lefèvre (Chairman WG3) reported:

1. Members met with scientists to review the data available on fishing activities and fleet sizes in the channel. Gaps in the information were identified and it was agreed that access to relevant data was something this RAC would need to seriously address.
2. Barrie Deas presented on the inshore fishing fleet in this area and the need to address certain inshore issues in this working group.
3. Management measures for Japanese clams were agreed by the WG and the Executive Committee via email procedures adopted the recommendation.
4. The activities of Danish Seiners in the channel was discussed, although no decisions were taken because the Dutch Members who represent the fishermen who use this method were unable to attend the WG because of prior commitments. It was agreed this issue be further debated at the next WG3 meeting.

### **Working Group 4**

In the absence of the Chairman WG4 through ill health Alan Mc Culla reported:

1. The Irish Sea Data Enhancement Project was currently in operation and so far had exceeded all expectations in respect of data return, with more fishermen signing up to the programme.
2. For 2008, WG4 will concentrate efforts to ensure that this programme remains a priority within UK, Ireland and the EU Commission, and will also hope to use it to work on a discard action plan to promote cod recovery.

### **General Comments**

1. When will the first data from this initiative be available?
2. What input the eNGOs can have on the monitoring committee?

### **Response:**

As the project did not commence until recently the data would be available to feed into the assessments in 2008

The monitoring committee was a trans-national group set up by the Governments of the relevant Member States and as such the RAC had no authority to insist on representation in the committee. Interested parties discuss their input with the relevant bodies (i.e. the Government Ministries of the Member States).

### **Report from Focus Groups**

#### **Deep-water Gillnets**

Jacques Pichon reported on the meeting that was held on the 27<sup>th</sup> June 2007 and informed the Executive Committee that:

1. Good and informed discussion took place on the work that has been done by the NWWRAC to date, and the work that remains to be done.
2. Nils Roar-Hareide, a scientist from Norway, spoke to the group about the work that was being done in the DEEPNET project. It was agreed that the NWWRAC should be working more closely with scientists involved in these studies and that Michel Goujon of CNPMM should co-ordinate this co-operation.
3. There had not been much time to discuss the issues of 'pingers' and gear marking but noted that the Commission showed its willingness to listen to the advice of the NWWRAC, when it adopted the proposal from this RAC that the TAC and quota regulation be amended so that the length of individual fixed nets were in line with the gear marking regulation of 5nmiles.
4. The Group proposed that the NWWRAC fund a workshop between the Members of the NWWRAC, the Industry, and Scientists as soon as possible.

#### **Comments**

Members were concerned that issues with gear marking and 'pingers' had had not been dealt with and asked for an update. The Secretariat reported that the Commission were currently tendering to Member State national institutes to carry out a desktop study on gear-marking regulations to benchmark the EU stipulations against international criteria. There had been no developments on the 'pinger' issue.

## **Cod Recovery**

Barrie Deas (Chairman sub-working group on Cod recovery) reported:

1. The background and current situation on the development of the NWWRAC response to the Commission Non-paper on Cod
2. The sub- group met (17<sup>th</sup> of July 2007) to discuss their initial thinking on the non-paper; how to respond to the Commission, and how to report on the NWWRACs opinion on the outcome of the Cod Symposium. It was agreed by the sub-group that a two-phase approach was necessary to take account of the effort put into this issue to date.
  - i. The sub-group signed off on a draft version of the NWWRAC opinion on the Cod Symposium, which was sent to the Executive Committee for approval. After consultation with the Executive Committee this was forwarded to the Commission in August. Some members of the Spanish delegation argued that this document was not formally adopted by the Executive Committee, but sent directly from the Focus Group to the Commission. They claimed for a stricter compliance of the Statutes dealing with the functioning of the NWWRAC, and for statement of the divergent or contrary opinions and views in any document upon request.
  - ii. The sub-group agreed to respond to the Commissions Non-paper on an area-by-area basis.
3. This response was currently still in draft form although the Commissions deadline for submission was 30th September –in just 4 days time. The Executive Committee Members were asked firstly for their initial comments on the draft response, ahead of a further meeting of the sub-group tomorrow, and secondly for guidance on how to get an approved response to the Commission within the very near future.

The rapporteurs for each of the ‘cod specific’ areas within the sub-group reported briefly on the draft response.

- Sean O’Donoghue- **West of Scotland**
- Jacques Pichon- **Celtic Sea**
- Alan McCulla- **Irish Sea**

It was pointed out that only the Executive Committee Members were sent the draft response before today’s meeting because the response was still in draft form, and further discussion was needed at tomorrows sub-group meeting.

