



CONSEIL CONSULTATIF POUR  
LES EAUX OCCIDENTALES  
SEPTENTRIONALES

NORTH WESTERN  
WATERS  
ADVISORY COUNCIL

CONSEJO CONSULTIVO PARA  
LAS AGUAS  
NOROCCIDENTALES

## MINUTES

### WORKING GROUP 2 (Celtic Sea)

**Nuevos Ministerios – Paseo de la Castellana, 63. Madrid**  
**Thursday 7<sup>th</sup> of March 2018**  
**14:30 – 18:00**

#### 1. Welcome and introductions

The Chairman, Jesús Angel Lourido García, welcomed the members and attendees to the meeting and introduced Mr Centenera from the Spanish administration and invited him to open the meeting.

The full list of participants is included as an [annex](#) to these minutes.

The agenda<sup>1</sup> was adopted. The status of the action points from the last meeting in Edinburgh (5<sup>th</sup> July 2017) was presented by the Secretariat, as follows:

1. The NWWAC to send advice on an incentivised data collection scheme for Celtic Sea haddock.

The advice had been sent on 25<sup>th</sup> October and a response from the EC was received on 16<sup>th</sup> February<sup>2</sup>.

The vice-Chair, Mr Trebilcock, expressed his disappointment on the response and suggested that the NWWAC should revisit the advice.

2. The Focus Group on Nephrops to review and update the NWWAC position on management measures for the Nephrops stock on the Porcupine Bank (FU16).

On the 26<sup>th</sup> October, a request was sent to the EC to ask the STECF plenary to re-evaluate the consensus advice submitted by the NWWAC on 30<sup>th</sup> November 2016. This advice detailed management measures for the Nephrops stock on the Porcupine Bank (FU16). A reply was received from the EC on 12<sup>th</sup> December requesting new scientific input from the NWWAC to feed into the ICES process. Following this request, the chair of the Focus Group

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<sup>1</sup> All relevant documents to the meeting can be found on the NWWAC website: [link](#)

<sup>2</sup> NWWAC advice on Celtic Sea Haddock: An incentivised data collection scheme to improve the management of the stock in the context of the Landing Obligation and the response by the EC [link](#)

suggested that a new letter be sent to the EC requesting that the NWWAC proposal be sent to ICES for evaluation to determine whether it is precautionary.

3. The Secretariat to follow-up on proposals for Marine Protected Areas (MPAs).

No new updates had been received.

4. The Secretariat to collate a bibliography on seismic surveys

This action point had not yet been completed. Irish members commented that recent research had shown that there were detrimental effects of seismic exploitation on e.g. zooplankton and fish distribution and recommended that the NWWAC should collate detailed information on this subject.

5. ICES to provide feedback on the evidence used to assess the effects of the square mesh panel to reduce discards of small haddock and whiting in the Celtic Sea.

The information on catches and discards for both stocks was analysed and the selectivity issue was examined at the 2017 WGCSE<sup>3</sup>. Small fish continue to be caught from both stocks and there was not yet evidence of a reduction in fishing mortality of younger ages. While it was noted that selectivity changes have not been detected since the introduction of the square mesh panels, the advice for both stocks also indicated that there had been an increase in the discarding of fish above the minimum conservation reference size (MCRS). The majority of the whiting discards were fish above the Minimum Conservation Reference Size. A benchmark, provisionally planned to take place in 2018, will re-examine the effects of selectivity.

Mr Lynch commented that the effects of selective gear should be addressed at ICES meetings, because it was important for fishermen to know whether new gear had the desired effect. If not, fishermen might need to use other alternatives to achieve the same objective.

6. Members to present options to close the knowledge gap for plaice

The Secretariat referred to a report from *Fishing into the Future*<sup>4</sup> who had developed Guidelines for Industry-Science data collection. It was agreed to distribute a link to the report.

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<sup>3</sup> The relevant section on Haddock in Divisions 7.b,c,e-k, Whiting in divisions 7.b-c and 7.e-k and associated tables can be found in the ICES report in English only:  
[http://www.ices.dk/sites/pub/Publication%20Reports/Expert%20Group%20Report/acom/2017/WGCSE/01\\_DRAFT\\_wgcse\\_2017.pdf](http://www.ices.dk/sites/pub/Publication%20Reports/Expert%20Group%20Report/acom/2017/WGCSE/01_DRAFT_wgcse_2017.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> Fishing into the Future website <http://www.fishingintothefuture.co.uk/>

- ACTION:** The NWWAC to revisit the advice on Celtic Sea haddock ;
- ACTION:** The Nephrops advice to be sent to the EC to request ICES evaluation;
- ACTION:** The Secretariat to collate a comprehensive bibliography on the effects of seismic surveys on the marine environment;
- ACTION:** The Secretariat to distribute a link to the *Fishing into the Future* report 'Guidelines for Industry-Science data collection'.

