

North Western Waters Regional Advisory Council

MINUTES

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE PARIS, 29 FEBRUARY 2012 9:00 - 13:00

Chairman: Bertie Armstrong
Rapporteur: Alexandre Rodríguez

1. Welcome

The Chairman of the NWWRAC, Bertie Armstrong, welcomed the members attending the meeting, as well as the Commission and ICES representatives and the observers to the meeting.

The list of participants, and the organisations they represent, is detailed in Annex I.

- Apologies: Apologies were received from Hugo González (ANASOL-ARVI).
- Adoption of the agenda: The Chairman explained that the original agenda had been revised to include a presentation from Pascale Baelde on the review of the functioning of the SWWRAC. This presentation was given at a coordination meeting between the Commission and the RACs held in Brussels in late January and the Chairman considered that the findings could also serve to focus members on the internal procedures of the NWWRAC.

Sean O'Donoghue asked if there were any updated information on the Joint RAC Seminar on Mixed Fisheries and the InterRAC group of RAC Chairs/Vice-Chairs. The Chairman indicated that both points would be discussed under item 8.

The revised agenda was adopted by the members.

- Adoption of the minutes of the last meeting (Dublin Castle, 27 October 2011): The report was considered a true record of the meeting and formally adopted.

2. Actions put forward by sub-regional Working Groups

2.1. Presentation of actions by Working Group Chairmen / Rapporteurs

The Executive Committee was requested to endorse the following Working Group decisions:

Working Group 1 – West of Scotland and Western Approaches (ICES Vb and VIa) Kara Brydson

- Review of the Cod Recovery Plan (EC Reg. 1342/2008)
 - The Secretariat will request clarification from STECF on its work plan and meeting schedule and will inform the members in particular about the scoping of mixed fisheries plans for West of Scotland, Irish Sea, Western Channel and Celtic Seas.
 - To set up a follow up meeting of the NWWRAC Focus Group on the Cod Recovery Plan within the next 4 to 6 weeks.
- Fishing Opportunities for 2013
 - The NWWRAC will write a letter to the Commission asking for clarification on the legal reasons for effort regimes and the reason for not moving away from its approach of automatic reductions for data deficient stocks. The letter will also state what the NWWRAC hopes to see a change in the policy statement on Fishing Opportunities for 2013.
- Data deficiencies for stocks assessment
 - The Secretariat will seek clarification from ICES on the new classification of data deficient stocks. The Secretariat will also liaise with ICES to set up a follow-up meeting (WKDDRAC3) once substantial progress in data deficiency work is achieved by the NWWRAC;
 - The NWWRAC will request that the Commission consults the RACs on changes to the Data Collection Framework Regulation. It should also ask the Commission to clarify its position on the Long Term Management Plan for West of Scotland Haddock.
- Marine Protected Areas in UK waters: The NWWRAC will continue their involvement in, and contributing data to, MPA projects in UK waters.

Working Group 2 – West of Ireland and Celtic Sea Jesús Lourido

- Management Plan for Celtic Sea Demersal Fisheries (VIIIfg):
 - The Secretariat and a Steering Group of members will seek clarification from the Commission on funding for the scientific underpinning of work on a long term management plan for Celtic Sea demersal stocks.
- Interim technical measures for the Celtic Sea (VIIIfg):
 - Barrie Deas and Sean O'Donoghue will prepare a short paper endorsing national measures developed by concerned Member States, based on the NWWRAC proposal on selectivity measures published in October 2011. It will be explained that these measures go far and beyond EC Reg. 850/1998 to protect against high rates of discards on incoming year classes, and noting the need for derogations for specific fleet segments.
- Data Deficiencies:
 - The Secretariat will liaise with appointed data coordinators and report on work progress to ICES with the aim of setting up a follow-up coordination meeting between ICES and the NWWRAC on this matter (i.e. WDDRAC3);
 - Data coordinators will be appointed at Working Group level for Plaice VIIIfg, Pollock VII and Whiting VIIb-k.
- Northern Hake:
 - The Secretariat and Víctor Badiola will establish regular contact with ICES coordinators for this stock in order to jointly develop a strategic plan to improve the exchange of knowledge on stock dynamics. The Secretariat will also ask Commission to keep the NWWRAC informed on any potential downward adjustment in TAC in the interim.
- Nephrops VII:
 - The NWWRAC will address any queries and requests for formal consultations, once it receives a reply from the Commission.
- Marine Conservation Zones in UK waters:
 - The NWWRAC will express its concern to the UK authorities regarding the MCZ process and language issues.

