



North Western Waters Regional Advisory Council

REPORT

Focus Group – Mixed Fisheries Management Plan for the Irish Sea (VIIa) Georges Hall, Dublin Castle Wednesday 26th March 2014

Chairman: Alan McCulla
Rapporteur: John Crudden

1. Welcome by the Chairman

The Chairman, Alan McCulla, opened the meeting at 16:00 and welcomed all attendees. He said that the agenda as circulated was largely redundant and he proposed that items 2 and 3 should be deleted as the relevant scientists were absent at another meeting and there was no new information from the Commission due to the institutional impasse regarding Management Plans.

- Introductions:
No introductions were deemed necessary as the participants were already known to each other. The list of participants is set out in Annex 1.
- Apologies:
Apologies were received from Tom Bryan-Brown (Manx FPO), Luc Corbisier (SDVO Belgium), and John Hermse (Scallop Association UK). It was also mentioned that Tom Bryan-Brown has moved to a new job in a Scottish fisheries organisation and has resigned to his post as Vice-Chair of the Irish Sea Working Group.
- Adoption of the Agenda:
The agenda as circulated was adopted with the deletion of items 2 and 3.
- Adoption of the Report of the last meeting:
The report from the last Focus Group meeting of 13th September 2013 was adopted without change.

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4. Development of a proposal for an Irish Sea Multi-Annual Management Plan

Alan McCulla referred to the presentation delivered by Norman Graham, Marine Institute, to the Celtic Sea Focus Group earlier. He was impressed with progress being made by the DAMARA Project and suggested it could be adopted to suit the Irish Sea and the West of Scotland Mixed Fisheries Management Plans.

Sean O'Donoghue reminded the meeting that it had been agreed to wind up the Focus Group for the West of Scotland and perhaps we should consider that option for this Focus Group as well. Michael Keatinge and Alan McCulla had worked very hard since last summer to deliver the resources for the Irish Sea project. It was disappointing that the Member States involved did not engage to deliver the means necessary.

Michael Keatinge (Director of the NWWAC and BIM) said that he was disappointed that the Member States rejected funding to deliver the project that was in train for the Celtic Sea and Irish Sea. Management planning is now laid out in the new CFP and it will be left to the Member States to deliver Management Plans through Regionalisation and if they can't deliver it will be done by the Commission. All those affected by these management plans should be part of the process. The approach this AC proposed would have delivered the solution.

He was impressed with the DAMARA project. It could be easily adopted to suit the Irish Sea with little extra funding. All that was needed was someone to do the deskwork to pull together all the various strands of the Management Plan. If we can figure out a way to get the funding for a project officer we could piggyback on the DAMARA project.

Sean O'Donoghue put forward a proposal that we should dissolve this Focus Group and subsume this strand of work into Working Group 4 to give it a higher priority with more focus. Emiel Brouckaert supported the proposal.

Alan McCulla said that there was a lot of work already done and we should not just wait about to see what happens. He referred to the Poseidon study funded by Seafish UK on the Nephrops fishery in the Irish Sea. It could potentially be closed down after 10 days because of the by-catch of whiting. There had been a lot of gear changes done to avoid discards and there is now a lot of data that needs compiling. He made the proposal that the AC should make contact with the Member States to find out what their intentions are.

Emiel Brouckaert said that we cannot afford to lose the impetus at this stage; a way has to be found to get around this.



Brendan Price said that it was disappointing that the Member States could not find a way to fund the project. The Irish Sea is a small and very manageable project that could be bolted on to a larger project.

The Commission suggested that there may be other opportunities for funding such a project but at the moment the development of an Irish Sea multiannual plan was not seen as a priority by the Commission. It was therefore up to the AC to convince the Commission and the administrations of the relevant Member States that it is a priority for the AC.

Francis O'Donnell proposed that each member organisation of the NWWAC should make an addition contribution of 500 euro to fund the project officer.

Sean O'Donoghue proposed that the project officer should be employed to work across all geographic areas of the AC not just the Irish Sea. We cannot simply do nothing until the EMFF funding comes on stream at the end of this year or early next year. He supported the proposal from Francis O'Donnell.

Conor Nolan (Executive Secretary of the NWWAC) said that there are sufficient funds available in the NWWAC budget to fund work on the project until September. He proposed that a job description be drafted as soon as possible. We should reflect again and review progress at the next meeting of WG 4 in Edinburgh in July.

