



CONSEIL CONSULTATIF POUR
LES EAUX OCCIDENTALES
SEPTENTRIONALES

NORTH WESTERN
WATERS
ADVISORY COUNCIL

CONSEJO CONSULTIVO PARA
LAS AGUAS
NOROCCIDENTALES

MINUTES

WORKING GROUP 4 (IRISH SEA)

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

**Wednesday 3rd of July 2019
14:00 – 15:30**

1. Welcome and introductions

The Chair, John Lynch, opened the meeting and welcomed the members, observers, ICES and COM representatives to the meeting.

Apologies were received from Johnny Woodlock in advance of the meeting. The agenda was adopted as drafted.

Action points from the minutes from the previous meeting in Madrid on 13th March 2019 were discussed:

1. Based on STECF recommendation on the requirements to support a *de minimis* exemption and a study evaluating the effects on the catch composition and economic impact of different selectivity options for whiting, the NWWAC would make further recommendation on selectivity options.

ACTION: The Secretariat to ask gear technologies from BIM to review all the relevant projects from the past 30 years and find those which would show good selectivity for below 20 cm. Results from this review should be presented in Dublin.

2. An overview to be presented on the effects and impacts of the eliminator trawl vs increasing mesh size to 120mm in TR1.

The person who carried out gear trials for NI is not contracted anymore and there does not seem to be a replacement.

ACTION: The Secretariat to contact NI to get information on gear trials state of play.

3. The Commission to provide clarification on two outstanding questions in relation to Article 10 of the Delegated Act for NWW.

This action point is addressed in item 3 of the minutes.



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2. ICES advice for the Irish Sea

Mr Ghislain Chouinard (ACOM Vice-Chair) presented the advice for Irish Sea stocks on behalf of ICES. Advice for *Nephrops* will be ready in the autumn.

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 2020.

The following discussion points arose from the audience and were addressed by Mr Chouinard:

- A quality assurance issue was raised on the assessment on cod in ICES. Two years ago, category 1 assessment and a different model were used, producing completely different results than the ones shown today, as the advice is given on a stock assessed as category 3. When the assessment was done at that time, was any quality assurance process done? Why this change in category?

The stock was benchmarked in 2017, retrospective patterns were investigated and back then they didn't seem to be a significant problem. In 2017 and 2018, an ASAP model was used to provide advice as a category 1. This year, there were several reasons to consider that assessment not reliable and to go back to category 3, mainly: the retrospective pattern was worsened; the biomass index, used as indicator of stock size, has decreased; and even though the TAC was higher, the catches weren't being achieved.

- It was also observed that the advice does not mention the cod closure in the Irish Sea. This closure started almost 20 years ago and has not been delivering very positive outcomes, thus according to members a review is needed to identify and solve the main flaws. The evaluation should review the number and type of vessels that have been fishing there and the specific gears used. It should both look at the area effectiveness and provide advice on management measures to improve it. Have ICES and the Commission looked at what results this closure has delivered? Do they advise to maintain it?

The Commission mentioned a cod tagging project, coming to the final round, from which a report is being finalized. This report should include information on many boxes in terms of stocks connectivity, also those between the Irish Sea and the Celtic Sea. It could be useful to get the authors to present the project's results, also considering connectivity between the stocks in West of Scotland and Irish Sea. Concerning the evaluation of the cod closure, the Commission will get in touch with STECF to see when and how this could be done and come back to the AC at the next meeting.

ACTION POINT: The Secretariat to prepare a letter to the Commission advising to carry out an evaluation of the effectiveness of the area to protect cod in the Irish Sea.

- Information was requested on the work carried out by the workshops on the ecosystem-based approach to fisheries management for the Irish Sea (WKIrish) and on the activities planned for the future. Is there a roadmap? Which will be the main outputs from these workshops?

A WKIrish workshop is coming up in November, aiming at a better understanding of the dynamics



characterizing the Irish Sea. The next steps are to revise and confirm the results of the analysis carried out and then to determine if and how the results could be used in the assessment and management of the resources.

- Another quality issue in the assessment concerning the validity of various stocks boundaries, such as for cod and haddock, in the Irish Sea and in the Celtic Sea was brought up. Is there actually a different stock of haddock in the Irish Sea than there is in the Celtic Sea? Two stocks rectangles in the Irish sea were appropriated to the Celtic Sea, which was the old information that created this situation? Has the validity of these stocks delineations been assessed?

The stock delineation is normally examined in the framework of benchmark meetings, the benchmark report 2017 on the Irish Sea should contain such information. Typically, if there is no new data, the stock boundaries are kept as they are. A genetic study might be useful here.

ACTION: The AC to write to COM to organize re-examination and re-definition, if needed, of stock IDs in the Irish Sea and the Celtic Sea regions.

- Concerning whiting, clarification was requested on the reliability of the figure on discards. A point was risen on why, after so much work done on the technical measures and with major changes in the gears, there is still a high discard rate reported for whiting especially from *Nephrops* fisheries.

