



CONSEIL CONSULTATIF POUR
LES EAUX OCCIDENTALES
SEPTENTRIONALES

**NORTH WESTERN
WATERS**
ADVISORY COUNCIL

CONSEJO CONSULTIVO PARA
LAS AGUAS
NOROCCIDENTALES

North Western Waters Advisory Council

Work Programme

Year 17

01 October 2021 to 30 September 2022



1. Introduction

The North Western Waters Regional Advisory Council (NWWAC) was established in accordance with Commission Decision 2005/668/EC on the 22nd of September 2005 as one of the seven Regional Advisory Councils, proposed under Council Decision 2004/585/EC, establishing Regional Advisory Councils under the Common Fisheries Policy.

With the entry into force of Regulation (EU) No 1380/2013, on the Common Fisheries Policy (henceforth, “CFP Regulation”), on the 1st of January 2014 the Regional Advisory Councils changed to Advisory Councils (ACs). The advisory role of the ACs was also enhanced as a constituent part of this change.

Now in its seventeenth year of operation, which runs from 01 October 2021 to 30 September 2022, the NWWAC wishes to apply for grant-aid from the EU Commission, in accordance with the relevant provisions in force.

2. Objectives of the NWWAC

The principal aim of the North Western Waters Advisory Council is to bring together European stakeholders (fishermen, representatives of producers’ organisations, environmental NGOs, recreational anglers, processors and consumers, amongst others) to provide evidence-based advice to the EU Commission and the Member States, in order to achieve the sustainable exploitation of the fish stocks within the geographical remit of the NWWAC as identified in (EU) No 1380/2013.

The advice produced by the NWWAC is directed by the objectives of the Common Fisheries Policy. The NWWAC also addresses the sustainable - biological, economic and social – management of fisheries in the wider context of the integrated maritime policy.

Given the mixed nature of the fisheries within the geographical remit of the NWWAC, the development of sustainable fisheries management options for the short and long term will remain the foundation for advice. The objectives articulated in the Marine Strategy Framework Directive will also be taken into account, as well as the European Green Deal and its related strategies.



3. Main topics for Year 17

3.1. Landing obligation (LO)

During Year 17 the NWWAC will continue its collaboration with both the NWW Member States Group and the European Commission to update and further develop the Choke Identification Tool (CIdT). The CIdT addresses potential mitigation actions required in fisheries subject to the landing obligation in all the sub-geographical areas of the North Western Waters. This tool will provide the basis and direction for much of the NWWAC's work.

Additional development of this tool may also provide useful information in support of the management of shared stocks with the United Kingdom following its full exit from the EU and act as a basis for collaboration between the NWWAC and UK stakeholders.

In Year 15, the NWWAC established its Focus Group Landing Obligation with the objective of examining and discussing the effectiveness of the LO as well as observing developments regarding related topics, such as the technical measures, the discard plan and the directed fishing definition in order to influence the best possible conditions for fishing in the NWW. In addition, the NWWAC will include the LO in the agendas of internal meetings (e.g., working groups and advice drafting groups) as well as in the agendas of meetings with scientists, the Commission and the NWW Member States Group to find solutions for stocks for which the implementation of the LO incorporates major challenges.

Following from the successful joint workshop in Year 15 between the NWWAC, EFCA and the NWW Control Expert Group on monitoring, control and enforcement of the Landing Obligation, the NWWAC continues its engagement by organising two meetings during Year 16, one with EFCA, DG MARE and the NWW MS Control Expert Group on Article 27 of the Technical Measures Regulation, which deals with catch composition and mesh sizes as against the requirement of Article 15 of the CFP, and a second one with EFCA on the Joint Deployment Plans in the NWW in progress. The information provided during these meetings and the exchanges between NWWAC members, EFCA, the Commission and the NWW Control Expert Group will prove highly valuable to our members, and the AC will continue these exchanges in Year 17.