Michael Keatinge praised the proposal coming from the NWWAC members. It promised an element of hope to address our immediate problems but he cautioned that the Focus Group had not agreed a formal arrangement to pay the additional 500 euro per organisation.

Bertie Armstrong (Chairman of the NWWAC) said that we had established the need for the project and the willingness to progress it. We should start immediately to look for someone to work on it. He cautioned that not all organisations around the table might be in a position to contribute financially.

The following actions were agreed:

- Ask the Executive Committee of the NWWAC to dissolve the Focus Group on a Mixed Fisheries Management Plan for the Irish Sea and integrate its work into Working Group 4.
- Ask the Executive Committee of the NWWAC to accept the invitation from the DAMARA project for closer involvement and co-operation by the NWWAC.

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- Secretariat to prepare a job description for a Project Officer.
- Secretariat to liaise with the Commission and the Member States to seek out a better understanding and a long term solution to project funding issues.

5. UK Plans for a Natura 2000 Fisheries Management Workshop

Tom Blasdale (JNCC) delivered a presentation on updates to fisheries management in 2 sites in UK waters in the Irish Sea, namely Pisces Reef and Croker Carbonate slabs. Defra has revised its approach to fisheries management in Natura 2000 sites. In relation to sites outside the 12 nautical miles these will be managed under the Common Fisheries Policy.

In relation to these 2 sites they have been found to be much larger than previously thought. They are sited entirely in UK waters. The Pisces Reef supports a large Nephrops fishery while the Croker Slabs affects mainly static gears. Tom confirmed that the Belgian beam trawling activities are not overlapping either of the sites. The MMO proposes to host a consultation meeting either in Belfast or Dublin towards the end of April. A formal invitation will be sent to the AC later.

Alan McCulla brought it to the attention of the meeting that the Pisces Reef was already a MCZ candidate and asked what extra benefit was to be got from Natura 2000 designation.

Tom Blasdale said that MCZ designation was a lengthy process and the UK administration could not wait for that to happen. There is no fisheries management there right now and needs some form of management to make sure nothing is damaged.

Johnny Woodlock (Irish Seal Sanctuary) sought reassurance that all MCZs and MPAs under Natura 2000 would not become “No Take Zones” when the Marine Strategy Framework Directive comes into force.

Alex Rodriguez and Michael Keatinge informed the meeting that BIM now had new conference facilities and it would be willing to host the workshop if needed.

6. Closing

The Chairman thanked the participants for their contributions to a very worthwhile and constructive meeting.

With no other business to discuss he closed the meeting at 18:00.



ANNEX I. LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

NWWAC MEMBERS		
<u>Name</u>	<u>Surname</u>	<u>Organisation</u>
Alan	McCulla	ANIFPO – Chair
John	Crudden	European Anglers Alliance – Rapporteur
Bertie	Armstrong	NWWRAC Chairman
Emiel	Brouckaert	Rederscentrale Belgium
Barrie	Deas	NFFO UK
John	Lynch	Irish Fishermen’s Organisation
Francis	O’Donnell	IFPO Ireland
Sean	O’Donoghue	Killybegs Fishermen Organisation
Eibhlín	O’Sullivan	Irish South & West FPO
Caitlín	Uí Aodha	Irish South & East FPO Ireland
Liane	Veitch	ClientEarth
John	Woodlock	Irish Seal Sanctuary

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NWWAC OBSERVERS		
<u>Name</u>	<u>Surname/s</u>	<u>Organization</u>
Tom	Blasdale	JNCC
Isobel	Bloor	Bangor University
René-Pierre	Chever	CDPMEM29
Richard	Curtin	Bord Iascaigh Mhara
John	Daly	Irish Seal Sanctuary
Siobhán	Egan	BirdWatch Ireland
Iain	Glasgow	DEFRA – United Kingdom
Michael	Keatinge	Bord Iascaigh Mhara - Ireland
Laurent	Markovic	DG MARE - European Commission
Sean	Murray	DAFM – MS Ireland
Stéphanie	Newman	Institute EU Environmental Policy
Brendan	Price	Wildlife Consultant
Glenn	Quelch	European Fisheries Control Agency
Brendan	Price	Irish Seal Sanctuary
Dominic	Rihan	DG MARE – European Commission
Cathrine	Schrimer	The Pew Charitable Trusts



NWWAC SECRETARIAT		
Conor	Nolan	NWWAC Executive Secretary
Joanna	McGrath	Executive Assistant, Administration and Finances
Alex	Rodríguez	Executive Assistant, Policy and Communication

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