

Haig Fras Site of Community Importance (SCI) MAIA¹ Fisheries Management Workshops Minutes

24 November 2011 – Conseil Regional, 283, avenue du Général Patton, 35 711 Rennes Cedex, France

JNCC - 22 December 2011

Twenty people attended the MAIA Haig Fras management workshop including five French fisheries representatives, one Cornish fisherman and a UK fisheries representative.

A series of presentations were given by Defra and JNCC regarding the Haig Fras SCI², its relation to the recommended Greater Haig Fras Marine Conservation Zone (rMCZ), and fishing activities³ around the site⁴. Following the explanation of the two different MPA processes, it was emphasized by fisheries representatives that fishers will not want to re-discuss management measures for both the Haig Fras SCI and the recommended Greater Haig Fras MCZ in a few years time when the MCZs have been forwarded. There was concern that this would lead to present discussions being annulled.

JNCC and Defra highlighted that there is a legal requirement under the Habitats Directive to put in place management for Natura 2000 sites within six years of notification to the Commission, hence the need to begin discussions now. Defra noted the remarks about MCZ selection and management made by the fishery representatives of the UK and France and relayed the fact that no decision has yet been taken on whether to designate the rMCZs and further analysis and consultation will be required before any decision is taken on the site.

JNCC presented new information showing initial maps of multibeam bathymetry and backscatter images of Haig Fras (from a survey conducted January 2011). This has provided more precise information on the location of the reef features. The site boundary is likely to need to be amended to include all the reef areas within the site and exclude as much 'non-reef' area as possible. When the full report from the survey is complete, a slightly amended site boundary will be recommended by JNCC to Defra. The fishermen and fisheries representatives present confirmed that the new information agreed with their perception of the location of the reef features and with the pattern of fishing shown by Vessel Monitoring System (VMS) data.

It was noted that there are some complex problems involved in identifying MPAs with lack of extensive ground truthed data; lack of detailed activity data; and projection estimates regarding static gear fishing.

¹ Marine Protected Areas in the Atlantic Arc (MAIA) EU Interreg IVb project – www.maia-network.org.

² Refer to JNCC Haig Fras SCI summary description of the site and conservation objectives and full site selection document and Conservation objectives and advice on operations document provided before the meeting and the complete version which can be found here - <http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/page-4534>.

³ Refer to JNCC's Haig Fras SCI description of known fishing activity in the period 2006 to 2009 document provided before the meeting.

⁴ Presentations available upon request

It was agreed that more sharing of information and methods (notably on activity data calculation and use) between French and UK authorities would take place as a learning process.

ACTION: JNCC to share risk assessment methodologies with relevant French officials.

JNCC presented management advice for fisheries on the features occurring in Haig Fras. They advised that the use of towed gears over the reef features is not compatible with the conservation objective to restore the features to favourable condition. Towed gear use on sediment areas adjacent to the reef is unlikely to have a significant effect on the reef features, and therefore may not need additional management within the SCI. Static gears are not believed to be damaging at low or moderate levels of effort, but may need to be managed if effort is at high levels. It is not currently possible to define precisely what constitutes a high level of fishing with static gears.

The Comité National des Pêches Maritimes et des Elevages Marins (CNPMM) [French fisheries committee] presented French fishing activity relevant to the site (based on two Ifremer analysis on 2005-2007 and 2008-2009 data sets), and their interaction with JNCC at the time of Haig Fras Special Area of Conservation (SAC) consultation (2008).

Subsequently, UK and non-UK fishing information was provided:

- It was confirmed that Potting activity does not happen within the site,
- Netting activity (gillnetting, trammel and some longline) occurs on the reef features;
- Due to topography constraints, trawling activity only occurs in between the reef features and around the edge of the site. It was further noted that trawling activity does not take place where netting activity occurs, helping to avoid conflict between the different industries;
- It was clarified that netting activity on the site is effectively limited by restrictions of space, tide and distance from fishing ports. A maximum of three vessels are able to fish on the site at any one time and fishing is only possible on neap or weak tides (two weeks per month). Netting activity on the site is therefore unlikely to be considered high and is not expected to increase significantly above present levels.

It was agreed that more detailed information on the level of static fishing activity that can occur without damage to the reef will be required in order to establish the level of static gear fishing that will be acceptable on reef features. It was proposed that the approximate intensity of netting activity currently occurring on the site could be quantified i.e. kilometres of net per days fishing per unit effort by the three vessels able to fish on the site. This would help to quantify what levels of activity are considered low/moderate and compatible with the conservation objectives.

The Marine Management Organisation (MMO) presented the possible options for management measures⁵ within the site. No further options were proposed by those present.