3.2. Technical measures

The NWWAC will continue to provide advice on technical measures, specifically in the context of the full implementation of Regulation EU 2019/1241 and will monitor and incorporate in its advice, where possible, relevant research to improve selectivity and reduce unwanted catches. Also, in year 17 the NWWAC will continue its collaboration with the NWW Member States Group and scientists to coordinate the ongoing work in different Member States. This will allow fishing industry and scientists alike to learn best practices and avoid duplication. A fruitful continuation of this cooperation is dependent on the procedures being developed between the EU and the UK regarding the work of the Specialised Committee on Fisheries. The NWWAC is ready to provide competent advice on all topics related to fisheries



management in its remit area and support the Commission in the areas relevant to joint stock management.

3.3. Implementation of multi-annual plan for Western Waters

The implementation of long-term management plans for fisheries in the Western Waters has been one of the main focuses of the NWWAC's work since its establishment.

This included the establishment of dedicated Focus Groups on management of the following stocks:

- Seabass: As in previous years, Inter-AC dialogue will continue to assist the development of recommendations on specific management and technical measures for the stock concerned.
- Scallops: In Year 15 the NWWAC set up a Focus Group on Scallops. In Year 16 this group discussed and agreed for the NWWAC to support the joint recommendation on a regional management plan for King Scallop stocks in the English Channel as proposed by the NWW Member States Group. The work of this Focus Groups will continue in Year 17 aiming to produce further advice on this topic.
- Skates & Rays: In Year 15 the NWWAC and North Sea AC set up a joint Focus Group on Skates and Rays to prepare advice on a harmonised management approach to the respective Member States Groups. In Year 16 this group updated the NWWAC and NSAC best management advice to these Member States Groups and identified additional areas of importance for its work, which will continue in Year 17.
- Whelk: In Year 16, the NWWAC set up a Focus Group on Whelk aiming at discussing and providing advice on the management of this resource in the Channel. This group is working in close collaboration with UK industry representatives to identify a common approach to the management of whelk fisheries in the Channel and to prepare NWWAC advice on this subject.
- Brown Crab: As a result of the work of a former NWWAC Focus Group in Year 16, a joint Focus Group was set up with the North Sea AC and the Market AC to identify common difficulties and possible solutions to supply chain issues, including different regulatory measures between the EU and Asian destinations for brown crab exports. This work will continue in Year 17.

Recognizing the importance of targeted fisheries on several non-TAC stocks in the area the NWWAC will continue to identify the necessity to provide advice that contributes to the sustainable management of these fisheries.

Relevant scientific experts and representatives from national and EU administrations, along with the STECF evaluation of proposals, will greatly enhance the structure of these meetings.

3.4. TACs and quotas

As in previous years, the NWWAC will produce advice on this important topic following the presentation of the ICES advice at its July meetings. The timing of this advice is dependent on the processes developed and agreed as part of the EU-UK Trade and Cooperation Agreement and the EU-UK consultations on the management of joint stocks, including the work of the



Specialised Committee on Fisheries. The NWWAC will follow the procedures as identified by the European Commission.

This advice will provide the NWWAC opinion on a number of subject areas, including a review of the state of stocks, the application of MSY, and multi-species considerations in the context of shared stock management with the UK. The implications of the Landing Obligation and the mitigation of choke risks will receive significant attention as in previous years.

The NWWAC advice on TACs and quotas will be submitted in sufficient time to inform all relevant discussions between the EU and the UK leading to the Commission's proposal to the Council for the Regulation on Fishing Opportunities for species in Atlantic waters in 2023.

As in previous years, a number of specific requests may also be submitted to the Commission and concerned Member States for some stocks in response to a specific advice request or when identified by members of the NWWAC following the latest scientific developments. If required and in accordance with available resources and budget, the NWWAC will organise specific Focus Groups or Advice Drafting Groups to develop the advice.