### **3. Election of officers (Chair and vice-Chair)**

At the NWWAC meetings in September 2017 the Chairs and vice-Chairs of each Working Group were re-elected for a term of 3 years. As there was no meeting of Working Group 2 during this series of meetings, the appointment of the Chair and vice-Chair of Working Group 2 was outstanding and needed to take place.

The Secretariat informed the meeting that nominations had been received from Mr Lourido García and Mr Trebilcock, for the positions of Chair and vice-Chair, respectively in advance of the meeting. As no other nominations were received from the floor, it was decided that the Executive Committee would be asked to approve the appointment of Mr Lourido García and Mr Trebilcock as Chair and vice-Chair, respectively.

### **4. Feedback from previous advice and meetings**

#### **1. Choke Mitigation Tool (CMT) (14<sup>th</sup> September 2017)**

The Chair summarised that the deadline for the full implementation of the Landing Obligation was approaching and the high risk of some stocks choking fisheries, presented a serious problem. It was important for members to note that the CMT was not an exhaustive list of problems and only highlighted the main issues. The Working Group was encouraged to be pro-active and think about solutions to mitigate the choke risks for stocks in the area.

The Secretariat informed members that an overview of the updated CMT with the STECF data for 2016 was available on the NWWAC website ([link](#)).

The Advice Drafting Group on the Landing Obligation<sup>5</sup> had met twice in Dublin (10<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> January Dublin) to discuss solutions for high-risk, choke species, with several species in the Celtic Sea area covered by this advice.

### **5. Further improvements in selectivity to reduce choke risk**

Mr Trebilcock started the discussion by giving an overview:

- For the UK, it was a priority to resolve the choke problem, which would be caused by haddock. Despite all the work being done, haddock was a serious choke species for both small-scale and mixed, demersal fisheries;

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<sup>5</sup> The Advice Drafting Group on the Landing Obligation met in Dublin on the 10<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> January 2018. All information can be found on the NWWAC website under meeting. The following advice

- Selectivity trials were ongoing to address the capture and escapement of haddock;
- Out-of-the-box solutions would be required to resolve the haddock choke problem.

Ms. Gamblin referred to the Advice Drafting Groups on the Landing Obligation (ADG LO) that had already taken place and asked if the meeting could be informed about the discussions at these meetings.

The Chair intervened and reminded the meeting that the aim of the agenda item was to discuss selectivity options. Mr Brouckaert thanked the Chair for the clarification and replied to Ms Gamblin that haddock had been identified as the main problem in the area and that he and Ms Hamilton were drafting advice based on the discussions at the ADG LO. The meeting was informed that the draft advice would be circulated to the ADG LO members by the end of the following week, in advance of sending it to the Executive Committee. Mr Brouckaert emphasised that conclusions and suggestions from the members present would feed into the advice, if not yet included.

On plaice in 7.hjk, Ms Gamblin suggested that a reference should be made to previous NWWAC advice which had asked for plaice to be removed from the TAC regime. The EC representative informed the meeting that this would require scientific evaluation and alternative management measures to constrain fishing mortality.

**ACTION:** The previous advice on the removal of Plaice in 7.hjk from the TAC regime should be revisited and the EC asked for more input.

On selectivity measures, Mr Kelly referred to several relevant selectivity studies e.g. the DiscardLess project. Mr Kelly agreed to forward details of the studies to the Secretariat, for distribution.

**ACTION:** Mr Kelly to send details of relevant selectivity studies to the Secretariat, for distribution.

Mr Boyle highlighted that despite the many efforts undertaken to improve selectivity, that selectivity alone would never resolve all the choke risks and that more solutions would be needed.

In response to a question from Ms Coelho regarding haddock in the Celtic Sea, Mr Trebilcock clarified that there was no longer a targeted fisheries for haddock in the Celtic Sea, so in effect, all quota was available for by-catch fisheries.

Mr Murphy commented that the only way to further improve selectivity was to stop fishing.

