

DRAFT REPORT

North Western Waters Regional Advisory Council

Working Group 4 The Irish Sea (ICES VIIa)

Wednesday the 13th of June 2007
2.00pm-4.00pm

Chair: Lorcan O' Cinneide (Ireland)
Vice-Chair & Rapporteur : Alan McCulla (UK)

1. Agenda

The agenda was adopted by group members.

Report of the last meeting

The report from the last working group meeting in Bilbao was adopted by the members without comment.

2. Presentation from ICES

Robert Scott from CEFAS presented an update on the Assessment of Northern Shelf Demersal Stocks, with particular reference to the Irish Sea.

Cod: The stock was stable at a low level.

Haddock: The spawning stock was continuing to increase.

Whiting: The spawning stock was reducing against a background of increased recruitment.

Plaice: The spawning stock was increasing, but ICES advised caution on the future status of this stock

Sole: The spawning stock was declining.

Nephrops: No assessment in 2007 and no basis to revise 2006 advice.

One common thread running through the advice was the deteriorating catch data. It was suggested that this would remain an issue in an environment of reduced fleet size and reducing days at sea. In other words, if there are fewer vessels spending less time at sea then deterioration in catch data was inevitable.

There was some discussion with regard to the cod stock in the Irish Sea, with reports of increased numbers of cod in the southern extremities of ICES sub-area VIIa. Issues regarding migration between and mixing of the Irish Sea stock with adjacent stocks was also mentioned.

3. Update on Irish Sea Discard Project

A lot of frustration was expressed regarding the delay in getting the project up and running. Much of the delay was attributed to the EC's approval of the project, which was a legal requirement. Funding for the project had been secured in the UK and Ireland. Some testing of the proposed sampling methods had occurred and the next Project Steering Group meeting was scheduled for Belfast on the 21st June 2007. It was agreed that the NWWRAC Chairman would write to the EC to encourage their formal approval of the project as soon as possible.

4. Cod Recovery – Irish Sea Proposals

The NWWRAC Chairman introduced the subject and summarised the up-to-date position regarding the non-paper from the EC regarding the future direction of cod recovery measures and the draft RAC position paper prepared by Barrie Deas.

There was some debate as to whether or not the EC was genuine in respect of their regional approach to cod recovery. It seemed that the EC had already laid down the parameters for future cod recovery measures. However, it was agreed that the many unique aspects of the Irish Sea would have to be highlighted in the response to the EC and that this could be achieved through the establishment of a small focus group.

5. Study on Fuel Management and Costs

This agenda item centred upon a paper tabled by the Irish Seal Sanctuary and in particular ideas as to how fishing vessel engine power could be regulated. It was agreed that as the focus for the paper was specific to one member state that the RAC was not the avenue through which to pursue this matter.

The meeting ended at 4pm.