3.5. Functioning of the Advisory Councils

Article 49 (Review) of Regulation (EU) 1380/2013 on the Common Fisheries Policy, provides that by 31 December 2022 'the Commission shall report to the European Parliament and to the Council on the functioning of the CFP'. In order that the NWWAC may provide useful input to this report, we will continue our discussions on a range of appropriate topics including, *inter alia*, targets for fisheries management in North Western Waters taking into account any new cooperation framework with the UK; the requirement for appropriate management measures to reach these goals; the composition, functioning and funding of the Advisory Council (see also section 5.2); etc. In order to be able to provide timely and relevant advice, we will combine information from (ongoing) scientific projects and other relevant sources where appropriate.

In order to continue monitoring the new functionalities and consequences the EU-UK TCA may have on the functioning, both of the activities in the relevant area and of the ACs themselves, the NWWAC Focus Group Brexit, which was established in Year 15 with the aim of assessing changes to fisheries policy and management in the NWW and preparing advice on the new functioning, has focused on identifying regulatory issues relating to AC set up and functioning under the current CFP in relation to UK withdrawal from the EU. The dialogue with the Commission at NWWAC and Inter-AC meetings in Year 16, e.g., on the review of the Delegated Act on the functioning of the ACs, will determine the NWWAC work on this topic in Year 17.

The NWWAC will also remain at the forefront of organising events when required, where useful and preferable, in collaboration with other ACs.



3.6. Ecosystem based approach to fisheries management

The NWWAC Work Programme includes the implementation of the ecosystem approach in the North Western Waters by promoting the development of monitoring programmes and conservation measures. The NWWAC work will focus on three key elements:

- Promoting understanding and acceptance by all stakeholders of the ecosystem approach to the management of human activities (e.g., marine litter, underwater noise), and improving communication among various management authorities in the NWW;
- Acting as a point of contact between policy makers and AC stakeholders in order to facilitate consultation for the designation and management of: Vulnerable Marine Ecosystems, Natura 2000, OSPAR and national marine offshore sites (i.e., MCZ, etc.), where fishing activity by EU vessels takes place in North Western Waters. The NWWAC wishes to contribute to the meetings of the NWW Member States subgroup on Article 11, dealing with conservation measures necessary for compliance with obligations under the EU environmental legislation (e.g., Marine Protected Areas (MPAs)).
- Identify and prioritise the needs for the NWWAC members to protect sensitive species and habitats.

3.6.1. Irish Sea benchmark

Since its establishment in 2014, the ICES Benchmark Workshop on the impact of ecosystem and environmental drivers on Irish Sea fisheries management (WKIrish) has been of great interest to the NWWAC as this workshop not only focusses on the improvement of single species assessments, but aims to incorporate a mixed fisheries model, to develop the integration of ecosystem aspects and to work towards an integrated assessment and advice for this region.

Following its conclusion with the 6th workshop, the members of the ICES working group as well as the NWWAC members continued to work with the results and joined together in a virtual workshop organised by the NWWAC in April 2021. The results from this discussion will feed into new NWWAC advice expected to be submitted before the end of Year 16 regarding the integration of this approach into EU fisheries management and the NWWAC will continue exploring additional routes for utilising the expertise and experience from WKIrish, for example in relation to the Celtic Sea.

3.7. Environment

In 2019, the European Commission published the Green Deal which recognises that climate change and environmental degradation are an existential threat to Europe and the world and proposes new strategies to overcome those challenges. Recognising the influence of environmental policies on fisheries management in the European Union and acknowledging the inter-connectedness of fisheries management and specific and non-specific marine environmental issues, the NWWAC decided in Year 16 to include work on wider environmental issues such as climate change, biodiversity loss, marine plastics, CO₂



emissions, impact of seismic activities on fish stocks. The Focus Group Climate Change and Environment is identifying and examining the AC's needs in developing advice related to climate and environmental initiatives promoted and adopted by the Commission in the context of the EU Green Deal. These include the EU Farm to Fork Strategy and the EU Biodiversity Strategy, as well as any DG MARE initiative relating to the implementation of the relevant Sustainable Development Goals, whilst also tracking the IUCN and FAO initiatives in this respect. The importance of these issue regarding fisheries management is becoming ever clearer and the NWWAC will continue to include work on these in its work programme for Year 17.