**Comments** and outcomes of discussion:

**Area VIIId:** Daniel Lefevre (Chairman WG3) asked that area VIIId be included in the deliberations of the sub-group. This is an area that forms part of the North Sea Cod Recovery programme but is within the remit of this RAC and therefore needed to be reflected in the response to the Commission.

**Outcome:** It was agreed that area VIIId would be included in the sub-group discussions on the 28<sup>th</sup> September

**Real-time Closures:** A general discussion took place including the current Scottish pilot project. Ian Gatt (SFF) reported on this project being run in Area VI and explained that it is a voluntary scheme that is being run by Scottish fishing vessels to examine the practicalities of implementing small area, temporary closures in parts of the Scottish Territory where these vessels come across aggregations of juvenile cod. He also requested that other Member State vessels fishing in the area voluntarily join the project.

A number of Members stated that they had concerns with real-time closures. The Spanish delegation stated that they were against real-time closures and asked that this be recorded both in the minutes of this meeting and in the paper to be addressed to the Commission. They also complained that this had not been clearly stated in the Preliminary Response forwarded to the Commission in August, in spite of specifically requesting this be done.

The Chairman apologised for this omission made on good faith and acknowledges that he better understands now the reasoning of the Spanish fishing industry. Members from areas such as the Channel and the Irish Sea felt that the scheme being piloted by the Scottish might not work in their areas, as the closures were quite large.

The majority of Members supported the pilot project and felt that in certain well-defined situations 'real-time closures' may be useful tools to use within area VI and VII. These Members also expressed frustration at the lack of support been shown for a forward thinking initiative which has the potential to actually work and reduce not only discarding of cod, but of other juvenile species and stated that this NWWRAC needed to support this and/or come up with similarly positive initiatives as the alternatives of effort management was far less workable and desirable from an industry perspective.

**Outcome:** It was agreed that the NWWRAC be kept informed of the Scottish pilot project.

**Impact of Climate Change:** The Meeting was informed of the Commissions recent publication on the impacts of climate change on European Fisheries.

**Outcome:** Details of this publication to be circulated to Members. Link:  
[http://ec.europa.eu/fisheries/publications/magazine\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/fisheries/publications/magazine_en.htm)

**Cod Avoidance Plans:** One of the main concepts introduced into the draft response were Cod Avoidance Plans. Barrie Deas informed the Members that these plans would be voluntary and targeted at the individual vessel (or fleet of vessels) with the purpose of encouraging the operators of these vessels to avoid catching cod in return for being exempt from effort control. These plans would draw on the individual fisherman's expertise on how best to tackle the problem of Cod by-catch.

**Outcome:** It was agreed that this should be discussed in more detail at the sub-group meeting on the 28 September 2007, but in general it was a concept that was supported by the Executive Committee.

**Action:**

After the lengthy debate it was agreed that because of the very short time available to submit a formal response the Executive would exceptionally grant the sub-working group an extraordinary and single mandate to draft a response, on behalf of the NWWRAC, to the Commission non-paper on Cod Recovery. This response would be circulated to the Executive Committee by 2nd October for minimum comment before the 5<sup>th</sup> October with a view to getting the final response to the Commission before the 10<sup>th</sup> October 2007. It was also agreed that this correspondence would all be done via English.

**TCM Workshop**

Sean O'Donoghue reported:

1. The recent Profet Policy TCM workshop held in Dublin (13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> of September) was a great success with very good participation from RAC Members attending.
2. The Commission unveiled some of the initial tables from the Communication Document that is due out shortly. There was general concern expressed at the workshop at what was shown because although the general principles were acceptable, there were still some problems with the detail that members have seen to date. In addition there has been no discussion on the detail contained within the forthcoming Document, which is of the utmost importance. The RACs should be engaging with the Commission now to ensure that they are actively involved before the Communication is released.
3. The next in the series of Workshops would take place in Vigo and asked Hugo Gonzalez Garcia to keep the NWWRAC informed of this event.

**Action:**

The Secretariat liaises with other RACs and develops a request to the Commission that a meeting be set up to discuss the annexes of the forthcoming TCM Communication Document.

### **Response to the Commission on Policy Framework Document**

The Secretariat informed the Members that the Commission had requested a response to their Policy Paper by the end of September and a short paper had been drafted and circulated to Members some weeks ago.

#### **Action:**

It was agreed that Members submit final comments to the Secretariat before 10 October 2007.