Management measure options discussed

1. A voluntary arrangement to restrict damaging fishing

This option was put forward as a possibility as the nature of the reef leads to a natural segregation of activities occurring on the site: low level of static gear on the reef feature and mobile gear on sedimentary substrates around the reef features. Additionally, since pelagic activities do not damage the reef features, a voluntary agreement would satisfy the conservation objectives.

The MMO emphasised that voluntary measures, if they are to be considered, must be robust and able to demonstrate that they can protect the sensitive reef features in the site. Defra

⁵ Refer to Haig Fras SCI possible Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) management measures document provided before the meeting.

noted that the European Commission (EC) is unlikely to consider voluntary measures to be sufficient to provide certainty of protection. The department of French Marine Fisheries and Aquaculture noted that the EC does not have a definitive position on this matter: there is an opportunity to propose voluntary measures. It was agreed to consider this subject with the Commission. Furthermore, it was agreed that additional discussions would be needed given the lack of presence at the workshop from Spanish and Irish fishing interests. The North West Waters Regional Advisory Council (NWWRAC) was proposed as a forum through which a voluntary agreement could be reached.

2. No fishing

This option was dismissed since the level of static gear fishing occurring on the site was deemed to be at low levels and pelagic fishing activity would not damage the reef features within the site. Prohibition of all fishing would put an unnecessary restriction on activities that are not considered to be damaging.

3. No fishing except pelagic

This was dismissed since the level of static gear fishing occurring on the site was deemed to be at a low level. Prohibition of static gears would put an unnecessary restriction on activities that are not considered to be damaging the reef features at present.

4. No fishing except pelagic and static demersal

This option was not taken forward since it was agreed that management boundaries could, providing there was effective monitoring and enforcement, be drawn to enable mobile fishing to continue in the sediment areas of the site (based on new data on location of reefs within the site).

5. No additional management

It was suggested that the nature of the site, which precludes use of mobile gears on the reef features and restricts static gear effort to low or moderate levels, may make further management of fishing unnecessary. However, it is possible that the Commission would not consider this sufficient to provide certainty of protection. This option was not discussed further in the meeting but it has not been dismissed.