In Year 15, the NWWAC and Pelagic AC set up a joint Focus Group on impacts from seismic activities and offshore wind farms with a view to developing specific research questions for an ICES Special Request Advice on the impact of seismic activities on fish stocks and marine ecosystems in the relevant sea basins taking into account previous AC requests to the Commission. This work continued during Year 16 and the group is poised to engage in close cooperation with the European Commission on these important topics through meetings in Year 17.

3.8. Social Aspects

Over the past years there has been an increasing difficulty to fill vacancies in the seafood sector with qualified employees, and specifically in the catching sector. One of the key issues is a low attractiveness of the catching sector, particularly for new generations of fishers. This lack of attractiveness can in some cases be linked with the balance between remuneration and hard-working conditions. With the number of jobs depending on the fisheries sector declining in the majority of coastal areas, some coastal communities are at risk of not being viable in the future. The NWWAC recognises that social sustainability is intrinsically linked with environmental and economic sustainability and will continue exploring relevant aspects in Year 17 in order to develop advice based on best practice.

3.9. Control and compliance

The NWWAC will continue to follow the operational activities of the European Fisheries Control Agency (EFCA) in Areas 5b, 6 and 7 and will participate in Advisory Boards and other Monitoring, Control and Compliance fora, when invited.

As already mentioned under 3.1 there is an active Focus Group on Control and compliance in the NWWAC with the objective of preparing further advice on all relevant monitoring, control and enforcement measures, also in collaboration and with the support of the European Fisheries Control Agency. The review of the Control Regulation which in Year 16 is leading up to trialogue level to conclude the approval of the new Regulation is at the core of the work of this Focus Group and this will continue throughout Year 17.



3.10. European Maritime Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund (EMFAF)

The NWWAC will continue to monitor the discussion and provide advice on the EU legislators' work on the EMFAF 2021-2027 regulation.

4. General topics

The NWWAC will continue to work, both on its own initiative and in coordination with other Advisory Councils, on providing advice on the implementation of the core aspects of the legislative package of the CFP Regulations.

4.1. Cooperation with the Member States and the European Commission / Regionalisation

The NWWAC is committed to the current structure of the consultation process, which promotes the collaborative engagement with the North Western Waters Member States Group and other relevant bodies and institutions under the present regional decision-making framework contained in the CFP Regulation.

The NWWAC will continue to endeavour to achieve a good collaboration with the NWW Member States Group and to assist this group, however possible, in Year 17.

4.2. Involvement and integration into the new EU-UK framework of fisheries management

The NWWAC aims at being involved in the stakeholder advisory process of the new EU-UK framework of fisheries management as reflected in the Trade and Cooperation Agreement and specifically regarding the Specialised Committee on Fisheries.

4.3. Cooperation with scientists (Improving the quality of scientific and economic data)

In Year 17 the NWWAC will continue its collaboration with ICES and Member States to identify measures to improve scientific assessments. The NWWAC will continue to actively engage with experts and NWWAC members in calls for support to ground truth and tune data series and advice documents. The NWWAC aims to participate in all ICES meetings and benchmark workshops of relevance, subject to invitation.

As part of this the NWWAC participates in the annual meeting between ICES, Advisory Councils and observers (MIACO). This meeting aims to strengthen stakeholder cooperation by providing the opportunity to communicate about its advisory process and obtain feedback from the participants. In a rotating system, the Advisory Councils organise a MIAC (Meeting ICES & ACs) to discuss pressing matters in more detail and in Year 17 this will be chaired by the NWWAC.



5. Working procedures

In Year 16 the NWWAC carried out a complete review of its statutes and Rules of Procedure to reflect changes imposed by the full exit of the UK from the European Union and the EU-UK Trade and Cooperation Agreement. The NWWAC will continue to refine its working procedures to ensure efficient and effective work practices.

