



CONSEIL CONSULTATIF POUR  
LES EAUX OCCIDENTALES  
SEPTENTRIONALES

NORTH WESTERN  
WATERS  
ADVISORY COUNCIL

CONSEJO CONSULTIVO PARA  
LAS AGUAS  
NOROCCIDENTALES

## **Working Group 4**

### **Irish Sea (VIIa)**

**Thursday 23<sup>rd</sup> April 2015**

**15:30 - 17:00**

**Bilbao Exhibition Centre (BEC)**

#### **1. Welcome by the acting Chair**

The acting chair, Sean O' Donoghue, opened the meeting and informed the meeting that although he was not a vice-chairman of the group that he had agreed to chair the session in the absence of Francis O'Donnell.

- **Adoption of the agenda**

The agenda for the meeting was adopted without change.

- **Apologies**

Apologies were recorded from: Frances O'Donnell, Alan McCulla, Jacques Pichon and Michael Keatinge.

- **Adoption of the report from the last meeting held in Paris, 13 November 2014**

The minutes of the last meeting were approved, as circulated.

#### **1. Administration**

As the delegated act was now in force, the chair requested the group to ratify the appointment of Francis O'Donnell as working group chair and appoint a rapporteur.

- **Decision:** Francis O'Donnell was appointed as Chair of the Working group. A rapporteur was not appointed and the Secretariat (Executive Secretary) agreed to act as rapporteur for this meeting.
- The chair noted that horizontal action items from the last meeting regarding the landing obligation and drafting group had been addressed and actioned.



## 2. Nephrops

The chair presented a table from the phasing paper produced by the AC detailing the species clusters, the species which defined the fisheries and the species which were bound by the landing obligation in 2016.

Members worked this table and paid particular attention to the species, to which the landing obligation applied to in 2016.

It was the decision of the group that haddock and nephrops were the main species in the Irish Sea. As very little hake was present in the area, this species was not considered to be of significant importance.

The areas requiring further work by the AC, were presented by the chair. Selectivity measures that maintain viability formed the basis for discussion and there was a consensus of opinion that there was a need to be more familiar with scientific trials on selectivity devices conducted in the Irish Sea, particularly regarding nephrops where there had been a significant amount of work conducted by BIM and DARDNI. The meeting was informed by the Secretariat that BIM had not been in a position to make a presentation at this meeting but would be available to attend the next meeting of the group in Edinburgh.

**ACTION            The Secretariat and Chair to contact BIM, DARDNI and any other relevant agencies to request that presentations on relevant selectivity work in the Irish Sea be made to members in Edinburgh, in order to develop an in-depth discussion on the subject.**

It was noted and agreed that debate on the topic should also include avoidance to Technical Conservation Measures, where this information was available.

Members agreed that the survivability of nephrops, in accordance with the table produced by the Secretariat (Barbara Schoute) at the meeting, needed to be highlighted in the AC paper presented to the Director's Group of the NWW Member States on 7th May in order to take into account the different survivabilities for Nephrops that existed in FU14 and FU15, in the Irish Sea.

Members identified that survivability information on other species such as plaice, would be required after 2016.

Given the success of the previous drafting group, it was agreed that a second drafting group be established to allow the AC to look forward (at the next meeting or before) and identify what studies are available for species which enter the discard plan at a later stage (e.g. skates, rays, plaice).



It was also agreed to approach the Commission to have a seminar to discuss what has been learnt from the cod management plan as this had suffered from being too rigid, with no ability to revise or make the plan more workable, in real time.

Such a seminar would be both useful and timely, as it could identify those elements which worked and those which didn't, along with those areas which were hurdles to effective implementation.

As the omnibus regulation contained a requirement to review the landing obligation it was suggested that a meeting of the NWWAC could be scheduled to take place just before or after such a meeting.

In summary, the chair indicated that both ideas were of merit and should be actioned.

**ACTION**            **The Secretariat to request that the Commission hold a seminar regarding the lessons learned from the cod management plan.**

**ACTION**            **WG4 support the establishment of a drafting group, which will focus on the development of AC opinion regarding the Landing Obligation and will determine a list of species for specific attention.**

**ACTION:**            **Request that a review process for the NWW Discard Plan, which included flexibility be put to the MS Director's meeting on 7th May.**

The Commission (Roy Griffin) indicated that their annual report planned for May 2016 would effectively constitute a review. The Commission agreed that plans must not be straightjacketed by unworkable legislation and that there needed to be a facility to make amendments to elements of legislation, which proved unworkable. In this context, the Commission indicated that a mechanism for revision was available through delegated acts, which could be done quickly. It was suggested to the meeting that the AC may consider meeting before the report deadline of May 2016 to provide input to the process.