NWWRAC Executive Committee

Paris, 29 February 2012

OR

- The NWWRAC will express the concern of members to the UK authorities that full engagement with the MCZ process requires that documentation be available in the working languages of the NWWRAC.

Working Group 3 – Channel (ICES VIId and VIle) Daniel Lefèvre

- Cod Recovery Plan in Eastern Channel
 - That WG3 provides ongoing input to the review process initiated by the Commission and carried out by STECF.
- Western Channel Sole:
 - Jim Portus to continue representing the NWWRAC and report on the outcomes of ICES WKFLAT in Bilbao.
- Effort regime for Scallops:
 - NWWRAC to hold detailed discussions on the review of western waters effort regime (kw/day) with the view of agreeing a common proposal.
- Scallops management:
 - The NWWRAC to work on regional management measures for scallops in the Channel coming from concerned fishing industry representatives from UK, France and Belgium.
- Data deficiencies:
 - The appointed NWWRAC data coordinators will continue to work with scientific correspondents, fishing industry professionals and MS and make progress in this field. The NWWRAC will coordinate views with NSRAC in order to develop a common position that could be presented to ICES next coordination meeting between ICES-NSRAC-NWWRAC on data deficiencies in relation to stock assessments (WKDDRAC3).
- Fully documented fisheries:
 - Bertie Armstrong and Barrie Deas will draft a first version of a position paper on how to achieve a fully documented fishery.

- Non-quota species:
 - NWWRAC to reflect about its role and keep informed on outcomes of ICES WKNEW at future WG3 meetings.

Working Group 4 – Irish Sea (VIIa) John Crudden

- Order of Working Group meetings
 - That geographical (sub-regional) Working Group meetings are rotated and the Irish Sea WG does not always come last in the schedule of meetings.
- Ecosystem-based management for the Irish Sea
 - That a Focus Group is convened to make proposals on a management plan for Irish Sea stocks.
- Management measures for Nephrops in Area VII
 - That only one sub-regional or geographical Working Group will deal with all aspects of Nephrops management in Area VII. However, as this is a horizontal issue, all NWWRAC members will be invited to participate in this discussion and proposals will be circulated among NWWRAC membership.
- Data deficiencies for stock assessments
 - The NWWRAC will continue with work at Working Group level;
 - The Commission will provide a definition of “data poor stock”.
- Technical Measures in Western Waters: Irish Sea
 - The NWWRAC Secretariat will collect reports from BIM on gear trials using the Swedish Grid and circulate to RAC members;
 - The Commission will provide a definition of “discards”.

Decision: All actions submitted by the Working Group Chairmen and/or Rapporteurs to the Executive Committee, were endorsed and adopted by the Executive Committee members present.

2.2. Discussion and comments from the floor

- Fishing Opportunities for 2013 (WG1)

Sean O'Donoghue and Bertie Armstrong suggested reinforcing the advice to be submitted by the NWWRAC to the Commission and asked the Commission if they intended to put forward a new policy statement on Fishing Opportunities or simply enumerate a list of stocks.

It was agreed that the NWWRAC would like to see a new policy statement rather than rolling over or persisting with the current document which has several flaws such as the automatic reductions in relation to data deficient stocks.

The DG MARE representative said that he was not aware of any changes envisaged in the operational procedure regarding Fishing Opportunities for 2013, and reminded that the previous policy document had a multiannual perspective.

- Scallop management (WG3)

A number of members asked for clarification if this was an industry only meeting or one which was within the remit of the NWWRAC. The WG3 Chair referred to this initiative as a first exchange of views between fishing professionals only. The outcomes and summary of the meeting will be subsequently brought to the Channel WG at a later stage and discussions will only take place at NWWRAC level when there are specific, transnational proposals from different fleets.

- Nephrops in Area VII (WGs2-4)

It was agreed that this topic would be dealt in WG4 for efficiency reasons but it will be considered as a horizontal issue and therefore all NWWRAC members will be invited to attend and kept informed on work progress and suggested actions.

- MPAs in UK waters (WGs1-4)

Alan Coghill will report back to NWWRAC members on the outcomes of a consultant report working with SFF in relation to this subject matter.

3. **Decisions regarding procedures and membership**

3.1. Proposal on review of the rules of procedure

The Secretariat (Alexandre Rodríguez) reminded the members of the accords reached at the last GA and Executive Committee meetings held in Dublin Castle in October 2011. It was agreed at this meeting to align the term of office of all the NWWRAC positions with that of the NWWRAC Executive Committee and General Assembly Chairmen (i.e. three years). However, this would require an amendment of Articles 40-45 and 51 of the NWWRAC rules of procedure.