The NWWAC will continue to work closely with its industry members and its members representing other interests, the Commission, the NWW Member States, scientists and other ACs to execute the work programmes in order to progress issues of common and specific concern.

5.1. Timetable

Appendix I details the NWWAC meetings timetable for Year 17.

5.2. Role, composition and functioning of the ACs

The NWWAC welcomes the increased collaboration between the ACs and the Commission via the more frequent Inter-AC meetings. A delegation composed of the Chair, OIG Vice-Chair and the Secretariat of the NWWAC will actively participate in these coordination meetings held throughout the year between the ACs and the Commission.

Having initiated inter-AC discussion on the functioning of the Advisory Councils, the NWWAC will support the continuation of this dialogue between the Advisory Councils and in any forum where this topic is to be discussed.

From its inception in 2017, the inter-AC dialogue meetings have provided a useful forum where the officers and Secretariat of the Advisory Councils can discuss issues of common interest specifically where they are related to the role, composition and functioning of the ACs.

5.3. Operational Structure: meeting types and frequency

The largest budgetary expenditure incurred by the NWWAC is associated with meetings. The NWWAC is often liable for costs associated with meeting room hire, interpretation services and technical equipment, in addition to the travel and accommodation costs of members and experts attending NWWAC meetings. On some occasions, public or private sponsorship may be offered to cover part or all of these expenses as contributions-in-kind (a.k.a. Benefit-in-kind). Such arrangements are duly reflected in the NWWAC accounts.

Due to the impacts of the COVID-19 health crisis during Year 15 and Year 16, the NWWAC switched from holding face-to-face meetings to virtual meetings including the provision of full interpretation support. The costs associated with these arrangements could be accommodated due to the fact that no travel expenses were incurred. The NWWAC will



continue to monitor the public health situation regarding COVID-19 during Year 17 and arrange all its meetings according to latest EU and national government advice.

In order to achieve the objectives of the work programme, the operational hierarchy of the NWWAC is organised in the following three-tier structure:

5.3.1. Executive Committee

All decisions relating to the NWWAC are made by an Executive Committee with a maximum of 25 members (i.e., 15 fishing industry, and 10 other interest groups) reflecting the 60/40 balance required. At the start of year 17, there are 17 members of the Executive Committee: 14 from fishing industry organisations and 3 from organisations representing other interest groups.

Executive Committee meetings are held at least three times a year. These meetings normally address high-level policy issues, debate the input from Working Groups, Focus Groups and Advice Drafting Groups or from General Assembly members. The Executive Committee decides on proposed actions from Working Groups and aims to reach consensus in the provision of NWWAC advice and opinion. The Executive Committee also decides on the processes and procedures required to improve the efficiency of the NWWAC, including the Communications strategy.

Each member of the Executive Committee, along with the Chairman of each Working Group presenting recommendations to the Executive Committee, is reimbursed for attending Executive Committee meetings and full interpretation is provided in the three working languages of the NWWAC (i.e., English, French and Spanish).

Representatives of the European Commission, the European Parliament, European Fisheries Control Agency and Member States, as well as relevant experts or presenters from EU projects or scientific institutes, are also invited to attend Executive Committee meetings to contribute to the discussions on the agenda.

5.3.2. Working Groups

Since an Extraordinary General Assembly approved the new Statutes and Rules of Procedure in July of Year 16 there are now three sub-regional Working Groups in the NWWAC, which are geographically based, and one Horizontal Working Group in which topics affecting all fisheries in the NWW are addressed. Working Groups are held at least three times per year (depending on budget and agenda items) and are important drivers of the NWWAC. Experts as well as Commission officials, are normally invited to attend and make presentations.



The three Regional Working Groups are:

1. Irish Sea (7.a)
2. Celtic Sea and West of Scotland (ICES Areas 6, 7.b, 7.c and 7.f to k)
3. English Channel (7.d and e)

Depending on the attendance at the meetings and the agendas, full interpretation will be provided (English, French and Spanish) for the HWG and WG 2. WG 1 operates in English only and WG 3 in English and French. In Year 17 all 4 Working Group meetings will be scheduled over a period of 1 to 2 days.