The opinion of members on the issue of onshore reception facilities for nephrops from the Irish Sea was limited. It was agreed that the item be placed on the agenda for the next WG4 meeting (Edinburgh; July 2015) as by that stage the NWW Member State Landing Obligation plans will be with the Commission.

**ACTION:**            **Onshore reception facilities for nephrops from the Irish Sea to be discussed at the next meeting of WG4 (Edinburgh, July 2015).**

Members agreed that there was no significant transboundary issues for nephrops functional units in the Irish Sea and were also informed (Eibhlinn O'Sullivan) that a joint de minimis application was being made by Ireland and the UK for nephrops in the Irish Sea.



On this subject it was noted that 7%, 6% and 5% percent *de minimis* was not species specific in the CFP.

The Commission indicated that Member States were implementing *de minimis* as 7% of the total allocation. It was noted that *de minimis* could be applied in other ways and it was stressed that their must be a legitimate basis for fisheries to qualify for *de minimis* in the first instance.

Following discussion it was agreed that there was a requirement to examine the effects of survivability at a stock level. It was noted that STECF had conducted such analysis and members were unanimous in their opinion that the WG should be made aware of their findings, as adverse implications could lead to a significant reduction in the estimation of stock size, which could lead to higher levels of discards in the Irish Sea nephrops fleet than currently exist.

Members were informed (Liane Veitch) that evidence indicates that small nephrops have a lower than average survivability, so this should be taken into considerations if high survival exemptions are being sought to deal with unwanted catch of small nephrops.

It was confirmed (Chair) that the biology and physiology of nephrops in the Irish Sea are different to other stocks and that differences in survivability, by area is taken into account by ICES. The chair indicated that this issue should be the focus discussion at the next working group meeting in July.

It was noted that STECF would not meet again until June or July and this may conflict with the timing of the next WG4 meeting. This being the case, a synthesis of available work on survivability, could be used to inform the group. It was the opinion of the chair that STECF have already looked at this issue in the 2 functional units (of 7 or 8), which are in the Irish Sea.

Members were reminded (John Woodlock) that the majority of discards in the Irish Sea were juvenile gadoids and that there was currently no quota for cod. As juvenile gadoids make up the majority of discarded species it was questioned as to whether or not whiting or cod should be landed in the absence of a targeted fishery for these species.

The chair confirmed that the Landing Obligation would detail the species that have to be landed and added that ICES advice referred to the discard of nephrops as the most significant issue in the Irish Sea.

In addition it was noted (John Lynch) that the gadoid discard problem in the Irish Sea had been much reduced following the introduction of square mesh panels and that the objective of all interested parties is to continue this reduction by all means available.

The importance of an AC drafting group addressing these and other issues was noted by the Chair. Likewise, the chair reaffirmed the intentions of members to devote time at the next WG4 meeting to address TCMs and avoidance measures. It was considered essential that BIM and NI colleagues make



presentations and inform members of the objectives and results of technical trials that have been completed.

**ACTION: Request STECF to present their findings on the survivability of nephrops and the effects of the Landing Obligation in the Irish Sea.**

**ACTION: Secretariat to invite BIM and DARDNI representatives to the next WG4 meeting to present the results of relevant TCM trials.**

### **Sole**

With the permission of the chair, the initial discussion on sole was led by Emiel Brouckaert who informed members of work conducted over the last 2 years with ILVO, which incorporated the views of fishermen and actual situations.

In summary:

- The fisheries science partnership project (with ILVO) to analyse the Belgian fisheries view that the abundance of sole in VIIa is far better than mentioned in the ICES stock advice continues;
- The TAC for 2015 has been reduced to 90 tonnes, which makes it almost impossible to maintain a viable targeted sole fishery;
- ILVO has collected two years of good data through observers on board Belgian vessels operating in the Irish Sea;
- A Belgian skipper and ILVO scientist (Sarah Vandamme) signed on the HMS Endeavour for the Beam Trawl survey in the Irish Sea in September 2014;
- Another part of the project is the analysis of commercial data;
- First indications are that there are less juveniles in the Liverpool Bay (which is the main survey area) and more juvenile sole in the Horse Shoe;
- The sampling by ILVO observers on board Belgian vessels continues in 2015, and hopes to demonstrate that juvenile sole are not in the surveyed areas, but elsewhere;
- This work is part of the collection of data for a sole VIIa ICES benchmark in 2016 and is supported by the following initiatives:
  - ILVO and CEFAS have discussed operating a commercial vessel next to the Endeavour in the relevant survey areas to compare catches;
  - A further analysis of commercial data from the UK and Ireland, in addition to data from Belgium is planned;
  - Irish authorities will be contacted to discuss the placement of observers on the Irish survey;
  - Ecosystem changes due to the installation of windfarms appear to have occurred and will be the subject of further investigation.

