



Minutes

Working Group 4

Irish Sea (Vlla)

Conference Room 01, Victoria Quay, Edinburgh.

Wednesday 8 July 2015

9:00 - 11:00

1. Welcome by the acting Chair (Francis O'Donnell)

- Apologies received; Helen McLachlan (WWF), John Hermse (Scallop Association)
Welcome to new member representative: Hugo Boyle for Irish South & East FPO (Caitlín Uí Aodh has stepped down). The chair also thanked Sean O' Donoghue for chairing the last meeting as he was on annual leave
- The agenda is agreed as drafted.
- Adoption of the report from the last meeting (Bilbao, 23 April)
Two comments to the minutes were made, both on page 4:
Paragraph 4: Liane Veitch indicated that the survival of small Nephrops was lower than average and that this needed to be taken into considerations if high survival exemptions are being sought to deal with unwanted catch of small nephrops.
Paragraph 7: John Woodlock indicated that he did not mention herring, and that juvenile *gadoids* make up the majority of discards, not only *cod*. The reference to 'these fish' should be to whiting or cod in this sentence.
These comments will be taken up – the rest of the minutes are agreed as drafted.

2. Administration

A new rapporteur needs to be appointed for the group but unfortunately no volunteers were found. The chair remarked that with the busy times ahead (the benchmark in the Irish Sea which ICES will start in September, the landing obligation itself and Multi Annual Plans). The chair spent considerable time attempting to get a rapporteur with no success. It would be a great help to get assistance from a WG member. The search will continue.

3. Multi Annual Plans – Information and development

The chair informed the group that the intention of this item was to have scientists from various MS present the results of work done on for example technical measure trials in the Irish Sea and other areas to assist in the development of a MAP for the Irish Sea. Not many could attend due to overlaps



with other meetings such as the PAC and an STECF meeting. Ronan Cosgrove (BIM) was not available to attend at the last moment due to domestic circumstances. The chair remarked that the lack of presenters was unfortunate but that we had plenty of issues to consider.

Emiel Brouckaert gave an update since the Bilbao meeting on sole – He noted an improvement in data collection, but it remains insufficient for detailed analysis of the fisheries due to a lack of geographical and temporal spread. He further remarked that older sole was still found by ILVO on all fishing grounds in the Irish Sea, even with the low recent recruitment and the assessment does not reflect this. This will be further worked on by ILVO to understand this anomaly and try to understand where they come from. A changed spawning ground could explain this. Observation trips on Irish Sea fishing trips will continue in 2015 focusing on these questions. For 2016 and beyond Belgium is looking for EMFF funding on improving surveys. The Irish survey mentioned in the discussion at the last meeting is not aimed at demersal fish so this will be deleted from the list. The idea is to work more on genetics. Several different selectivity measures are in use by Belgian fisheries. There is the 30 cm mesh size panel in the back of the net and the extension piece with mesh size increased from 80 to 120 mm which was evaluated by STECF and approved on a preliminary basis as a tool to avoid juvenile sole. Many trials are ongoing, among which the use of dual codends, and benthos release panels with ‘pulse-gear’ (only on scientific vessels for now). The Belgian industry would like to review the survival of plaice discards, for which a project is running. Most plaice stocks are in a good state whilst subject to extensive discarding. Survival exemption is a priority for Belgium in the implementation of the demersal Landing Obligation. It would be a pity to be faced with a LO that would increase the mortality for this species.

The chair opened a discussion on the socio economic impacts of the landing obligation and referred in particular to the simulation trials carried out by BIM, and in particular the potential chokes in the Irish Sea such as juvenile Gadoids and juvenile Nephrops. He gave a short overview of the trials undertaken. Conor Nolan advised the group to log onto the BIM website where the published reports could be accessed. BIM research results can be found (see [here](#)). Eibhlin O Sullivan advised the group in relation to trials commonly known as the ‘Challenge trials’ which are ongoing. Skippers are challenged to make choices in real time such as moving location to avoid unwanted catches. The chair hoped that Ronan Cosgrove could update the group at the next AC meeting or possibly sooner at a focus group meeting at the beginning of September. This may the industry a better insight as to how real time fisheries management such as avoidance when the LO in kicks into place.

Some considered the results of the LO difficult to model because it is unclear what the quota uplifts will be, how quickly the industry will adapt. It is important that the AC maps out the issues that may arise in the implementation period – which chokes and why, to what extent can they be avoided by TCM’s, what new TCM’s needed to be developed and trialed – how quickly can the quota management system be adjusted to adapt. Some argued that changes in overall TAC’s for species impacted by the LO could have relative stability considerations. It was considered that prescriptive TCMs (EC 850/98) have been shown not to work and legislation should lay down general rules with built in flexibility, with the role of government to facilitate fishers in transitioning. It is up to the MS to prepare and propose what funding they need in terms of TCM development and research to the



EC in their respective operational programs to resolve issues. The chair pointed out that most MS have submitted their OP's and that they may not have considered this fully. The Commission reps advised that revisions of programs can be made every year. It is not clear if MS will have the budget to fund survey work to help here. The chair advised that the LO was a political decision, it was up to MS who signed up to this agreement to provide the necessary funding to undertake what trials are considered necessary. The development or tweaking of new TCM's was the same in his opinion. He advised that results from trials in January will be very different from the same trials in September in the same fishery using the same gear type. Catch composition will be totally different, chokes will be different. Multiple trials across a plethora of fisheries will be required.

