



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 15

01 October 2019 to 30 September 2020



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) in order to address a broader range of seafood topics such as migratory species, aquaculture and markets. The advisory role of the ACs was also enhanced as a constituent part of this change.

Now in its fifteenth year of operation, which runs from 01 October 2019 to 30 September 2020, 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, Member States and the European Parliament, in order to achieve the sustainable exploitation of the fish stocks within the geographical remit of the EC waters of sub-areas 5.b, 6 and 7.

The advice produced by the NWWAC is directed by the objective 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.



3. Main topics for Year 15

3.1. Landing obligation (LO)

During Year 15 the NWWAC will continue to develop 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.

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. Such challenges include:

- The setting of TACs in highly dynamic, variable and mixed fisheries (e.g. cod, haddock, whiting 7b-k) and coverage of non-target species (e.g. Plaice 7hjk).;
- Mitigating against the risk of choke species closing fisheries prematurely.
- Highly depleted stocks with apparent low rebuilding potential (e.g. West of Scotland cod).
- The lack of accurate catch data, particularly on discards. This includes not only demersal stocks but also pelagic bycatch in demersal fisheries. It restricts the ability to assess whether stocks present a choke risk.
- The unintended consequences of measures, e.g. displacement.

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 15 the NWWAC aims to collaborate 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.

3.3. Development and implementation of multi-annual management plans

The development and implementation of long-term management plans for fisheries in the North Western Waters has been one of the main focuses of the NWWAC's work since its establishment. The NWWAC will participate, as it is able and in accordance with available resources and budget, in developing input for existing or newly proposed multi-annual fishery management plans, where stakeholders' input is requested.

The NWWAC established dedicated Focus Groups on the following stocks:

- Seabass: Inter-AC dialogue will continue to assist the development of recommendations on specific management and technical measures for the stock concerned.



- Scallops: The NWWAC has called for expressions of interest from its members regarding the setting up of a Focus Group on Scallops. This group, once established, will continue discussions on a long term regional management plan for King Scallop stocks in the English Channel. The work of this Focus Groups will begin in 2020.
- Brown Crab: In recent years the brown crab fishery has been driven by a highly demanding market. The pressure on the stock may create instability for the brown crab fishery and its associated stakeholders in Europe. The NWWAC aims to provide a trans-national overview of economic developments and their impacts in the immediate and long-term future of these fisheries. In year 15 we will, taking into account the remit of the Market Advisory Council and following consultation with the relevant ICES Working Group (WGCRAB), provide advice on the joint, sustainable, management of these fisheries.

Recognizing the emerging importance of several non-TAC stocks, including squid and cuttlefish, the NWWAC will take steps 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 in September 2020, in response to the EC Consultation on Fishing Opportunities for 2021.

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. The implications of the Landing Obligation and the mitigation of choke risks will receive significant attention.

The NWWAC advice on TACs and quotas will be submitted in sufficient time to inform the discussions leading to the final adoption of the Regulation on Fishing Opportunities for species in Atlantic waters in December 2020.

In common with previous years, a number of specific requests may also be submitted to the Commission and concerned Member States prior to the December Council 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; the requirement for appropriate management measures to reach these goals; the composition, functioning and funding of the Advisory Councils (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.

The NWWAC will continue to monitor Brexit and the consequences this may have on the functioning, both of the activities in the relevant area and of the ACs themselves. We will remain at the forefront of organising events when required, specifically to discuss and achieve a harmonised approach with other ACs.

3.6. Ecosystem based approach to fisheries management

The NWWAC encourages 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 by the NWWAC members to protect sensitive species and habitats.

3.6.1. Irish Sea benchmark

The Benchmark Workshop on the impact of ecosystem and environmental drivers on Irish Sea fisheries management (WKIrish) is of great interest to the NWWAC as this workshop not only focusses on the improvement of single species assessments (i.e. principally cod, haddock, whiting and plaice), 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.

Having engaged in previous workshops, the NWWAC will attend the next workshop (WKIRISH6) in November 2019 which will address progress towards the development of an integrated ecosystem assessment and advice.



