

## North Western Waters Regional Advisory Council

### REPORT

#### Working Group 4 – Irish Sea - ICES Area VIIa Dublin, 4<sup>th</sup> July 2012

Chairman: Alan McCulla  
Rapporteur: John Crudden

#### 1. Welcome

The Chairman, Alan McCulla, opened the meeting at 09:00h.

- Apologies: Jacques Pichon (ANOP).
- Introduction: The chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting. He mentioned the unusual position of holding the meeting first in the schedule of WG meetings rather than last which resulted from a decision of the last Executive Committee meeting. He welcomed the new rotary system for WG meetings established by the Secretariat and noted a larger than normal attendance at the meeting.

The list of participants to the meeting is shown in Annex I.

- Adoption of the agenda:  
The agenda as circulated was adopted without additions or amendments.
- Adoption of the report from the last meeting:  
The report from the last WG4 meeting held in Paris on 28<sup>th</sup> February 2012 was adopted without comment.

#### 2. Mixed Fisheries Management Plan for the Irish Sea

The Chairman briefed the meeting on the proposed Focus Group meeting taking place on 5<sup>th</sup> July. He briefly introduced the document from external consultants Poseidon Ltd.<sup>1</sup> prepared for Anglo North Irish Fish Producers Organisation (ANIFPO). Although it is specifically relevant for the Northern Ireland fleets it could be used as a basis to kick-start the plan for the Irish Sea.

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<sup>1</sup> [http://www.nwwrac.org/admin/publication/upload/Irish\\_Sea\\_EAFM\\_Project\\_Proposal\\_April2012.pdf](http://www.nwwrac.org/admin/publication/upload/Irish_Sea_EAFM_Project_Proposal_April2012.pdf)

### Comments from the floor

Johnny Woodlock said that we must get the Irish Sea into a healthy functioning ecosystem before we try for an ecosystem based approach. There is a problem of imbalances in the trophic chain in the Irish Sea and this is one of the priority issues that need to be looked at.

Sean O'Donoghue agreed that the document was a good basis but the over-riding issue was the state of the cod stocks. Trying to break the cycle of decline of cod means we will have to plan on a mixed fishery basis. He suggested that the Focus Group should be broadened to include the West of Scotland.

The Chairman said that mixed fisheries and multi species Ecosystem Management Plans were coming as was evident from the advice presented by ICES however the Commission replied that it was still being advised in that regard. It welcomed any assistance the RAC could give on the Irish Sea.

## **3. Review of the Cod Recovery Plan for the Irish Sea**

### 3.1 Short-term Review: Interim measures for improving the implementation of the Cod Plan

Sean O'Donoghue introduced the subject in his capacity as Chairman of the Cod Focus Group. The NWWRAC Focus Group on cod had proposed a number of initiatives in the past six months. The RAC had submitted an updated position paper which covered the key articles that needed amendments of the Regulation 1342/2008, namely articles 9,11,12,14 and 17. Articles 9 and 12 were highlighted as the two causing the biggest problems for the fishermen (automatic -25% reduction in TAC and limitation of effort).

The Commission has organised a seminar on fishing effort for the 5<sup>th</sup> of July at the same time as the NWWRAC was holding an Executive Committee meeting. The Commission was criticised for this but had agreed to meet NWWRAC representatives separately on 13<sup>th</sup> July to discuss both short term and long term initiatives. Finally, STECF has been carrying out a review work of articles 11-13.

### 3.2 Outcome of ICES WKROUND

Pieter Jan Schon gave a summary of the outcomes of ICES WKROUND and stated that the benchmark process is not finalized until next year, and the NWWRAC is welcome to provide input to this process. Sean O'Donoghue expressed disappointment with the result of the benchmarking process. The industry perspective does not match the scientific perspective that it seems to be "*nothing but juvenile cod in the Irish Sea*". The bench-mark process is not finished and needs further work next year.

### 3.3 Outcomes of STECF Scoping Meeting (June 2012)

The outcomes from the deliberations on the five articles proposed by the NWWRAC are not out yet. There was an impression given at the meeting that the co-decision procedure did not apply in this case and the outcomes would be published soon. The Commission initially suggested that the original intent was to apply minor changes to the current Cod Management Plan but that seems to be not the case anymore.