Some members of the group indicated that as well as heavy discarding, fishermen have also shown that they can find areas where clean hauls can be found just as well. Fishermen do have the ability to avoid a lot of discards. In general it was considered that the LO will put an economic pressure on fishers to avoid unwanted catch – the ability to respond will vary greatly. TCMs should be chosen in the wheelhouse rather than in Brussels. Fishers know better than anyone.

The group agreed to request an overview of all selectivity trials (ongoing and recently completed in the Irish sea, or trials relevant to the Irish sea but conducted elsewhere) would be needed to help the development of MAPs for the Irish Sea. Also relevant is the status of research evaluation by STECF.

From the side of the UK a list of selective gears was sent after the meeting:

- (1) 200mm square mesh panel developed for the Nephrops fishery in North West England
- (2) 200mm square mesh panel (only available for vessels 12 meters or under in length)
- (3) 300mm square mesh panel
- (4) Seltra '300' trawl
- (5) Seltra '270' trawl
- (6) Faithlie panel
- (7) Flip-Flap trawl
- (8) Net Grid or variants
- (9) Inclined separator panel
- (10) Swedish Grid

These are the high selectivity gears which are approved by STECF for use in the Irish Sea by UK vessels. More details can be found [here](#).

As per the action point from the previous meeting, **the group continued to support** to establish a focus group for the Irish sea to understand the immediate issues arising from the impending LO, i.e. what TCM's were working, what TCM's were not and what TCM's needed to be developed from new. It was not clear if the group considered that a second FG was needed (or the same one) TO focus on MAP's for the Irish Sea. A discussion took place that it may be more practical for the AC as a whole to establish a FG on MAP's as the overlap was considerable. Further discussions arrived at the conclusion that a larger focus group representing the four working groups would work better and that WG4 could deal with the regional dimension of same.

Proposal for ExCom: WG4 proposes a focus group on LO implementation for the Irish Sea – if possible/needed in combination with a horizontal focus group.

If this is agreed by ExCom then a meeting will be needed (bearing in mind that the NWWAC has no more budget for extra meetings before the end of the year). A meeting should take place in the beginning of September and should include experts. This might also be feasible during the time planned for meetings in Dublin 16-17 September? Any earlier meetings should be very short or by webex.

The Secretariat will try to find a meeting time for an Irish Sea focus group in early September to get together with the scientist who were unable to attend this AC.

ToRs need to be drafted for this group (for instance further planning of MAPs (action points last meeting) & Input for an ISMAP. Liane and Francis will look into this.

4. ICES Irish Sea Benchmark proposal – Information point

The benchmark was highlighted in the presentation of the ICES advice and by the Secretariat at the WG meeting.

ICES is planning an 18 month process to improve fish stock advice for the Irish Sea region. WKIrish should result in:

1. A list of potential drivers (ecosystem and/or environmental) of fish stock trends (This is the ToR for the WK1, on 14-15 September just before the GA meeting, both in Dublin)
2. WK2 is a data compilation workshop (end 2015) that is looking for new information sources to improve stock assessments
3. WK3 will ‘benchmark’ the stock assessments (beginning 2016) for the main species in the Irish Sea, concluding on the best available input data and assessment method.
4. WK4 aims to find a way to use new knowledge for new stock assessments and translating this to better management (plans) for Irish Sea fisheries (end 2016)

NB: All ICES Workshops are open to everybody and ICES welcomes participation from all interested parties. An AC opinion is not required since the meetings are looking for data and information rather than political issues. See also at <http://www.ices.dk/community/advisory-process/Pages/Benchmarks.aspx>

The group discussed the need of a preparatory meeting through a focus group to agree a plan/programme, although some suggested that a focus group is more suitable for drafting advice in reply to a question. It is important to get all the data on the table and issues such as the use of FDF, real time observer trials to look into cod density and technical measures.



The chair pointed to the explosion of cod in the Irish Sea at the moment and he felt that this should be evaluated immediately. This in his view had major choke implications. A realistic TAC needed to be set to allow for overall catches. He pointed to the area VI disaster scenario for cod, it has basically closed the area.

The group agreed in the end that there was a general interest in the subject and all members that have time should take part in this benchmark process but that there is no time/budget for a specific meeting (also considering the importance and overlap with the LO and MAPs initiatives). In order to prepare this the **SECRETARIAT** will get a more focused question on what is needed from the side of ICES through to the WG members.

The chair thanked Barbara Schoute for making the presentation on the ICES benchmark for the Irish Sea and commented that we were fortunate to have her expertise.