3.7. Environment

Recognising of 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 has decided to include work on wider environmental issues such as climate change, biodiversity loss, marine plastics, CO₂ emissions, impact of seismic activities on fish stocks, in its work programme for Year 15.

Following from discussion in Year 14 NWWAC members requested the establishment of a Focus Group on Marine Plastics. Its agreed objective is the development of recommendations to the Commission on operational aspects of Fishing for Litter and the Single Use Plastics Directive. To ensure maximum stakeholder involvement the NWWAC co-organises with the MAC a workshop on Plastics in the seafood supply chain in November. This will bring together members of the Advisory Councils with experts and scientists to explore in both broader and greater detail the impact of plastics on fisheries and market actors. The NWWAC Focus Group will also liaise closely with the North Sea AC Focus Group on Circular Design of Fishing Gears.

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 fishermen. This lack of attractiveness can 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 explore relevant aspects in Year 15 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.

Following the advice produced in year 14, the NWWAC has reconvened the Focus Group on Control and compliance with the objective of preparing further advice on all relevant control measures for the NWWAC.

3.10. European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF)

The NWWAC will continue to monitor the discussion and provide advice on the EU legislators' work on the EMFF 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 Regulation, namely the Basic Framework Regulation, the Commission's delegated act laying out the functioning of the Advisory Councils and the EMFF Regulation.

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 between the Advisory Councils and 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 has developed strong links with the NWW Member States group and will continue to collaborate and assist this group, however possible.

The NWWAC has welcomed and benefited from the engagement of representatives of the NWW administrations and will continue to foster and develop this relationship in Year 15.

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

In Year 15, 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 is committed 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.

5. Working procedures

The NWWAC will continue to refine its working procedures to ensure efficient and effective work practices.

The NWWAC will work closely with the fishing industry, Other Interest Groups, the Commission, 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 15.

5.2. Role, composition and functioning of the ACs

A delegation composed of the Chair and the Secretariat of the NWWAC will actively participate in the coordination meeting to be held on 08th November 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 within 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.

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 15, there are 21 members of the Executive Committee; 15 from fishing industry organisations and 6 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, also attend Executive Committee meetings as observers.

5.3.2. Sub-regional Working Groups

There are currently 4 sub-regional Working Groups (Working Groups) in the NWWAC, which are geographically based. Working Group meetings are held up to 3 times each year (depending on budget and agenda items) and are important drivers of the NWWAC. All issues, e.g. management plans, landing obligation, necessary for debate are tabled at these meetings and experts, as well as Commission officials, are normally invited to attend and make presentations.

The four Working Groups are:

1. West of Scotland (5.b and 6);
2. Celtic Sea (7.f to k);
3. Channel (7.d and e);
4. Irish Sea (7.a).

Membership of Working Groups varies from 25 to 50 participants depending on the subject matter and full interpretation is provided for WG 1 and 2 (i.e. English, French and Spanish). WG 3 operates in English and French and WG4 operates in English only. All 4 Working Group meetings are normally held over a period of 1 to 2 days.

5.3.3. Focus Groups, Horizontal Working Groups and Advice Drafting Groups

Focus Group and Advice Drafting Group meetings are specialist meetings, which are convened when issues of urgent concern require an immediate and technical response from the NWWAC.

Focus groups and Advice Drafting Groups are formed from within the general membership and generally consist of a small group of members (i.e. 8 to 15) with specific professional experience and expertise.

Additionally, Horizontal Working Groups are convened, as required, to discuss issues of common interest to all NWWAC members.



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 via web-meeting.

Focus Groups or Horizontal Working Groups are planned to work on the following topics in Year 15:

- i. Non-TAC stocks such as squid and cuttlefish;
- ii. Management strategy for brown crab;
- iii. Management strategy for Scallops;
- iv. Marine Plastics;
- v. Control and Compliance (FGCC);
- vi. Landing Obligation

To improve the efficiency of the meetings and the quality of the advice, the Secretariat would like to organise tailored workshops for NWWAC members. The focus of these workshops would lie on chairing meetings effectively in order to facilitate productive discussion, make more decision and achieve greater consensus and support positive dissent.