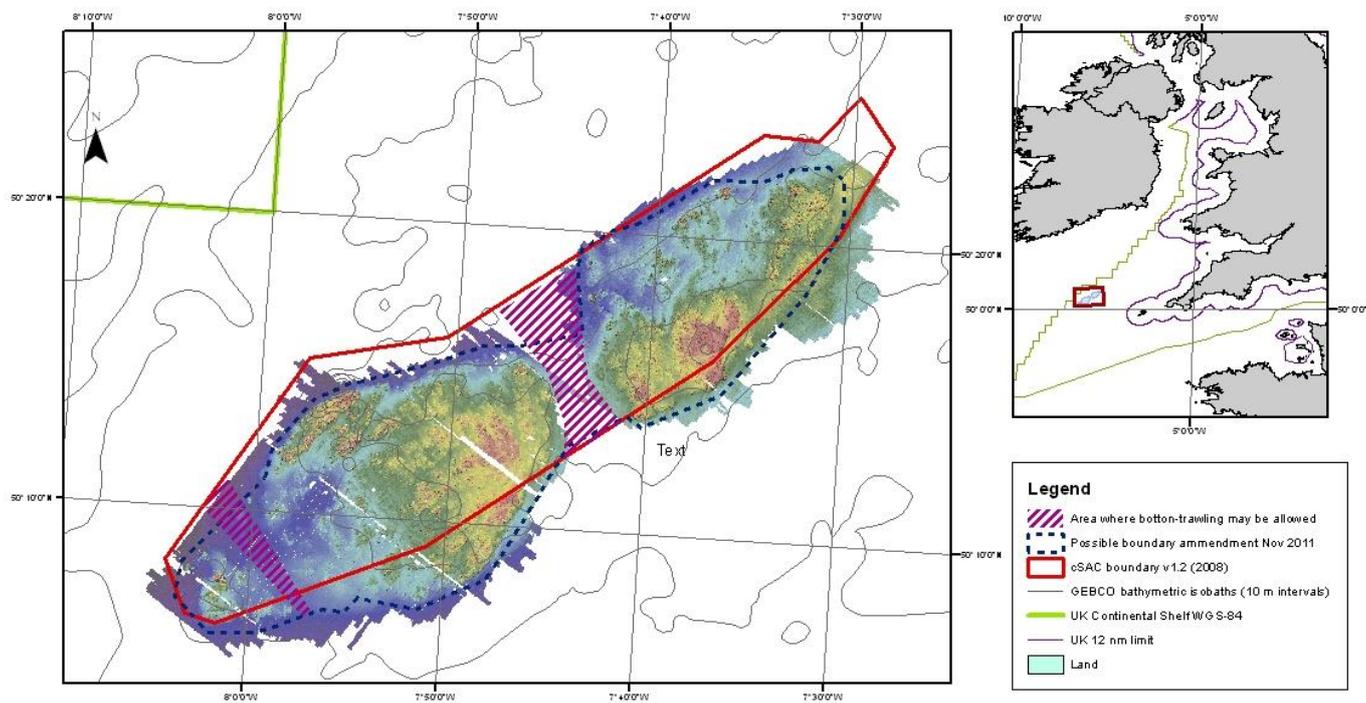
6. Zoned management

Given the above, this option was explored in more detail. There are three areas within the current SCI boundary where mobile fishing gear is currently used on what is believed to be sedimentary seabed (refer to figure 1 for more detail – the third area is in the very north-east corner of the site where new data is not yet available) and it is likely that a zoned management approach could be taken to allow such activity to continue. JNCC will examine the newly available detailed VMS and multibeam survey data to assess the potential impacts of fishing in these areas and whether it is possible to identify permitted fishing areas with sufficient margins to ensure protection of the reef. It was agreed that this option would need to be discussed with the NWWRAC.

ACTION: Present conclusions from this meeting to the NWWRAC.

ACTION: MMO to provide JNCC with Point Data (unprocessed VMS data [filtered for speed] showing actual vessel locations) so JNCC can re-examine detailed VMS data in relation to the new survey data.

Figure 1: Map of Haig Fras with possible differential fisheries management boundaries discussed and possible boundary adjustments following new multibeam bathymetry and backscatter data



World Vector Shoreline © US Defence Mapping Agency. The exact limits of the UK Continental Shelf are set out in orders made under section 1(7) of the Continental Shelf Act 1964 (© Crown Copyright). MAP NOT TO BE USED FOR NAVIGATION. GEBCO bathymetry © NERC 1994, 1997. Multibeam bathymetry © JNCC 2011. Projection WGS84 UTM 30N. SE 15/12/11

Summary

The workshop considered that management measures would only be required for benthic mobile fishing gear. The group identified three areas within the site that are not part of the reef feature, and recommended that these areas should remain open to towed gears as part of a zoned management approach (subject to further analysis of the data by JNCC, see figure 1) and the effectiveness of a monitoring and enforcement regime. The preferred option would be a voluntary agreement (negotiated through the NWWRAC) but this would be subject to confirmation that voluntary arrangements would be acceptable to the EC. UK government hope to propose management measures for Haig Fras, Stanton Banks and Dogger Bank SACs before the end of 2012.

All present agreed that discussions were useful and all were pleased with the outcome. The presence of more fishers would have been beneficial and this may have been achieved by locating the meeting in a relevant fishing port such as Concarneau or Le Guilvenec. Furthermore, it was noted that simpler and more concise preparatory documents would have been beneficial with maps with legends that fishermen can use.

Annex 1

Attendees

Charlotte Johnston	Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC)
Franck Evrat	North West Waters Regional Advisory Council (NWWRAC) representative - ANOP/FROM Brittany
John Clorley	Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs (Defra)
Johnny Murt	JNCC
Lucile Toulhoat	Comité National des Pêches Maritimes et des Elevages Marins (CNPMEM)
Mark Tasker	JNCC
Michael McLeod	Scottish Government (Marine Scotland)
Neil Wellum	Marine Management Organisation (MMO)
Paul Trebilcock	Cornish Fish Producers Organisation (CFPO) / National Federation of Fishermen's Organisations (NFFO)
Jane Goodwin	Defra
Simon Porter	UK Fishermen
Solenne LeGuennec	la Fédération des Comités des Pêches Maritimes du Finistère (FCPM29)
Sophie Elliott	JNCC
Sophie LeCerc	Comité Regional des Pêches Maritimes et des Elevages Marins (CRPMEM) – Brittany
Stephanie Tachouires	Agence des aires marines protégées (AAMP) – MAIA Partner
Thomas Bouyer	Department of French Marine Fisheries and Aquaculture
Tom Blasdale	JNCC
Violaine Merrien	CRPMEM – Brittany

Appologies

Rob Banning	Pelagic Regional Advisory Council (PRAC)
Caroline Gamblin	CNPMEM
Dale Rodmell	NFFO
Jesús Lourido	Puerto de Celeiro – Spain
John Walsh	UK Fisher
Patrick Berthou	Ifremer
Paul Connolly	Marine Institute – Ireland
Phil Mitchell	UK Fisher
Sean Porter	UK Fisher