



DRAFT MINUTES

WORKING GROUP 4 (IRISH SEA)

**Room 21.04 “Jacob Van Artevelde” - Virginie Lovelinggebouw (VAC)
Koningin Fabiolalaan, 9000 Gent**

**Wednesday 4th of July 2018
14:00 – 15:30**

1. Welcome and Introduction

The Chair Francis O'Donnell opened the meeting welcomed the participants.

Apologies were received from Alan McCulla (ANIFPO), John Woodlock (ISS), Javier Lopez (Oceana), Barrie Deas (NFFO) and Paul Trebilcock (CFPO).

The agenda was adopted as drafted.

The Secretariat updated the meeting on the action points from last meeting in Dublin (28th November 2017):

1. Trials would be conducted in both Ireland and Northern-Ireland in early 2018 to look at the effect of increasing the mesh size in the TR1 fleet. These trials will be coordinated by BIM and the Anglo-North Irish Fish Producers Organisation.
2. Trials would be conducted in early 2018 to look at the effect of increasing the mesh size in the Northern Irish TR2 fleet
3. BIM will assess existing data from previous trials to investigate the potential benefits of different mesh sizes to reduce whiting in the TR2 fleet.

The chair updated the meeting of the trials conducted in both Ireland and Northern-Ireland. Trials were still ongoing.

4. The NWWAC would write to the COM requesting to postponing the increase in the cod-end mesh size in the Irish Sea Nephrops fishery, until more evidence is available.
5. The Secretariat will ask the ExCom for a fast-track approval of the NWWAC letter.

The letter was sent on the 6th December 2017 ([link](#)) and a response from the COM was received on 12th February 2018 ([link](#)).

6. The Secretariat will discuss options with the NWW Member States Group on how research and trials on technical measures could be better coordinated



7. The Secretariat, with the help of the scientific experts and WG members, would conduct a review on the different fisheries and métiers in the Irish Sea and the selective devices currently used for further discussion at the next WG 4 meeting.

An STECF meeting has taken place (5-9th March 2018), with both experts from the MSG and the NWWAC to review the technical measures with a focus on the NWW. The full report is available on the NWWAC website ([Link](#)) as background information for this meeting.

ACTION: The Working Group will continue discussions on selectivity trials to make recommendation for the Regional Group.

2. Marine Protected Areas

Mr Nicholas Greenwood (Marine Management Organisation, UK) gave a presentation to inform members of:

- MCZ and Marine Conservation Zones in general
- West of Walney Marine Conservation Zone

He informed the meeting that the UK had just published the Fisheries White Paper: sustainable fisheries for future generations ([Link](#), in English only)

In response to questions raised by members, Mr Greenwood clarified:

- The windfarms in the West of Walney Marine Conservation Zone (MCZ) are fixed (not floating). The windfarm site was decided prior to the designation of the MCZ. The Irish Sea Conservation Zone project recommended to co-locate the windfarm and MCZ, recognizing there will be some loss of catches especially for the inshore fisheries. These losses have been taken into account when making the proposal.
- Article 20 of the CFP allows MS to take management measures provided they consult relevant MSs, ACs and COM for 2 months. How Brexit will impact stakeholder consultation is unsure for now.
- The report does not include a scientific evaluation of potential impact of windfarms on the species the MCZ aims to protect. Ongoing work looks at the indirect impacts of the windfarms.
- There are no extra requirements for VMS reporting in the vicinity of the MCZ
- There is still uncertainty about the relevance of the site to the different stakeholders following Brexit. If a transition period will be in place, EU law will apply to the UK. The London Convention provides access to other MS to the 26 and 12 nmiles zone, once the UK has withdrawal from the London Convention, there will only be UK vessels operating at this site. Access for other MSs would be provided on the basis of negotiation with the EU.

3. ICES advice for the Irish Sea

Mr Ghislain Chouinard (ACOM Vice-Chair) presented the advice for the stocks in the Irish Sea on behalf of ICES.



After the presentation, the chair opened the floor for questions and invited members to provide specific feedback that will form the basis of the NWWAC response to the fishing opportunities for 2019.

In response to questions raised by members, Mr Chouinard clarified:

- The total catch advice for plaice for 2019 includes both the wanted and unwanted catch. To calculate the percentage TAC change, one has to compare the TAC for 2018 with the wanted catch. The distinction between wanted and unwanted catch is a result of plaice coming under the LO.
- The survival rate for plaice, based on the study by Catchpole et al (2015¹), has been taken into account in the assessment. It is recognized that there is variability on survival rates between studies.
- Plaice stocks are doing well in all NWW areas except in 7.hjk. Whether or not this is due to issues with stock delineation is unclear. The ICES working group TACMAN is looking into alternative management measures. This stock was included on the list of demersal stocks and the advice should be available late September. The working group will however not look at the definition of the management areas. If such evidence would be presented to the COM or ICES, ICES would look into this
- To resolve mixing of cod between the Irish and Celtic Sea, the 2 southern ICES rectangles (32 E3 and E2) in the Irish Sea are assigned to the Celtic Sea cod stock. Currently, the stock area definition will not be changed.

The meeting discussed the potential evolution of fishing effort in the Irish Sea in light of the repeal of the Cod Recovery Plan (Council Regulation (EC) No. 1342/2008). As a result of progressed status of Irish Sea stocks and the repeal of the Cod Recovery Plan, the fishing effort may increase to unwanted levels. The meeting agreed that clarification should be asked from the COM.

ACTION: Consult the COM on the timing of the repeal of the Cod Recovery Plan and what considerations were given to the Western Waters as the plan was related to the introduction of the North Sea Multi-Annual Plan.

The chair summarized the recommendations from this WG:

- The NWWAC has put forward a recommendation after extensive deliberation on how to resolve the choke risk of Whiting. This recommendation should be put forward to the COM
- The mixing issue between Irish and Celtic Sea Cod should be investigated further. The WG suggests joining forces with other WGs to study the genetic population structure of cod in NWW
- Plaice and Whiting are included in the ICES Working Group TACMAN. The results of this WG should be seriously considered.

ACTION: The working Group will draft advice for the COM on setting the fishing opportunities for 2019 based on the discussion

¹ Catchpole, T., Randall, P., Forster, R., Smith, S., Ribeiro Santos, A., Armstrong, F., Hetherington, S., Bendall, V., and Maxwell, D. 2015. Estimating the discard survival rates of selected commercial fish (plaice – *Pleuronectes platessa*) in four English fisheries. MF1234, Cefas report. 108 pp.



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4. Summary of actions agreed and decisions adopted by the Chair

1	The Working Group will continue discussions on selectivity trials to make recommendation for the Regional Group.
2	Consult the COM on the timing of the repeal of the Cod Recovery Plan and what considerations were given to the Western Waters as the plan was related to the introduction of the North Sea Multi-Annual Plan.
3	The working Group will draft advice for the COM on setting the fishing opportunities for 2019 based on the discussion



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Annex 1 – List of Participants

NWWAC members	
Rederscentrale	Emiel Brouckaert
ClientEarth	Heather Hamilton
Irish Fishermen's Organisation	John Lynch
Irish South and East Fish Producers Organisation	Hugo Boyle
Killybegs Fishermen's Organisation	Sean O'Donoghue
Observers	
Fundació ENT	Lydia Chaparro
European Bureau for Conservation and Development (EBCD)	Maria Aira
The PEW Charitable Trusts	Jean Christophe Vandeveldde
BirdWatch Ireland	Fintan Kelly
Irish South and West Fish Producers' Organisation	Patrick Murphy
Dutch Elasmobranch Society	Irene Kingma