On the comment by Mr Kelly on how the EC tracks the implementation of e.g. selectivity measures, the EC explained that the answer to the question was complex. The haddock stock was a difficult case and the EC had tried to address this by adding a footnote on selectivity measures in the TAC regulation. This had been rejected by the EU Council as it was considered too early to add anything new without having knowledge of the results of the upcoming STECF<sup>6</sup> expert meeting in March on technical measures. Each MS had different interests in individual stocks, which complicated discussions on solutions. The EC hoped that proposals would be included in the Joint Recommendation to mitigate the choke risks regarding this stock, e.g. to reduce catches of juvenile haddock.

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<sup>6</sup> STECF 18-02 Expert meeting on Technical Measures took place in Dublin on 5-9<sup>th</sup> March. More information can be found on the website [link](#)

Mr Lynch commented that options were available to further improve the selectivity of Nephrops, but in the mixed trawl fisheries options were limited, at this point.

Mr Robert commented that although a lot of problems had been discussed by members at this meeting, there were more questions than solutions. Although some problems may be resolved at vessel level, Mr Robert considered that members were looking for methods to reduce discards and perhaps by doing so were being too general and not facing reality. As the first requirement of the CFP is to fish at  $F_{MSY}$ , it was emphasised that this required correct catch data in order to be determined. It was the opinion of Mr Robert that the traditional framework of regulations causes recurrent problems.

The Chair of the meeting suggested that the Working Group wait for the conclusions of the STECF<sup>5</sup> meeting and also suggested that the Working Group could draft recommendations based on the STEFC conclusions when they became available. The STECF meeting aimed to assess the economic effects of increasing selectivity, which was an important issue for industry.

## **6. Discussion on potential solutions to the choke problem in mixed fisheries**

Mr Brouckaert and Ms Hamilton presented an overview of the draft advice on Celtic Sea haddock as a result of discussion at the ADG LO in January. The following questions were raised from the floor:

1. How is a target fishery for haddock defined?
2. Would a combined TAC for the gadoids be a solution?

The meeting was informed that a definition for a target haddock fishery could be developed during the discussion, and that a combined TAC was discussed but not included, as members felt that it might increase the choke risk instead of decreasing it.

Mr Robert suggested that the first objective should be to improve the knowledge base on the biomass level, as the quota problem resulted from the assessment. ICES could be asked to benchmark the Celtic Sea haddock stock.

**ACTION:** The Secretariat to follow up with ICES to determine if there were any plans for an ICES meeting to benchmark Celtic Sea haddock

Referring to the earlier discussion on selectivity, Mr Murphy commented that discards consisted of large fish and survival rates for haddock were low. Data gaps were known and realising it took some time before science caught up with observation at sea, Mr Murphy wondered why the TAC could not be increased to a level that reflected actual catches. The EC shared the concerns on the catch advice for Celtic Sea haddock, as expressed in the NWWAC advice<sup>2</sup>. The EC informed members that catch advice and forecasts, however, were dependent on data availability and the reliability and quality (i.e. certainty) of that data. Without good data, the ambiguity of the advice increased and this would be reflected in the setting of the TAC. In this context, the EC indicated that improved data quality would increase assessment quality and might lead to an increased TAC, if the stock abundance had increased.

The Chair confirmed that good quality data was the basis needed for advice and that the industry are doing what they can to provide more accurate data by fully documenting fisheries (CCTV and

observers). Data collection was, however, threatened if the TAC was being, artificially, kept at a low level. It was frustrating for the industry to hear from the EC that data was not being collected.

The EC was asked if the economic impact assessment performed by STECF<sup>5</sup> that week on selectivity measures was the first time that the EC requested an economic impact assessment. The EC was also asked whether it had set up a task force to discuss solutions for choke risks, outside the CFP. The EC referred to an economic assessment that had been completed previously and agreed to send the details of this assessment to the Secretariat in order for it to be distributed to members.

It was noted, however, that the impact assessment performed by STECF, this week, would provide an assessment on a métier by métier basis, which was unique. The EC confirmed that a choke task force had been set up, and stressed the importance of the NWWAC being involved in the discussions with the MS Group to draft the Joint Recommendation and to provide input to the EC proposal on the TAC regulation, by proposing solutions the NWWAC deemed feasible and necessary. The EC thanked the NWWAC and especially Mr Brouckaert and Ms Hamilton for their hard work on the development of the advice to date.

**ACTION:** The EC to send details of a previous economic assessment on Celtic Sea haddock, for distribution to AC members.