### **Long-term Management Issues**

#### **Outcome of the CEFAS Project**

John Casey of CEFAS reported:

1. Progress by CEFAS and other Member State Scientists on the definition of fisheries by metier in area VII.
2. Once defined by a unit or metier the fishery can then be appropriately managed.
3. Members had been circulated with a draft report of the Project several weeks ago and were invited to consider a table, which listed the final set of relevant categories that fleets could be assigned to and comment before the final report was submitted to DEFRA.

#### **Comments:**

Members noted that

1. Area VIIId had not been included in the initial phase of work.
2. Information on the dredging fleets had not be taken account of and
3. Belgian and Dutch data would need to be included.
4. This was a very useful exercise and looked forward to working with the Project partners to develop a model to set out management scenarios.

#### **Actions**

John Casey agreed to amend the draft paper based on the discussions at the meeting and to circulate it to the Executive for final comments in the coming weeks.

### **Development of a LTM Framework Contract**

Barrie Deas introduced the Proposal and informed Members it was developed as a result of discussions with the Commission and Economists at the Commission Economic Seminar held last May 2007 and is a proposed way of ensuring the availability of appropriate funding for Long-Term Management Plans. The Secretariat added that this proposal has gained the support of the NSRAC, the SWWRAC, and Baltic RAC and that they would like to be involved with the proposal from now on.

#### **Action:**

The Members unanimously supported the Proposal and it was agreed that the Secretariat, with the guidance of Barrie Deas would progress this idea.

### **Proposed Scallop Project**

This proposal was first developed as a result of discussions in the Scallop workshop last October 2006 in London. The Chairman asked for guidance on how to proceed as opinion was divided.

#### **Comments:**

Members who supported this proposal felt it was an issue that the NWWRAC could develop, with scientists, to improve the management of this important non-quota stock.

Other Members felt that this was an inshore species that should not be a priority for this RAC and that management of these species should be left to the relevant Member States.

It was noted however that most scallops are caught in waters outside of the 12-mile limit, and that there has been very little work done on these stocks the purpose of the work being proposed here is to better inform the industry and managers.

**Action:**

It was agreed to progress the proposal as tabled and that the Secretariat would follow up with relevant National Institutes and funding bodies to ascertain the possibility of getting this work started as soon as possible.

**Representation for Advisory Committee on the Ecosystems (ACE) and Integrating the Ecosystem into Fishery Management (IMAGE) Project:**

Ian Gatt reported that some significant changes were due to be put in place for ACE so representative was not nominated at this time.

John Crudden expressed his interest to represent the NWWRAC on the IMAGE project; the Executive Committee endorsed this.

**Request to work with other RACs**

**Deepwater TAC and quotas**

The SWWRAC expressed an interest to work with the NWWRAC on deepwater issues in light of the proposals to be released on deepwater stocks in 2008. However it was felt that due to the differences of situation between these RACs for these fisheries it was agreed that this work should be postponed until the Commission make available their draft proposals.

**Workshop on Natura 2000/MPAs**

The NSRAC approached the NWWRAC to set up a joint workshop in 2008 on the Natura 2000 Directive, and MPAs Members agreed that work was needed on the consultation and implementation process and the initiative was agreed in principle.

**Action:** Mark Russkell (RSPB) proposed a venue for this meeting in Scotland and agreed to liaise with the Secretariat.

**Proposal For Communication Strategy**

The Secretariat gave a brief overview of a short proposal that had been circulated to Members prior to the meeting.

**Action:**

It was agreed that this proposal should be developed and signed off at the next Executive Committee meeting.

**AOB**

**Scientific Seconded**

The Chairman reported that after the last Executive Committee in Paris (17 April 2007), he and Jacques Pichon had met with the Director of the Ministry for Fisheries in France to discuss the development of the RACs in general.

The Director offered to support the RACs (NSRAC and NWWRAC in particular) by providing a scientific secondee to work with the RACs. This offer has now been extended to the SWWRAC so that the secondee would share his/her time between the 3 RACs.

**Comments:**

There was unanimous support for this proposal and the Chairman was asked to write to the French Administration to urge them to go ahead with the process of putting this secondee in place.

**Report Community Fisheries Control Agency (CFCA) Meeting 26 September 2007**

Jacques Pichon reported:

- CFCA Representatives reviewed activities for 2007 and circulated the proposed work programme for 2008. The representatives informed Jacques that the CFCA had no plans to focus work within the NWWRAC area until 2009, but requested to meet with the NWWRAC mid 2008 to plan for this work.

**Actions:** Circulate the CFCA proposed work programme via the Secretariat.

**Close of Meeting: 5.20pm**

The Chairman thanked the Members, the Observers and the interpreters and closed the meeting.