The Secretariat noted that the NWWRAC rules of procedure were adopted in September 2005 and no changes had been made since then¹. The evolution of RAC working practices had introduced new elements that required a certain degree of flexibility (e.g. adoption of advice by electronic means) and that rendered some of the articles in force incomplete or even obsolete.

In view of the above, the Secretariat advocated that this might be a good opportunity for the NWWRAC to undertake a thorough review of its rules of procedure in order to streamline the articles with current practices. This would be not only relevant for internal purposes, but also for a better understanding from stakeholders and third parties of how the NWWRAC operates. It was also highlighted that there is a growing number of scholars and external consultants that use the rules of procedure of the RACs as a source and basis for developing studies and assessing the performance and the functioning of the RACs.

Article 53 establishes the legal procedure to be followed by the NWWRAC: *“any amendments must be presented to members for comment at the Annual General Assembly and agreed by a two-thirds majority of members of the Executive Committee and must have the consent of the European Commission and concerned Member States. Any modification of the aims and objectives of the North Western Waters RAC shall also have the consent of the European Commission and Member States concerned”*.

The Secretariat informed the members that it had worked on a first draft proposal of amendments based on current practices and had circulated it among the NWWRAC members in English only. This draft had been circulated to encourage debate and initiate discussions among members towards achieving a common proposal within the next number of months. Once agreed, the draft proposal will be submitted to the Commission and the concerned Member States for its view prior to being presented at the General Assembly-AGM that is likely to take place in September 2012 for comments, and subsequently to the Executive Committee for adoption by qualified majority.

The Chairman thanked the Secretariat for the explanations provided and opened the floor for comments

Victor Badiola said that the NWWRAC members would need to see the proposed amendments in the three languages of the NWWRAC, i.e. English, French and Spanish; and a minimum consultation period of four weeks should be allowed for submitting comments.

Mr. Badiola also wondered if the Executive Committee would be entitled to carry out a comprehensive review given that the mandate of the last General Assembly was limited to align the term of mandate for all NWWRAC positions to three years.

The Secretariat replied that it was possible for the Executive Committee to adopt a series of amendments beyond the term of mandate, but they should be compliant with article 53.

¹ The rules of procedure are available at the “About Us” section of the NWWRAC website: http://www.nwwrac.org/About_NWWRAC/About_Us_ENG/Rules_and_Procedures.html

Action: The Secretariat will translate the proposed amendments to the rules into French and Spanish and circulate it among all NWWRAC GA members giving a minimum timeframe of four weeks for submitting comments. If agreed, a revised draft of the rules of procedure will be forwarded to the Commission and the Member States for approval prior to being tabled at the General Assembly in 2012 for comment, and thereafter to the Executive Committee for adoption by qualified majority.

3.2. Proposal on an additional fast-track procedure for the adoption of NWWRAC letters

Sean O'Donoghue and Jacques Pichon submitted a proposal to the Secretariat requesting that the NWWRAC finds a mechanism to allow Steering Groups, Focus Groups and/or Working Groups a certain degree of freedom to operate effectively in non controversial issues without recourse to the Executive Committee, particularly in those situations requiring immediate reaction. An example of this issue was described and referred to November 2011 when the Celtic Sea steering group decided to send a letter to the Commission requesting specific funding for the development of a management plan for the mixed demersal fisheries in the Celtic Sea. This action had already been agreed at the Focus Group and Executive Committee and the steering group understood that there was no need of further consultation or circulation.

However, the Secretariat informed the Group that in accordance with the rules of procedure, any proposal coming from a Steering Group and/or Focus Group under the form of document or advice from the NWWRAC had to be translated, circulated and validated by the Executive Committee before submission to the Commission. The rules of procedure allowed no exceptions to this possibility. Working within the rules and acting with maximum speed, the Secretariat circulated the letter from the steering group by fast track electronic procedure among WG2 and Executive Committee member with a minimum period of 48 hours for comment.

Sean and Jacques considered this to be an example of an unnecessary level of meaningless bureaucracy within the rules of the NWWRAC, although they acknowledged that the Secretariat dealt efficiently with the issue and that the letter was submitted in good time. They advocated that, where justified, the Chairs of the Focus Group or Working Groups should be able to ask a simple question directly to the Commission such as if there was funding available for a project without the need to revert to the Executive Committee for approval.