6. Communications and Outreach

In Year 14 the level of communication and outreach has increased and will continue to do so in Year 15.

The NWWAC website remains the main communication tool between the NWWAC Secretariat and 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 will develop plans to invest in:

1. An electronic system for meeting registration;
2. Online reimbursement system;
3. Online web meeting facilities;
4. Website redevelopment.

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Appendix I

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

Year 15

(1st of October 2019 to the 30th of September 2020)

The information presented below is indicative of NWWAC operations in Year 15 and has been adopted by the members of the General Assembly, which met in Dublin on the 06th of September 2019.

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 15)

NORTH WESTERN WATERS ADVISORY COUNCIL

Indicative Schedule of meetings in Year 15 (01 October 2019 – 30 September 2020)

Meeting Type	Proposed dates/duration	Venue	Work Priorities
DG MARE Workshop on traceability of fishery and aquaculture products	10 – 11 October 2019	Brussels	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discussion on existing traceability tools and future developments by Member States and industry
Focus Group Marine Plastics	11 October	Web	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discussion on upcoming MAC/NWWAC workshop, development of joint workshop on gear technology with NSAC
ClimeFish	17 October 2019	Brussels	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project presentation and discussion of H2020 ClimeFish
EFCA Advisory Board	21 October 2018	Vigo	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provision of stakeholders to the Advisory Board
NSAC FG on Circular Design of Fishing Gear	31 October 2019	Schiphol	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Development of joint workshop on gear technology in relation to the SUP Directive for Jan/Feb 2020
NWWAC/MAC Workshop on Plastics in the Seafood Supply Chain	07 October 2019	Brussels	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The purpose of the Workshop is to bring together members of the MAC, of the NWWAC, and other Advisory Councils with experts and scientists to explore in both broader and greater detail the impact of plastics on fisheries and market actors.
Coordination Meeting between DG MARE and the ACs	08 November 2019	Brussels	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Co-ordination of the Advisory Councils with the EC



NORTH WESTERN WATERS ADVISORY COUNCIL

Indicative Schedule of meetings in Year 15 (01 October 2019 – 30 September 2020)

Meeting Type	Proposed dates/duration	Venue	Work Priorities
The Role of Advisory Councils under the Common Fisheries Policy	12 November 2019	Brussels	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The aim of the seminar is to present to newly-elected PECH Committee members the important role of the ACs in providing recommendations on fisheries and aquaculture management matters, including, market, conservation and socio-economic aspects, as well as dialogue platforms for all relevant stakeholders.
WKFlatNSCS	10 – 22 November 2019	Ghent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Benchmark Workshop for Flatfish stocks in the North Sea and Celtic Sea
WkIrish 6	25-29 November 2019	Dublin	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Benchmark Workshop developing on the Irish Sea ecosystem, stock assessments, and fisheries issues, and scoping needs for assessment and management advice
Meeting of the Advisory Councils and ICES (MIACO)	16 and 17 January 2020	Copenhagen	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collaboration with ICES on issues relating to the assessment of stocks.
Focus/Working Groups, Executive Committee	10 and 11 March 2020	Madrid	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Relevant topics based on outstanding actions Landing Obligation, TCMs
SUMARiS	29-30 April 2020		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Final project event presenting work carried out over project duration including review the stock and scientific evidence for skates and rays focusing on the Southern North Sea/ English Channel stocks, plus potential management options
Working / Focus Groups, Executive Committee	07 – 08 July July 2020	Ghent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Presentation of ICES Advice for 2021 Fishing Opportunities for 2021 / LO Development of Focus Group topics



NORTH WESTERN WATERS ADVISORY COUNCIL

Indicative Schedule of meetings in Year 15 (01 October 2019 – 30 September 2020)

Meeting Type	Proposed dates/duration	Venue	Work Priorities
Working Groups, General Assembly and Executive Committee	02-04 September 2020	Dublin	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ratify Year 16 accounts and budget for Y16• Report from the Chairman on Y15 / Work Plan Y16• Focus / Working group topics to be developed