Overall, discards seem to have a downward trend compared to previous years. Discards were estimated using the available data by the expert group. The Commission added that, looking at STECF FDI database, it is clear there is one particular MS, subject to a different regulatory regime, doing the majority of whiting discards.

- It has been noted for herring that it has moved from the Celtic Sea to the Irish Sea in year classes, could this be a contributory reason why all these discards are recorded? Are all year classes distributed over the area considered in the survey? If year classes move across the area and one or more are missed and not reported, this could impact the survey validity significantly.

Presumably, the surveys contain this information. When a survey is considered, a first thing is to identify where the stock is and whether there is any relevant movements to consider. Generally, if a year class would have moved within the survey area, it should be detected by the survey. Sometimes it is not necessarily the same pattern year after year, but as long as it is staying within the survey area, it should be possible to detect it.

- A question was raised concerning the reasons for the request of an advice based on PA for plaice.

The Commission explained that an administrative agreement had been set up with ICES defining which stock advice needed to be based on MSY and which on PA, according to a list from the draft MAP for the NWW. Therefore, there was a mismatch between what ICES was asked to do, what ended up being on the list of targeted stocks of the MAP and what scientifically could be done.

- **Drafting advice to inform the development of the EU TAC proposal**



ACTION: The Secretariat to collect input/comments from members on the presented ICES advice to develop an advice on the fishing opportunities for 2020.

3. TCM in the Irish Sea

The Commission came back to the members on two questions related to Article 10 of the Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) 2018/2034, coming from the past Working Group 4 meeting in Madrid (13 March 2019).

The first question concerned the way technical measures in the Discard Plan for the Irish Sea break down and what the obligations are. The Commission explained that the idea originally was to make sure there was a threshold creating two categories with different technical measures associated. This threshold is the 10% catch composition. The complication is that the catch composition has changed in the way the old catch composition used to work. The old ones were about targeting, and these ones are about bycatch and without prejudice of the landing obligation. Anyway, vessels should fall into one category or the other, unless catches comprise more than 30 % of Norway lobster, and have the corresponding technical measures which indicate the mesh size.

The other question regarded the 120 mm mesh vs the eliminator trawl and whether it is possible to have alternative selective gear options. This because by using the 120mm mesh size, discards would be highly reduced, but it could also result in a negative economic impact on fisheries. The Commission replied that other options are possible in case of more selective gear available, but this needs to be examined and approved by STECF, as reported in Article 10 paragraph 5.

4. Choke Avoidance Best Practice

At the previous NWWAC meeting in Madrid, the Commission informed the ExCom that they would appreciate a new advice from the AC on how to deal with choke issues and identify the new choke risks stocks.

The ExCom has to decide if a FG or an Advice Drafting Group will be set up to develop the advice and which the Terms of Reference should be (ToR were already agreed for an ADG on LO from last meeting in Ghent on 19 July 2018).

ACTION: Choke Identification Tool to be updated by the Secretariat.

The update should consider those species which were already examined to see the category in which they were put needs to change.

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

1	The Secretariat to ask gear technologies from BIM to review all the relevant projects from the past 30 years and find those which would show good selectivity for below 20 cm. Results from this review should be presented in Dublin.
2	An overview to be presented on the effects and impacts of the eliminator trawl vs increasing mesh size to 120mm in TR1. The person who carried out gear trials for NI is not contracted anymore and there does not seem to be a replacement. The Secretariat to



	contact NI to get information on gear trials state of play.
3	The Secretariat to prepare a letter to the Commission advising to carry out an evaluation of the effectiveness of the area to protect cod in the Irish Sea.
4	The AC to write to COM to organize re-examination and re-definition, if needed, of stock IDs in the Irish Sea and the Celtic Sea regions.
5	The Secretariat to collect input/comments from members on the presented ICES advice to develop an advice on the fishing opportunities for 2020.
6	Choke Identification Tool to be updated by the Secretariat.

Annex 1 – List of participants

NWWAC members	
John Lynch (Chair)	Irish Fishermen's Organisation
Hugo Boyle	Irish South and East Fish Producers Organisation
Sean O'Donoghue	Killybegs Fishermen's Organisation
Francis O'Donnell	Irish Fish Producers' Organisation (IFPO)
Emiel Brouckaert	Rederscentrale
Jenni Grossmann	ClientEarth
NWWAC Observers	
Patrick Murphy	Irish South and West Fish Producers' Organisation
Norah Parke	Killybegs Fishermen's Organisation
Fintan Kelly	BirdWatch Ireland
Pedro Santos	EBCD
Other observers	
Elsa Tudal	Direction des pêches maritimes et de l'aquaculture
Jonathan Shrives	European Commission
Ghislain Chouinard	ICES
Secretariat	
Michael Keatinge	Executive Secretary NWWAC
Mo Mathies	Deputy Executive Secretary NWWAC
Matilde Vallerani	Deputy Executive Secretary NWWAC
Monica Negoita	Executive Assistant (Finance and Administration) NWWAC