

REPORT

North Western Waters Regional Advisory Committee

Working Group 4 – Irish Sea (VIIa)

8th July 2009

14:00-17:00

CNPMEM - Paris (France)

Chairman: Lorcan O’Cinnéide

Rapporteur: Alan McCulla

1. Welcome

a. Adoption of the agenda: With the addition of items on the application of the fishing effort regime (Kw Days) in the Irish Sea and a discussion on the management of spurdogs, the agenda was unanimously adopted.

b. Adoption of report from last meeting: The report of the WG4 meeting held in Madrid the 18th of February 2009 was adopted without any comments or amendments.

2. Review of ICES 2009 Advice for VIIa – Irish Sea

A detailed presentation on the Irish Sea stocks assessed by ICES was given by the Vice-Chair of the Advisory Committee, Miss Manuela Azevedo.

Cod: Very low recruitment. SSB is below Blim. F is above Fpa – harvested unsustainably. ICES recommend a closure of the fishery.

The industry expressed a great deal of frustration with various aspects of the assessment and management of the stock. The evidence from the fishery suggested the stock was at a level well above what ICES assessed it at. In addition, this stock was driving management for the main demersal fisheries in the Irish Sea (and elsewhere), which in turned caused additional problems managing and retaining an economically sustainable fishery in the area. Survival of the industry in the Irish Sea was a very real and present issue.

While a specific review of cod recovery in the Irish Sea had been requested over several years, this had not materialised. It was suggested that an audit of the recovery scheme, since its introduction in 2000 be commissioned. This audit would examine the unique aspects of the ecosystem in the Irish Sea, including stock interactions, as well as fleet development etc.

Plaice: Good recruitment. SSB well above Bpa. F well below Fpa – harvested sustainably and under fished. “A green light stock” – ICES. Comments were made that against similar advice last year the TAC had been cut so as to comply with MSY targets.

Sole: Low recruitment. SSB below Bpa. F decreasing. ICES recommend no fishing in 2010.

Industry comments were again that the science was not in keeping with evidence from the grounds and there was a serious inability for the science to recognise a stock that was recovering.

More consideration should be given to the dramatic reduction in fishing effort in recent years. In addition there was a belief that the impact of other human activities was not being taken into account with ICES stock assessments, while there was recognition that activities such as wind farms or extraction platforms did have varying impacts on a range of fish species.

Haddock: Recruitment shows recent decline. Increasing SSB. F stable. No catch forecast was provided by ICES.

Industry comments included observations on the effect of 'cod recovery measures'/effort control on this (and other) stocks. Overall, given the fishing evidence on the state of the stock, the feeling was that ICES advice was too negative.

Whiting: No new data since last year. No comments.

Nephrops: Irish Sea West underwater camera survey indicates declining stock. This taken together with data from other Functional Units of the Area 7 stock lead to an ICES recommendation to cut the TAC by 45% in 2010. However, EC rules suggest TAC reduction would be constrained to 15-20%

There was dismay amongst industry representatives at this advice, which again did not reflect evidence from the fishery out with the Porcupine Bank. Following questioning of the ICES representatives by the industry, it was clear there was a difference of emphasis/opinion within ICES on the interpretation of the data and therefore the status of the stock. For the sake of "consistency" with other Nephrop stocks, ICES had applied the same framework. Industry representatives argued that such an approach could not reflect regional variations. It seemed ICES' opinion on the state of the stock was one that was based more on perception, and not evidence.

It was recommended that a Long term management Plan be developed for the stock, which should be discussed urgently at a sub-group or focus group.

3. Presentation on UK Round 3 offshore wind farm proposals

Representatives from the UK's Crown Estate gave a presentation to the back ground and process the body had used in defining 9 zones around the UK for the development of additional wind farms by 2020. These were designed to assist the UK in meeting its renewable energy targets.