The Chair asked the meeting if there were any specific issues to be discussed on hake, megrim and anglerfish.

Following a discussion on a proposal from Ms Fernandez on the importance of finding solutions on a stock by stock basis and the potential solution offered by reallocating under-utilised quota among different Member States, the meeting agreed that the EC would be contacted to request the provision of detailed data on quota utilisation to allow the NWWAC to conduct a more thorough analysis on quota usage and potential options for redistribution, as the latter would not impact on relative stability. This analysis would be separate to the purpose of the Choke Mitigation Tool and would also fall outside the scope of the Joint Recommendation.

**ACTION:** Ms Fernandez to assist the Secretariat to write a request to the EC to provide data to allow the NWWAC to conduct an analysis on the underutilisation of quota by Member State.

## 7. Summary of actions agreed and decisions adopted by the Chair

1	The NWWAC to revisit the advice on Celtic Sea haddock
2	The Nephrops advice to be sent to the EC to request ICES evaluation;
3	The Secretariat to collate a comprehensive bibliography on the effects of seismic surveys on the marine environment;
4	The previous advice on the removal of Plaice in 7.hjk from the TAC regime should be revisited and the EC asked for more input
5	The Secretariat to distribute a link to the <i>Fishing into the Future</i> report 'Guidelines for Industry-Science data collection'.
6	Mr Kelly to send details of relevant selectivity studies to the Secretariat, for distribution.
7	The Secretariat to follow up with ICES to determine if there were any plans for an ICES meeting to benchmark Celtic Sea haddock

8	The EC to send details of a previous economic assessment on Celtic Sea haddock, for distribution to AC members.
9	Ms Fernandez to assist the Secretariat to write a request to the EC to provide data to allow the NWWAC to conduct an analysis on the underutilisation of quota by Member State.

## Annex 1 – List of Participants

<b>NWWAC members</b>		
Emiel	Brouckaert	Rederscentrale
Olivier	Lepretre	Federation des Organisations de Producteurs de la Peche Artisanale
Alex	Kinninmonth	Royal Society for the Protection of Birds
Jesús	Lourido García	Puerto de Celeiro S.A. OPP-77
Debbie	Crockard	Seas at Risk
Juan Carlos	Corrás Arias	Pescagalicia- Arpega- Obarco
Maria	Aira Martin	European Bureau for Conservation and Development
Luis	Francisco Marín	Organización de Productores de Pesca de Ondarroat
Javier	López	Oceana
Heather	Hamilton	ClientEarth
Jean-Marie	Robert	Les Pecheurs de Bretagne LPDB
John	Woodlock	Irish Seal Sanctuary
Patrick	Murphy	Irish South and West Fish Producers' Organisation
Geert	Meun	Stichting van de Nederlandse Visserij (Dutch Fisheries Organisation)
Purificación	Fernández Alvarez	Asociación Nacional de Armadores de Buques de Pesca de Gran Sol
Pascal	Coquet	France Pêche Durable et Responsable
Caroline	Gamblin	CNPMEM
Paul	Trebilcock	National Federation of Fishermen's Organisations
<b>Observers</b>		
Jonathan	Shrives	European Commission
Elsa	Tudal	DPMA (French Administration)
Stéphane	Pinto	CRPMWM Hauts-de-France
Manon	Joguet	FROM Nord
Lionel	Bottin	CDPM Calvados
Vera	Coelho	PEW
Jean Christophe	Vandevelde	PEW
Francis	O'Donnell	Irish Fish Producers' Organisation
Enda	Conneely	IIMRO
Dominique	Thomas	CMEOP
Nicolas	LeBlanc	CRPMEM de Normandie
Guy	Le Moigne	Comité départemental des pêches du Finistère
Emmanuel	Kilberine	CRPMEM de Bretagne
José Manuel	Beltrán	OPP-LUGO
Luis Francisco	Marin	OPPAO Ondarroat
John	Lynch	IFO
Hugo	Boyle	ISEFPO
Jim	Portus	SWFPO
Lydia Chaparro	Fundació ENT	Lydia Chaparro
Mathieu	Vimard	OPN
Fintan	Kelly	Birdwatch Ireland
Gerald	Hussenot Desenonges	Bluefish
<b>NWWAC Secretariat</b>		
Sara	Vandamme	Deputy Executive Secretary
Deirdre	Hoare	Executive Assistant
Rachel	Maher	Finance and administration Executive Assistant



NWWAC Document  
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