The NWWRAC Chairman supported the approach of the Secretariat and reminded the members of the need to stay within rules of procedure. However, he understood the argument being made and the need to react quickly to some urgent, non-controversial requests. He reminded the members that the NWWRAC had already a fast track procedure in place for such purpose. The Chairman also recalled that the fast track procedure has also a default procedure, i.e. in case of no reply it is understood that members agree with the content of the proposal or advice as it stands.

In summary, there is a procedural obligation to consult the Executive Committee for any type of advice or communication to the Commission. However, the NWWRAC must remain flexible and find a balance between effectiveness and compliance with the rules.

Kara Brydson and Víctor Badiola supported the NWWRAC Chairman's approach and were strongly of the opinion that the interpretation of what is considered "non-controversial" advice was subjective. As such there was no need to change the rules of procedure as this could set a dangerous precedent.

The Secretariat clarified that, if members would like to incorporate a new procedure, the extent of the mandate of the Chairs of the Focus Groups/Working Groups should be precise and that the functions and boundaries of such groups should be clearly defined. This might eventually require a formal amendment of rules of procedure.

Decision: Following a detailed exchange of views, the members of the Executive Committee agreed that the only possibility to send a direct request to the Commission was that a letter would come from the Secretariat (and not from the Chairmen) after having received an express mandate from the Executive Committee. The Secretariat will also include a slight modification of the current fast track procedure which will allow points of fact to be sent immediately rather than being circulated for comments and objections.

3.3. Application for Executive Committee membership

The Secretariat (Alexandre Rodríguez) reminded the members that, according to article 22 of rules of procedure, that the General Assembly is the body that appoints members of the Executive Committee.

However, given the fact that there were three vacant seats under the "other groups of interest" category of article 22.c), and that the GA had agreed that those empty seats could be filled anytime before the next election procedure, it would be up to the members of the Executive Committee to approve the appointment of new Executive Committee members for these seats..

The Marine Conservation Society of UK submitted a letter on behalf of Seas at Risk (SAR) on the 28th of January requesting the appointment of the latter as member of the Executive Committee under the category of other interest groups (1/3)².

The Secretariat reminded the members that SAR had already been a member of the NWWRAC Executive Committee from September 2005 to 2007 and rejoined the NWWRAC as member of the General Assembly and the West of Ireland Working Group (WG2), in 2011.

² Letter uploaded as meeting paper in the NWWRAC website:
www.nwwrac.org/admin/publication/upload/SAR_Letter_Application_NWWRAC_ExCom_28January2011_EN.pdf

The Secretariat invited the SAR representative, Debbie Crockard, to provide a brief overview of the organisation's activities and the reasons for applying for this seat.

Ms. Crockard explained that SAR is a European association of non-governmental environmental organisations working to protect and restore to health the marine environment of the European seas and the wider North East Atlantic. This environmental organisation has more than 25 years of activity and is integrated into the Coalition Ocean 2012. SAR is an active member of several RACs such as Pelagic Species, South Western Waters and Baltic Sea.

Decision: The members of the Executive Committee did not pose any objections and the organisation Seas at Risk was therefore accepted as a member of the Executive Committee with immediate effect.

4. Update on the Commission's work programme and consultations

The Commission's representative at the meeting, Robert Griffin, updated the attendees of the Commission's work priorities for 2012 and highlighted two main areas of work.

- Technical measures

The current transitional technical measures will expire at the end of 2012. In the short term, there is an intention to amend Regulation No 850/98 in order to include the transitional measures into the current framework. In the long term, there will be a more substantial technical measures framework regulation that will replace the current one. However, delivery of the new measures is tied to the outcome of the CFP reform.

The Commission warned that a prudent approach must be taken regarding the level of regulation (i.e. material scope and extent) that will be built under the new TCM framework regulation as there are still many areas whose inclusion remains to be defined in the ongoing dialogue (i.e. multi-annual plans, coordination between Member States, etc.) on the CFP reform.

- Discards

The idea of implementing a gradual ban on discards by fisheries has been proposed by the Commission and approved by the Council. A ministerial discussion will be held in March to shape how this going to be done. The outcomes of this proposal might have ramifications for other current standard policies (such as technical measures or MSY).

The Chair thanked Mr. Griffin for this summary and opened the floor for comments

Questions from the floor

Sean O'Donoghue asked for the legal procedure as well as the timetable for a consultation on technical measures. He also asked what is going to happen in 2013; will there be an interim solution or will the proposal include all the issues raised in relation to the elements of the CFP?

