

**Draft Minutes**  
North Western Waters Regional Advisory Council  
(NWW RAC)

**Working Group 2**  
**Western Approaches and Celtic Sea (ICES VII except a,d&e)**

**Thursday 25 January 2007**

**1500hrs to 1830hrs**  
**Bilbao**

**Adoption of Agenda**

The agenda was adopted by consensus.

**Adoption of Minutes of the Last Meeting**

There was some clarification required regarding the deep water gill net discussions. It was recognised that there had been no consensus reached on this issue at the last working group meeting. It was agreed that Member States and individual organisations would make their own representations to the Commission and/or the NWW RAC Executive Committee as no agreement had been reached by Working Group 2 (WG2).

Following this clarification the minutes were adopted.

**Review of December Council**

There was a wide ranging discussion on the outcomes of the December Fisheries Council. On the whole, WG2 members were satisfied with the TAC levels regarding Monkfish, Hake and Megrim. It was also acknowledged that the Commission's declaration that the hake recovery plan would be transitioned to a long term management plan due to the improvement of the stock was a positive move.

There was disappointment expressed at the Commission and Council handling of the deepwater gill net issue. The regulation was poorly drafted and nets were only permitted down to a depth of 600m not 800m as appeared scientifically justified. There were further concerns over technical aspects of the regulation such as gear marking and gear configuration issues which had not taken into account the practicalities and safety of working in this type of fishery.

Celtic Sea Cod was raised as an issue of major concern. It was noted that there had been a reduction in the TAC which would cause problems for some Member States. It was also noted that there was not an extension of the days at sea regime in to the Celtic Sea for 2007 which was positive.

However, there was a declaration from the Commission that the Celtic Sea would be included in the Cod Recovery Review during 2007 and it was clear that it is the Commissions intention to extend the effort control into the Celtic Sea in 2008.

There followed a wide ranging debate and it was agreed that this important issue must be addressed as soon as possible. It was agreed that WG2 Must engage early with the scientists and the Commission to develop proposals that could form a very strong submission to avoid unnecessary and draconian measures imposed from Brussels. It was agreed that a small focus group would be established to take this issue forward and develop a WG2 position ahead of the Cod Symposium to be held in Edinburgh on 8 & 9 March.

Particular reference should be made to uncertainty in the assessment, the existing measure already taken by the industry along with a thorough evaluation of them, the wider management area (ICES VIIb-k and VII not just VIIfg) and the implications for effort control in the ultra-mixed fisheries in the Celtic Sea.

It was agreed that the make up of the focus group would reflect that of the original Celtic Sea Cod group that proposed the existing 'Trevose Closure'. It was agreed that the meeting would be held in London on the 6 February and would be open for others wishing to contribute. The venue was to be confirmed by the secretariat.

### **Presentation on Long-term Management Project**

WG2 received a presentation from Steve Mackinson from, CEFAS (UK). A copy is attached for information. This was a particularly sensitive issue and a broad range of views and concerns were expressed.

WG2 recognised the importance of this issue, however concerns were expressed about the compatibility of mixed fisheries and MSY, as well as what exactly the definition of a long term management plan was.

Steve Mackinson explained that long-term management plans looked into the future with a view to sustaining the health of the stocks and the fisheries dependent on them, attempting to reconcile the needs of the fisheries with the long term sustainability of the ecosystem.

It was explained that the work presented was simply a first step and primarily involved data collection and organisation of that data to enable further analyses of how to move forward.

There were serious concerns raised by Spanish representatives who felt the project should encompass all Member State's data from all of their scientific and fishing industry establishments.

The concerns raised by the Spanish representatives were taken very seriously and it was recognised that without complete transparency and mutual respect this issue could not be tackled properly by the NWW RAC.

It was made clear that it was indeed the intention to be open to all interested parties and that it had only been started in UK because DEFRA had made funds available but that it was completely open and indeed it was essential that all member states were involved.

The DEFRA representative agreed that they would contact other Member State administrations to involve them in the process.

WG2 agreed that this project should be supported and moved forward by all interested parties.

### **Review of Proposed Closures under the Habitat Directive**

WG2 noted the paper presented by the Commission (attached for information) along with the request for response by the end of February 2007 on the closures.

WG2 felt that the paper was not presented well and lacked clarity. It was agreed that the Commission should be required to give more time to consider the paper and that further clarification and explanation was required.

The objectives were not clear to WG2. Issues regarding oil and gas extraction were raised as well as the economic and social importance of fishing grounds identified in the proposals. It was further noted that any new Commission regulation must have an associated impact assessment and it was agreed that this should be requested from the Commission.

It was agreed that the Commission should be compelled to attend the next meeting of WG2 to present on this issue.

### **Management Measures for deep-water gillnets**

Once again, there was disappointment expressed at the Commission and Councils handling of the deepwater gill net issue. The regulation was poorly drafted and nets were only permitted down to a depth of 600m not 800m as scientifically justified. There were further concerns over technical aspects of the regulation such as gear marking and gear configuration issues which had not taken into account the practicalities and safety of working this type of gear.

It was agreed that there was a need for further extensive trials on board of commercial vessels operating nets in depths of water between 600m and 800m to establish the facts in these fisheries, with particular regard to by-catch and gear losses. It was felt that this would enable the proper framing of appropriate management measures. It was agreed that the trials should be independent and trans-national to allow complete transparency with, an agreed protocol and time frame. The outcome of the trials could not be pre-empted. WG 2 felt the NWW RAC Executive Committee should consider this item as a matter of priority at its next meeting.

### **Discussion of Control Issues for the Celtic Sea**

WG2 received and noted a presentation from the new European Control Agency. (Presentation attached for information).

### **Introduction to Invest In Fish SW Project**

WG2 was given a presentation by Heather Squires (project manager) from Invest In Fish South West (UK) as an introduction to the project. Members of the Working Group noted the progress of the project with interest. (Presentation attached for information).

### **IMAGE Project**

The Secretariat informed WG2 that the IMAGE project had requested that a representative from the NWW RAC attend some of their meetings. Members felt that the project as presented was too abstract and requested more information. (Paper attached for information).

### **Any Other Business**

There was no further business.

**Paul Trebilcock**  
**February 2007**