Working Group members asked a number of questions dealing with the interaction with fishing activities and the possible effects of these wind farms on fisheries, including potential exclusion zones. The Crown Estate admitted that in agreeing the zones, one matter that had been of concern was a lack of information regarding fishing activity.



4. Irish Sea Discards Project

Members heard that while the project was continuing, it was suffering from a lack of incentive, which meant it had failed to meet its original expectations.

5. Science/Industry Workshop for the Irish Sea

No progress has been made on this since the last meeting. The Chairman advised members about a Gear Technology workshop being convened in Belfast on the 26th August.

Any Other Business:

6. Spurdog Management

It was suggested that the Commission be invited to convene a workshop on this issue, which might result in management measures being applied that would avoid discard problems, which neither helped the recovery of the stock or the commercial fishery. The Commission's aim of achieving zero catches was perceived as unrealistic by the fishing industry and would only exacerbate the problem.

One eNGOs pointed out that the ban on Spurdog landings was implemented to protect the species and prevent targeted fisheries.

7. Fishing Effort Regime

Industry representatives highlighted a range of areas where the effort control regime was impacting upon the economic viability of the commercial fishery. These included confusion over derogations for various fisheries, including Queenies, displacement of effort and the serious economic problems the fleet was encountering as a direct result of reduced days at sea.

It was pointed out that highlighting the difficulties would not in itself encourage the Commission to change course and the perverse/negative impacts the regime was having upon fisheries needed to be highlighted, as well as the development of a credible alternative.



Proposals and recommendations to put forward to the Executive Committee:

WG4 recommends to the Executive Committee the following actions:

1. The NWWRAC write to the EC stating its fundamental disagreement with the ICES advice regarding Area 7 Nephrops, in particular the methodology being used to develop the advice. The 'F' of 0.1, as developed for the North Sea prawn stock is inappropriate for the Area 7 stock. Landing figures, in particular within Area 7a, underline the stability of the fishery.
2. The NWWRAC express its serious concerns at the operation of the kilowatt-days regime and calls on the EC to conduct a comprehensive review of the management of the cod stock within the Irish Sea.
3. Working Group 4 requests that the Executive endorse the proposal of convening an urgent Irish Sea Fisheries Management workshop, which would focus on issues relating to the science on Nephrops, the science on other stocks within the area and the impacts of, as well as alternatives to the kilowatt days regime.

End of meeting

ANNEX I. LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

Name	Surname/s	Organisation	Status
Kristel	Adriaenssens	NWWRAC Secretariat	Secretariat
Manuela	Azevedo	ICES Advisory Committee	Scientific Expert
Iwan	Ball	WWF	Member
Thomas	Bryan-Brown	Manx Fish Producers Organisation	Member
Hannah	Cherry	The Crown State - UK	Observer
Luc	Corbisier	Stichting voor Duurzame Visserij	Member
John	Crudden	European Anglers Association	Member
Barrie	Deas	NFFO	Member
Ian	Gatt	Scottish Fishermen's Federation	Member
Sam	Lambourn	Chairperson NWWRAC	Chairperson NWWRAC
Colm	Lordan	ICES WGNSSDF	Scientific Expert
Joe	Maddock	Irish Fishermen Organisation	Member
Alan	McCulla	ANIFPO	Rapporteur
Conor	Nolan	BIM - NWWRAC Secretariat	Secretariat
Lorcan	O'Cinnéide	Irish Federation Producers Organizations (IFPO)	Chairman WG4
Gerard	O'Flynn	Irish South West FPO	Member
Patrick	Peril	Irish Seal Sanctuary	Member
Alexandre	Rodríguez	NWWRAC Secretariat	Secretariat
Pieter Jan	Schon	ICES WGNSSDF	Scientific Expert
Paul	Trebilcock	Cornish FPO	Member
David	Tudor	The Crown State - UK	Observer



Michael	Walsh	ISEFO	Member
John	Woodlock	ISS	Member