If the latter, an amendment of Regulation 850/98 would be required by co-decision, and would risk being delayed for at least two years. Mr. O'Donoghue said that this required immediate action as the TCM Regulation currently in force is extremely complex and not fit for purpose in many of its constituent elements.

Eamon Mangan (French Administration) said that current transitional measures are likely to be extended where substantial issues will follow the ordinary legal (co-decision) procedure. He asked the Commission if it has reflected on how any interim small changes on substantial issues will be transposed into national measures implemented by Member States, such as the NWWRAC proposal on selectivity measures for the Celtic Sea.

The Commission's representative replied to the queries from members as follows:

Consultation on technical measures is hoped to be addressed before the end of 2012. Even though transitional measures will effectively require an amendment of Reg. 850/1998, there will be no substantial changes or revision until the CFP reform provides directions for a clear policy on technical measures.

There are several ways to adopt additional technical measures: one would be via article 7 of Regulation No 2371/2002, where emergency measures could be implemented for a period of 6 months. There are also the provisions of Articles 45 and 46 of Council Regulation (CE) No. 850/98. The Commission will discuss options with concerned Member States.

5. Input to the EC review on the functioning of the RACs within the CFP reform

5.1. Performance assessment of the RACs: case study for the SWWRAC (Pascale Baelde)

The Chairman introduced the speaker, Ms. Pascale Baelde, saying that this presentation was already given at a recent coordination meeting between the Commission and the RACs. Although the objective of this study was to assess the performance of the work in consultation of the South Western Waters RAC, it was considered that the recommendations of this work would be of interest to all of the RACs.

The Executive Secretary (Conor Nolan) explained that the reason for inviting Pascale was also in response to comments made by Ernesto Penas (Head of Policy Development and Coordination from DG MARE), whereby he requested all RACs to provide comments or proposals in relation to changes to the internal structure and the functioning of the RACs. The initial deadline for such comments is early summer (i.e. June).

Ms Baelde explained that she is a consultant now but she had been working as a fisheries scientist in Australia for 20 years and had experience in participation and management models. She described the methodology used and presented the main results (good and bad) and recommendations contained in the study, suggesting improvements for the RACs, the Commission, and for both.

The most relevant issue highlighted by the speaker was the contradictions of the stakeholder participation model. In theory, the RACs were established under an advisory model based on consultation. In practice, however, the RACs operate a collaborative model that requires negotiation and cooperation between its members in order to reach consensus-based position. The collaborative model also requires an exchange of ideas between stakeholders and the managing authority until an agreement is reached, but this is not the case, which could explain the fact that communication between the RACs and the Commission is often described as “*parallel monologues*” by some members in relation to advice and Commission responses. There is a need to find the appropriate tools to meet the expectations of the RACs, the Commission has to be more precise and set up the right conditions for consultation and integration of RAC advice into its proposals.

The presentation from Ms. Baelde is available for consultation on the NWWRAC website³

5.2. Discussion on the operating mechanisms of the NWWRAC: proposed way forward

The Chairman thanked the consultant for the quality of the report and the great clarity of thought. He acknowledged that there is a lack of strategic vision both within the Commission and the RACs in relation to the participation of stakeholders in the decision making process, and that we need a common understanding on this matter to achieve the sustainable management of fisheries in Europe. This has become of high interest with the ongoing discussions on governance and regionalisation (including the role of the RACs) within the CFP reform. It is crucial to know what the nature of our operational model is (i.e. consultation or collaboration?).

Cécile Fouquet informed the meeting that Mr. Penas gave some information about the future composition of RACs at a meeting she attended. Mr. Penas announced that the Commission is preparing a review of the composition of the RACs and are of the opinion that there is a lack of representation from small scale fisheries as well as from civil society.

³ www.nwwrac.org/admin/publication/upload/PA_RAC_Consultation_Feb%202012_PB_EN.pdf

Action: The NWWRAC will ask Ernesto Penas what is expected from the NWWRAC in terms of contribution to the review of the composition and functioning of the RACs as well as requesting a clarification on the timetable for such reform.

6. Development of a NWWRAC position on regionalisation

6.1. Current status and preparation of advice

Barrie Deas introduced this topic and recalled that a NWWRAC position in response to the Commission's proposal for a CFP Basic Regulation has been put forward in November 2011⁴. Five "non papers" were subsequently released by the Commission in December 2011 on the following topics: transferable fishing concessions, discards ban, maximum sustainable yield, regionalisation and small-scale fisheries.