Mike Park made the point that it needed to be put strongly to the Commission that major and proactive changes are needed to revert the cycle of decline for cod stocks.

Barrie Deas said that neither the TAC or effort regime is addressing cod mortality. At the last Focus Group meeting held in Dublin, the members reinforced the need for dramatic change in the trend of cod stocks, with the case of Western Channel Sole as reference. Seven principles were identified together and extensive dialogue with relevant scientists was encouraged in order to set a positive programme of actions.

The Chairman reminded the Commission that an amendment to the Cod Management Plan had been expected earlier this year and now seemed to be delayed. The Commission was unable to give a firm date but said it was “*imminent*”. This sparked a debate as to whether such amendments would be the subject to co-decision. Industry representatives were of the view that it would thus meaning that agreement might not be reached until 2014. The Commission disagreed with the industry views stating that it was possible to adopt amendments by co-decision in short time if there was will from the Parliament and the Council; and that Commission policy is to make workable proposals that can be applied in the short-term.

### 3.4 Proposed way forward

**Action 1: Ask the Executive Committee to seek urgent clarification and a clear timeframe from the EU Commission on what process is to be used in relation to the amendment of the Cod Management Plan (Reg. 1342/2008) and if it will be submitted to the co-decision procedure.**

**Action 2: Ask the Executive Committee to organise, subject to available funding, two Focus Group meetings on West of Scotland (ICES Area VI) and Irish Sea (ICES Area VII) Cod, respectively, from a mixed fishery perspective.**

**Action 3: Ask the Executive Committee to work up a new initiative or concept, to include the two eco-regions of the West of Scotland (ICES Area VI) and Irish Sea (ICES Area VII) to “break the cycle of decline” of Cod.**

#### **4. Management measures for Nephrops in sub-area VII**

Eibhlín O’Sullivan introduced this agenda item by putting a number of questions to the European Commission representative. She asked if a request had been made to STECF for a review of the seasonal closure on the Porcupine Bank and if a decision had yet been made on whether the Commission intended to propose an area-based or functional unit management for Nephrops in 2013, as mentioned in page 9 of the Commission’s Communication on Fishing Opportunities for 2013. The Commission representative replied that he was not aware of any request to STECF in this regard and that no decision had yet been made on the various management options.

Industry representatives argued that management by functional unit especially in the Porcupine was displacing effort and putting considerable pressure on other areas/units. The Chairman reminded that, within the last two years, significant reductions in effort have occurred in TR2 fleet and introduction of new technical measures to improve selectivity and reduce discards.

**Action 4: Ask the Executive Committee to request clarification from the EU Commission if it intends to manage Nephrops by area or by functional unit in 2013.**

**Action 5: Ask the Executive Committee to request clarification from the EU Commission if it has made a request from ICES/STECF to evaluate the seasonal closure in the Porcupine (FU 16)**

#### **5. Data deficiency issues for stocks assessments**

##### 5.1 Report on work progress from WG4 data coordinators

Barrie Deas gave a brief report on work progress to date. The big picture is that there is very good dialogue with ICES (e.g. MIRAC) and it now has provided quantitative advice for data-poor stocks. ICES would be keen to meet again with the NWWRAC during the year to assess progress. Each of the data co-ordinators gave updates on the situation with their allocated stocks. The updates will be included in the report to be submitted to ICES by the end of July.

Pieter-Jan Schon stressed that, for the case of cod and haddock stocks, it would be desirable that the fishing industry might provide additional data they might have ahead of next year’s benchmark for both stocks.

## 5.2 Definition of a Fully Documented Fishery (FDF)

Barrie Deas gave a briefing on the draft position paper presented for this meeting. This is a simple paper for discussion and makes the point that CCTV cameras are not appropriate for all fleets and métiers. There is a need to look for other mechanisms to cross check that vessels are not stepping out of line across the various fleets and FDF was being used as a term for just TV cameras on board. It presents some ideas about the way we should go forward. Further discussions will take place on developing a more detailed approach within the Cod Focus Group meetings.