Members were presented with a scientific overview by ILVO scientist Sara Vandamme who had taken over the role from Hilde Vanhaecke. An analysis of commercial and survey data revealed that



the Belgian fleet were active in 3 main areas of the Irish Sea, namely Liverpool Bay where TACs increased, and in the horse shoe and chicken areas of the central Irish Sea, which were also targeted for skates and rays. Changes within the stock were noticed in 2000 with an increase in plaice in the survey areas although the older year classes of sole were still abundant. This indicated a need to collect more samples to determine whether the fishery is changing or if the stock is collapsing and if the latter, to understand why there are still old, mature sole in the survey area. It was also considered important to collect age data to investigate the origin of central Irish Sea sole as no survey statistics for sole in the central Irish Sea existed. The origin of adult sole was also unknown as was the importance of the Bristol channel or other areas in this context. Because of the reduction in the TAC, fishermen have indicated that some ICES rectangles are being avoided as all the available quota has been taken and it has now become uneconomic to travel to fish.

Following the presentations members recalled that there seemed to be a problem before with the assessment methodology and questioned whether this still existed or had been solved. Members also wished to know whether both data sets were being designed and analysed with scientists and if the stock assessment methodology would be changed in any way. The fact that older size classes were abundant was highlighted as in direct contrast with cod and was identified as a scientific question that needed to be addressed.

In reply it was noted that CEFAS had decided to focus on the need for data to be robust, before any changes to the assessment methodology are suggested. There was also too much variability around older ages and this was the subject of review using the Belgian tuning series for this species.

In this context, it was noted that the influence of environmental parameters on the stock should be addressed as the severe winters of a few years ago seem to have had a positive effect on gadoids, which may have influenced the recruitment and distribution of other species in the area.

Emiel Brouchaert agreed to keep members informed of developments regarding the WG3 focus group on sole in VIId being held in June, in Dublin.

Further to discussions on the Landing Obligation it was noted (Emiel Brouchaert) that WG4 had not addressed the *DiscardLess* project and in particular issues relating to avoidance methods and discards. Members agreed with the proposal to invite both industry and non-industry “ambassadors” to attend the next meeting of the WG in July. It was also agreed that both “ambassadors” attend together and that single attendance of one or other “ambassador” be rejected.

**ACTION:           Secretariat to invite both “ambassadors” of the *DiscardLess* project to the next WG4 meeting in July.**

In his final remarks, the chair restated the need for a rapporteur to be appointed from the group and informed members that the Chair (Francis O'Donnell) would be forced to mandate a member at the next meeting to take this responsibility should no member volunteer for the role.



CONSEIL CONSULTATIF POUR  
LES EAUX OCCIDENTALES  
SEPTENTRIONALES

NORTH WESTERN  
WATERS  
ADVISORY COUNCIL

CONSEJO CONSULTIVO PARA  
LAS AGUAS  
NOROCCIDENTALES

The Chair summarised the agreed actions and closed the meeting at 16:35.

--- END ---

## Annex 1. List of participants

WG members		
Sean	O'Donoghue	Killybegs Fishermen's Organisation
Bertie	Armstrong	Scottish Fishermen's Federation
John	Crudden	European Anglers Alliance
David	Beard	Manx Fish Producers Organisation
Emiel	Brouckaert	Rederscentrale
Luc	Corbisier	Stichting voor Duurzame Visserij Ontwikkeling (SDVO)
Dave	Cuthbert	New Under Ten Fishermen's Association
Barrie	Deas	National Federation of Fishermen's Organisations
John	Lynch	Irish Fishermen's Organisation
Liane	Veitch	ClientEarth
John	Woodlock	Irish Seal Sanctuary
Observers		
Nuala	Carson	DEFRA
Andrew	Clayton	The Pew Charitable Trusts
Edward	Fahy	Irish Seal Sanctuary
Gonzague	De Moncuit	Ministère de l'écologie, du développement durable et de l'énergie
Robert	Griffin	European Commission
Marina	Le Garun	CRPMEM Bretagne
Laurent	Markovic	European Commission
Miquel	Ortega Cerdá	Fundació ENT
Sara	Vandamme	ILVO
Paul	Trebilcock	CFPO
Ross	Dougal	Scottish Fishermen's Federation
Eibhlín	O'Sullivan	IS&WFPO
NWWAC Secretariat		
Conor	Nolan	Executive Secretary
Barbara	Schoute	Deputy Executive Secretary
Joanna	McGrath	Executive Assisstant - Finance & Administration