Mr. Deas suggested following the ongoing debate on this matter at CFP reform seminars and at discussions with the Commission, Member States and European Parliament to see if the Commission will provide any guidelines on specific models for regionalisation. He suggested that the NWWRAC should then initiate a programme of work to produce a paper on regionalisation that could be circulated by electronic procedure. The Executive Committee supported this proposal.

Action: The NWWRAC to produce its own position on regionalisation once guidelines or more information is available from the Commission, Member States and/or European Parliament.

6.2. Forthcoming events: NWWRAC participation in EP Public Hearing (21 March 2012)

The Secretariat (Alexandre Rodríguez) reported to the meeting that the discussions on regionalisation are running at different levels and are now the main focus at Council (Member States) level as well as within the European Parliament these being the institutions entrusted with amending and adopting the proposal from the Commission.

It was recalled that the inter-RAC group submitted a letter in December 2011⁵ to the MEP Ms. Ulrike Rodust, in her capacity as the designated rapporteur of the CFP reform, to organise a public hearing on the role of the RACs within the future CFP reform.

⁴ This paper is available in the Publications section of the NWWRAC website – Direct link: www.nwwrac.org/admin/publication/upload/NWWRAC_Opinion_EC_Proposal_CFP_Reform_28Nov2011_EN.pdf

⁵ www.nwwrac.org/admin/publication/upload/InterRAC_Letter_MEP_Rodust_EP_Conference_Regionalisation_211211_EN.pdf

The EP Fisheries Committee replied to this request in January 2012⁶ by organising an EP Public Hearing on Regionalisation structured in two panels:

1. Role and tasks of the different actors after the CFP reform, definition of decentralization/regionalisation and available financial resources;
2. Instruments that could be used in a regionalized CFP (i.e. MAMPs, allocation of access to fisheries, technical measures)

The seven RACs were invited by the organizers to nominate a single representative that would present a common position on the views of the RACs on regionalisation, allocating an initial speaking time of 15 minutes.

The Secretariat reminded the members that the Council of Ministers scheduled for June is planning to present a first draft that will address most issues included in response to the five non-Papers released by the Commission mentioned in item 6.1.

Comments from the floor

Sean O'Donoghue stated that the NWWRAC needs to react quickly if it is to have any influence in the ongoing debate on the CFP reform. There has been substantial progress made at Member State level and European Parliament in 2012. The NWWRAC should be able to propose specific amendments to the Commission's proposal of basic Regulation, particularly in relation to the role and functioning of the RACs (Arts 52-54) and claim for an increased funding under the new EMFF. The NWWRAC also needs to come up with a sensible model of regionalization that does not create an added layer of bureaucracy to co-regional management.

Action: Sean O'Donoghue will develop headlines for discussion on regionalisation by looking at the articles of the Basic Regulation and suggesting modifications. The Secretariat will help in this process and assist with any administrative matters.

Regarding the drafting of an inter-RAC common position or statement to be presented at the EP Hearing and given the tight deadline and the diversity of views within each RAC, it was agreed to limit the contribution of the NWWRAC to four basic points:

- RACs need more funding to undertake increased responsibilities on its advisory role;
- RACs are in favour of a less centralized /regionalized system;
- Aspects to improve the administrative functioning of the RACs (already agreed by Secretariats and Chairmen at an Inter-RAC letter of January 2012);
- RACs are composed of various stakeholders (including small scale fisheries and NGOs) that collaborate together.

⁶ Response available in the publications section of the NWWRAC website – direct link:
http://www.nwwrac.org/admin/publication/upload/Letter_Invitation_PECH_EP_Public_Hearing_Regionalisation_CFP_Reform_17Jan2012_EN.pdf

Action: The NWWRAC Secretariat will liaise with colleagues from the other six RAC Secretariats to appoint a representative (one RAC Chairman); and to draft a common position that will be circulated to each respective RAC Executive Committee for comments and fast track adoption. The NWWRAC would reserve its right to refuse the proposed content of a consensus position and present its own position.

7. Data deficiencies for stock assessments

Barrie Deas provided the meeting with a description of progress on the data deficiency initiative made from October 2011. The NWWRAC had established a mature dialogue with ICES. The Head of the ACOM and working group Chairs have been very supportive of this initiative and recognized at the last MIRAC meeting that they would like to be informed of progress achieved. They also encouraged stakeholders' contributions to assist in providing data needed to improve quality of scientific assessments.

As a result of this ongoing dialogue, ICES is developing their own thinking on data deficient stocks and is looking at the different types of data deficiencies, moving away from the limited definition established by the Commission.