## 5.3 Collaboration with ICES WKDDRACS

**Action 6: ask the Executive Committee to request ICES to have a coordination meeting to improve data deficiencies.**

## **6. Technical Measures in Western Waters: Irish Sea**

### 6.1 Discussion on the Swedish Grid

Alan McCulla briefed the meeting on the history of effort control in the Northern Irish TR2 fleet in the Irish Sea. The final report is not available but in progress. The focus has been on amending the gear. An alternative to the Swedish Grid has been the “box trawl” which meets the requirements to be exempt from effort control. The focus is back on the Commission to see if this also solves the requirements of the Cod Management Plan. All the steps have been met in terms of cod avoidance from the industry perspective and it is up to the Commission to respond.

The Commission replied that it was still evaluating the alternative but it welcomed all selectivity initiatives coming from the fishing industry and/or the RACs.

Johnny Woodlock asked about the survivability of escapees from the Swedish grid. Sean O’Donoghue said that there was huge cost implications to evaluate these.

**Action 7: Ask the Executive Committee to call for the inclusion of the evaluation of the survivability of escaped species from grids and square mesh panels in future trials.**

## **7. Update on Irish Sea MCZ’s: state of play**

Barrie Deas gave an update on progress. The network of various sites in the Irish Sea is of great relevance to the members of this RAC. Further designations are coming down the line with potential restrictions on fishing from complete closure to gear restrictions.



Consultations are now taking place with non-UK organisations. Most protected zones will concentrate on mud habitats which could be a big issue for future displacement.

## **8. Close of the meeting**

With no other business to discuss the Chairman thanked everyone for their participation and closed the meeting at 10:55 h.

**-END-**

## **ANNEX I. LIST OF PARTICIPANTS**

<b>MEMBERS</b>		
<b><u>Name</u></b>	<b><u>Surname/s</u></b>	<b><u>Organization</u></b>
Alan	McCulla	ANIFPO – <b>WG4 Chairman</b>
Thomas	Bryan-Brown	Manx Fish Producers’ Organisation – <b>WG4 Vice Chairman</b>
John	Crudden	EAA – <b>WG4 Rapporteur</b>
Bertie	Armstrong	NWWRAC Chairman
Iwan	Ball	World Wildlife Fund
Luc	Corbisier	Stichting voor Duurzame Visserij
André	Gueguen	OPOB France
Barrie	Deas	NFFO UK
John	Hermse	Scallop Association UK
John	Lynch	Irish Fishermen’s Organisation
Francis	O’Donnell	Irish Fish Producers Organisation
Sean	O’Donoghue	Killybegs Fishermen’s Organisation
Caitlín	Uí Aodha	Irish South and East Fish PO
John	Woodlock	Irish Seal Sanctuary

<b>OBSERVERS</b>		
<b><u>Name</u></b>	<b><u>Surname/s</u></b>	<b><u>Organization</u></b>
Emiel	Brouckaert	Rederscentrale Belgium
René-Pierre	Chever	CDPMEM 29 France
Alan	Coghill	Scottish Fishermen's Federation
Juan Carlos	Corrás Arias	Pescagalicia-Arpega-Obarco
John	Daly	Irish Seal Sanctuary
Ramón	De la Figuera Morales	Member State - Spain
Helen	Dobby	ICES/ Marine Lab
Paul	Duane	SFPA Ireland
Grant	Fulton	SFPA Ireland
David	Gatt	SWFPA Scotland
Marc	Ghiglia	NWWRAC President
Roy	Griffin	European Commission
William	Hazel	Coastwatch Ireland
Laurent	Markovic	European Commission
Kevin	McDonnell	WSFPO Scotland
Mike	Park	SWFPA Scotland
Brendan	Prince	Independent Consultant
José Luis	Otero	Lonja de la Coruña Spain



<b>OBSERVERS</b>		
<b><u>Name</u></b>	<b><u>Surname/s</u></b>	<b><u>Organization</u></b>
Eibhlín	O'Sullivan	Irish South & West FPO
Jane	Sandell	SFO – WG1 Chairman
Marina	Santurtun	AZTI Tecnalia Spain
Pieter-Jan	Schon	AFBI Northern Ireland
William	Stewart	European Fisheries Control Agency - EFCA
Paul	Trebilcock	Cornish Fish PO
Joel	Vigneau	ICES / IFREMER

<b>NWWRAC SECRETARIAT</b>		
Conor	Nolan	Executive Secretary
Joanna	McGrath	Executive Assistant, Administration and Finances
Alexandre	Rodríguez	Executive Assistant, Policy Coordinator