5. **NWW Discard Plan** – discussion point

The Joint recommendations from the NWW MS are now available and although advice from the NWWAC has been taken into account (on phasing for instance, and the choice of species for the first step) – many questions remain on the implementation of the LO. The chair opened by giving his opinion wearing “not his chairman’s hat” but his IFPO hat. The lack of flexibility and historical track record were in his opinion flaws in the current plan. He again raised the issue of nephrop mortality in area VIIa and VII general. We may be increasing Fishing Mortality on Nephrops which is contrary to the CFP. No one seemed to care.

The calculation of quota uplifts was discussed, as well as practical issues such as the responsibility for reception facilities for discarded fish at the quay side. The Commission were of the view that quota uplift would only apply to species which come under the landing obligation and in some cases this may only be applied to part of the fleet. These issues were complex and not finalized. In relation to reception facilities it was clear that the MS was responsible for ensuring that they are received and disposed of. The chair asked the Commission reps if the Commission would accept the submission of an operational program that did not articulate in detail how the same MS was going to deal with discards when landed. He also queried who was responsible for discards that belonged to a non MS vessel that landed into one of its ports. The Commission replied that in principle, the EMFF should be used for the implementation of the LO but there may be differences between EMFF planning between MS. They could not elaborate further

The EC asks for detailed questions to be put on paper in order to be able to check answers within the EC and make the answers available to all members. The Chair and group agreed to do this.

SECRETARIAT to collect questions on LO - and to check how things are arranged in the Baltic and with other AC’s in terms of how discards were going to be handled once landed.

- Criteria for fisheries definition 2013-2014 (historical Track record)



One item in the Joint recommendation that caused friction were the criteria for fisheries definition, using the track record for 2013-2014. The WG generally did not agree with the recommended method. It was suggested that the AC should propose a better alternative in order to improve future proposals. The methods used in other regions should be studied as well.

Action point: Follow up by LO focus group to work on improved fisheries definition criteria.

- Effects of the LO in the Irish Sea by fishery: where do we see the main issues with the current plan?

Main problem here is that nobody knows what the consequences of the plan will be after January 1st. Although AC input has been used in the drafting of the plan, there are still a lot of fishermen that do not agree with the LO at all – so implementation will not be easy. With the Joint Recommendation sent out, MS should now start making people aware of the it and work out the implementation.

The EC suggested that if the dialogue between MS and stakeholders on major obstacles in the plan does not work out, the EC is willing to try to facilitate.

6. Summary of actions and proposals to be put forward to the Executive Committee by the Chair/Rapporteur

- **Proposal for ExCom:** WG4 proposes a focus group on LO implementation for the Irish Sea – if possible/needed in combination with a horizontal focus group.
- **The Secretariat** will try to find a meeting time for an Irish Sea focus group in early September to get together with scientist to present previous, current and future trial needs.
- **ToRs need to be drafted** for this group (for instance further planning of MAPs (action points last meeting) & Input for an ISMAP. Liane and Francis will look into this.
- **WKIrish1:** Secr to send out leaflet with the main questions ICES has for stakeholders, and what information ICES needs – to be forwarded to members for ICES benchmark in September
- **On the LO:**
SECRETARIAT to collect questions on LO to forward to EC
SECRETARIAT to forward information on how practical LO implementation is arranged in the Baltic and what Industry is doing in other AC's

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ANNEX 1 – List of participants

Members WG4		
Francis	O'Donnell	Irish Fish Producers Organisation
Bertie	Armstrong	Scottish Fishermen's Federation
Hugo	Boyle	Irish South & East FPO
John	Crudden	European Anglers Alliance
David	Beard	Manx Fish Producers Organisation
Emiel	Brouckaert	Rederscentrale
Dave	Cuthbert	New Under Ten Fishermen's Association
Barrie	Deas	National Federation of Fishermen's Organisations
John	Lynch	Irish Fishermen's Organisation
Liane	Veitch	ClientEarth
John	Woodlock	Irish Seal Sanctuary
Observers		
John	Anderson	Scottish Fishermen's Organisation
Stéphan	Beaucher	Consultant
Kevin	Charlot	CNPMEM
Andrew	Clayton	The Pew Charitable Trusts
Siobhán	Egan	Birdwatch Ireland
Marta	García Merchán	Ministerio de Agricultura, Alimentación y Medio Ambiente
Iain	Glasgow	DEFRA
Mindaugas	Kisieliauskas	European Commission
Laurent	Markovic	European Commission
Glenn	Quelch	European Fisheries Control Agency
Ross	Dougal	Scottish Fishermen's Federation
Eibhlín	O'Sullivan	IS&LOFPO
Emanuel	Kelberine	CDPMEM du Finistere
NWWAC Secretariat		
Conor	Nolan	Executive Secretary
Barbara	Schoute	Deputy Executive Secretary
Joanna	McGrath	Executive Assistant - Finance & Administration