The Chairman said that recognition and support perceived from the scientific world to the NWWRAC initiative should serve as a stimulus to keep up the momentum and continue with this work in collaboration with ICES and national scientific institutes.

Sean O'Donoghue added that another output from the MIRAC meeting was that ICES would try to arrange training courses for the RACs designed to present an understanding of the basics or fundamentals of stock assessments (e.g. fishing effort, recruitments, SSB). These courses would be of 2-3 days duration and might start before the July meetings, where the ICES annual advice for Atlantic demersal stocks will be presented.

8. Progress report on external meetings with NWWRAC participation

8.1. Joint RAC Conference on Mixed Fisheries

Barrie Deas informed the Executive Committee that responsibility for organising this event had been delegated to the Danish Fishermen Association (DFA) that took over the duties of the steering committee. In terms of work, only one short phone conference took place with meeting organizers since summer 2011. Following successive delays, the 30th and 31st of May were proposed as dates for this meeting.

In terms of work programme, although the structure of the meeting seemed to be clear at the start (i.e. to follow the model of the Cod Symposium), there was a sudden change to a more generic approach, which pursued a different direction to that agreed by the NWWRAC membership.

Many members thought that the NWWRAC should urge the DFA that the Steering Committee be reinstated and that a follow-up meeting takes place immediately to agree a meeting structure that takes into account regional specificities by fisheries/areas (i.e. Baltic Sea, North Sea and North Western Waters).

Many members shared their frustration that the organization of this meeting seemed to have stalled. Members retained their view that a high profile conference would be very useful to develop thinking on mixed fisheries linked to the development of multi annual management plans.

Action: The Secretariat will contact the Danish Fishermen's Association (coordinators of the initiative) to request information about the state of play in relation to the proposed Joint RAC seminar on the issue of mixed fisheries. The NWWRAC will urge the DFA to reinstate the steering committee and set up a follow-up meeting to agree the meeting structure and give it a regional dimension.

8.2. Workshop on Control and compliance in western waters

The Secretariat (Alexandre Rodríguez) provided an update on the work carried out by the NWWRAC since the decision adopted by the Executive Committee in October 2011, whereby it supported the recommendation made by the Steering group to organise a half-day technical meeting on this matter within the ordinary schedule of meetings in 2012.

The NWWRAC Secretariat participated in an EFCA Advisory Board meeting in February 2012. Following the mandate given by the ExCom, the decision was communicated and an invitation was made to the EFCA Executive Director, Pascal Savouret, as well as EFCA officials to participate in this technical meeting that would take place in July. Mr. Savouret thanked the NWWRAC for the invitation and he personally committed to attend together with EFCA colleagues as observers. The EFCA will provide presentations on the activities of the Agency and work priorities for future, with a specific insight in the following topics: report on preliminary outcomes of first multispecies JDPs for Pelagic Species in Western Waters; and development of the Regional Control Areas.

Action: The steering group composed of: Sean O'Donoghue, Barrie Deas, Jacques Pichon and Hugo González will meet to draft the terms of reference (i.e. key objectives, target audience, speakers, draft work programme) for this meeting.

NWWRAC Executive Committee

Paris, 29 February 2012

16 of 19

The Secretariat will submit a formal invitation to the EFCA and concerned Member States to participate in this meeting and will also arrange the logistics.

8.3. Update on the proposal to form an Inter-RAC group of RAC Chairs

The Chairman and the Executive Secretary explained that a first meeting between RAC Chairmen to exchange views on policy issues took place in the fringes of a coordination meeting between the RACs and the Commission held on the 21st of February 2012 in Brussels. Following the instructions and decision adopted by the Executive Committee, the NWWRAC did not participate at this meeting.

After a brief discussion, the Executive Committee agreed that the North Western Waters RAC Chairman and/or Vice Chairs should engage in dialogue and participate in any informal exchange of views between the RACs. However, the Executive clearly stated that the remit of this group must remain at this level, and that it would have no authority or legitimacy to take decisions on behalf of the individual RACs. NWWRAC representatives to this group will also have a duty to formally report to members the discussions and outcomes of this group.

Actions:

Bertie Armstrong (as NWWRAC Chair) and Iwan Ball (as NWWRAC Vice-Chair representing the other groups of interest) will participate informally in forthcoming discussions with other RAC Chairmen and will report back to the Executive Committee on discussions and outcomes. It was made clear that they will have a restricted mandate and cannot commit on behalf of the North Western Waters on policy or any other issue.