5.3.3. Focus Groups and Advice Drafting Groups

Focus Group and Advice Drafting Group meetings are specialist meetings proposed by the Working Groups and agreed by the Executive Committee to address specific topics and prepare advice.

Interpretation services for these meetings will be provided, if required, and contributions-in-kind will be sought from Member States and relevant projects to minimise costs and maximise efficiency. Where possible these meetings will be convened virtually.

Focus Groups or Advice Drafting Groups are expected to work on the following topics in Year 17:

- i. Management strategies for specific stocks, for example seabass, scallops, skates & rays, and whelk
- ii. Control and Compliance
- iii. Landing Obligation
- iv. Climate Change and Environment
- v. Brown Crab supply chain issues (joint with the North Sea AC and the Market AC)
- vi. Any other topic for which a Working Group proposes, and the Executive Committee approves the creation of a Focus Group or Advice Drafting Group.

6. Communications and Outreach

Since Year 15, the level of communication and outreach has continually increased, and the NWWAC Secretariat will maintain this high level in Year 17.

The NWWAC website will remain the main communication tool between the NWWAC Secretariat, NWWAC members, European Commission, Member States, European Parliament, scientific observers and the general public. The website contains up-to-date information on membership, legislation, administration, meetings, publications, consultation and advice, and includes all relevant correspondence generated between the NWWAC, the Commission, Member States and other parties.



To enable the Secretariat to keep up with the increasing workload of meetings and communication, the NWWAC switched to:

1. An automated electronic system for meeting registration
2. Online reimbursement system
3. Online web meeting facilities including interpretation services where possible

The NWWAC also invested in adding a membership page to its website to enable detailed information access to all work processes being carried out within the AC for all its members. In addition, a new Communication Strategy was developed and adopted in Year 15 and its effectiveness is monitored and assessed during Year 16. This work will continue in Year 17.

In Year 17, the NWWAC will concentrate on ensuring that the restructuring due to Brexit is functioning efficiently and effectively, and that the newly agreed Rules of Procedure will be fully implemented. Should any inefficiencies become apparent, this period will be used to fine tune the changes and updates ensuring that the NWWAC continues its efficient and effective support to the Commission and the Member States. Once these updates have been fully realised, the NWWAC will carry out an external performance review in Year 18 as envisaged in the proposed amendments to the delegated act which were presented by the Commission on 15 July 2021.

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Appendix I

The proposed schedule of meetings to achieve the objectives of the NWWAC work programme

Year 17

(01 October 2021 to 30 September 2022)

The information presented below is indicative of NWWAC operations in Year 17 and will be adopted by the members of the General Assembly, which will meet in Dublin on 24 September 2021.

All dates and topics for discussion are subject to change and will be directed by the requirements of the Commission and proposals originating from NWWAC members and endorsed by the Executive Committee.



SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS (YEAR 17)

NORTH WESTERN WATERS ADVISORY COUNCIL

Indicative Schedule of meetings in Year 17 (01 October 2021 – 30 September 2022)

Meeting Type	Proposed dates/duration	Venue	Work Priorities
Farm to Fork 2021 Conference	14-15 October 2021	virtual	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> annual gathering of European stakeholders interested in helping to shape the EU's path towards sustainable food systems.
European Elasmobranch Association Annual Meeting	03-05 November 2021	Leiden	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> developments in the science and policy landscape that deliver for shark and ray conservation
Working Groups and ExCom	March 2022	Madrid	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Relevant topics based on outstanding actions Landing Obligation, TCMs
Working Groups and ExCom	July 2022	Ghent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Presentation of ICES Advice for 2023 Fishing Opportunities for 2023 / LO Development of Focus Group topics
Working Groups, ExCom and GA&AGM	September 2022	Dublin	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ratify Year 17 accounts and work programme and budget for Y18 Report from the Chairman on Y17 / Work Plan Y18 Focus / Working group topics to be developed