The NWWRAC Secretariat will ask the Baltic Sea RAC (coordinators of this initiative) to provide a copy of the report of the first meeting in order to keep track with ongoing discussions, and will request the terms of reference to define the scope and functions of this group.

9. MAIA Project: a network of Marine Protected Areas in the Atlantic Arc

Amandine Eynaudi, project coordinator from the French Agency on MPAs, provided a detailed presentation on the MAIA Project to develop an MPA network of managers and stakeholders in the Atlantic Arc. Ms. Eynaudi explained that MAIA is a 3 year trans-national project involving 9 partners from 4 countries (i.e. UK, France, Spain and Portugal). It has a wide geographic area, corresponding to marine regions (and sub-regions) as defined in the Marine Spatial Framework Directive.



One of the key objectives of MAIA project is to establish formal ways of cooperation with stakeholders for the development of management measures for offshore MPAs. To this effect, a series of technical workshops have been set up to encourage stakeholders input and participation, and also several presentations have been made at different RACs and fishing industry organisations.

The Chair thanked Ms. Eynaoudi for her presentation and thought that it was worthy of careful consideration by all the members. The NWWRAC would be willing to participate in future meetings, but the extent of collaboration or engagement of this project remains to be defined.

The presentation is available for consultation on the NWWRAC website⁷.

There is also a dedicated MAIA website that includes, among other features, a GIS database, a document database and a private collaborative space (www.maia-network.org).

Action: Ms. Eynaoudi will prepare a formal letter requesting the involvement and collaboration of the North Western Waters RAC as a partner of this project. The NWWRAC Secretariat will circulate the letter among all members and the ExCom will provide a response in due course.

10. Concluding remarks by the Chair

The Chairman, Bertie Armstrong, thanked all participants for their attendance, CNPMEM for hosting this meeting and the interpretation team for their excellent work.

The Chairman closed the meeting on time at 13:00 h.

-END-

⁷ Presentation available in the corresponding meeting site of the NWWRAC website – Direct link: www.nwwrac.org/admin/publication/upload/Presentation_MAIA_Project_NWWRAC_29022012_AE.pdf

ANNEX I. LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEMBERS		
First Name	Last Name	Organisation
Bertie	Armstrong	NWWRAC Chairman
Víctor	Badiola	Organización de Productores de Ondarroa - CEPESCA
Iwan	Ball	World Wildlife Fund
Emiel	Brouckaert	Rederscentrale
Kara	Brydson	RSPB-Birdlife International
Alan	Coghill	Scottish Fishermen's Federation
Luc	Corbisier	Stichting voor Duurzame Visserij Ontwikkeling
John	Crudden	European Anglers' Alliance
Bruno	Dachicourt	European Transport Federation (ETF)
Barrie	Deas	National Federation of Fishermen's Organisation
Anton	Dekker	Dutch Fisheries Organisation
Cécile	Fouquet	European Bureau for Conservation and Development
André	Gueguen	Comité National de Pêches Maritimes
Eduardo	Míguez	European Association of Ports and Auctions
Sean	O'Donoghue	Killybegs Fishermen's Organisation
Eibhlin	O'Sullivan	Irish South & West Fish PO
Jacques	Pichon	Association Nationale Organisations Producteurs
Dominique	Thomas	France Pêche Durable et Responsable
John	Woodlock	Irish Seal Sanctuary
OBSERVERS		
Pascale	Baelde	Sea Matters
Alain	Biseau	IFREMER
Debbie	Crockard	MCSUK - Seas at Risk
John	Daly	Irish Seal Sanctuary
Amandine	Eynaudi	Agence des Aires Marines Protégées – MAIA Project
Paul	Francoise	FFSPM
Robert	Griffin	DG MARE – European Commission
Daniel	Lefèvre	CRPMEM Basse Normandie – WG3 Chair
Jesús A.	Lourido García	Puerto de Celeiro S.A. – WG2 Chair
John	Lynch	Irish Fishermen's Organisation
Eamon	Mangan	French Ministry for Food, Agriculture and Fisheries
Laurent	Markovic	DG MARE - European Commission
Francis	O'Donnell	Irish Fish Producers' Organisation
Jim	Portus	South West Fish Producers Organisation
Paul	Trebilcock	Cornish FPO
SECRETARIAT		
Conor	Nolan	Executive Secretary
Alexandre	Rodríguez	Executive Assistant – Policy Issues - Rapporteur
Joanna	McGrath	Executive Assistant – Administration and Finances