



CONSEIL CONSULTATIF POUR  
LES EAUX OCCIDENTALES  
SEPTENTRIONALES

NORTH WESTERN  
WATERS  
ADVISORY COUNCIL

CONSEJO CONSULTIVO PARA  
LAS AGUAS  
NOROCCIDENTALES

## MINUTES

### WORKING GROUP 4 (IRISH SEA)

**CNPMEM, Paris**  
**Wednesday 3<sup>rd</sup> of February 2016**  
**14:00 – 15:30**

Chair: Francis O'Donnell  
Rapporteur: Barbara Schoute

#### 1. Welcome and introductions

Francis O'Donnell (FD) welcomed members, Commission and Member State representatives, and observers to the meeting. Apologies were received from Sean O'Donoghue. The agenda was adopted as drafted. A member of the group was requested by the chair to act as rapporteur. As no member present wished to undertake the role the chair deferred the appointment to the next meeting and requested the Secretariat to complete the task.

Of the action points from the last meeting (8<sup>th</sup> July 2015, Edinburgh) the only outstanding item was the finalisation of the draft Terms of Reference for the Focus Group on the Irish Sea (FGIrish).

**ACTION:** Chair and secretariat to finalise the draft Terms of Reference for the FGIrish.

#### 2. Nephrops (Irish Sea) - mesh size increase TR2

At the last meeting, the option for increasing the mesh size for multi-rig vessels in the Irish Sea had been discussed and the intention had been to draft a management proposal on this topic at that meeting. The chair informed members that the Irish Government had launched a public consultation to evaluate the option of increasing the minimum mesh size for TR2 fisheries to 80 mm. It was noted that exemptions for smaller vessels may be included in the final proposal.

Members were asked if they agreed that the mesh size for single-rig vessels should remain at 70 mm, or if there should be a request to harmonise this with other gears. The meeting concluded that small boats should have the option to fish with a smaller mesh size, and supported the increase in mesh size for multi-rig vessels, with an exemption for small vessels with single rig.

#### 3. ICES Irish Sea Ecosystem approach benchmarking process

The meeting was informed by Alan McCulla (AMC) and the Secretariat that ICES had delayed the Irish Sea Benchmark to enable better preparation by national institutes. The next meeting ([WKIrish2](#)) will take place between the 26<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> September, in Belfast, with Mike Armstrong as chair, and will aim to compile and evaluate available data for the final ecosystem benchmark meeting planned for



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early 2017. Although the delay was considered to be unfortunate, it would enable better coherence with ongoing ecosystem modelling. AMC indicated that stakeholders were expressly invited to these meetings and reminded the group that there was a great need for input from stakeholders to scientific benchmarks.

Barrie Deas (BD) informed the meeting of plans by CEFAS (Cris Darby) for a tagging experiment for Irish Sea gadoids in 2016, and that the AC may be asked to help ensure return of tags. AMC confirmed this initiative and indicated that tagging was also planned to take place in Northern Ireland and emphasised the importance of ensuring cooperation with industry. The EC informed the meeting that an initialisation meeting for the tagging study was planned for the second week of February.

The meeting was informed that the Irish Sea benchmark would be considering whiting, cod, haddock, plaice and herring stocks.

Comments were made on the following items:

a. Irish Sea haddock

AMC indicated that there was a need to improve the assessment for this stock in 2016 and that in-year revisions of the assessment were being considered, which was greatly appreciated.

b. Irish Sea sole

Although this stock is not on the list for a benchmark, Emiel Brouckaert (EB) indicated that a fisheries-science partnership project was ongoing in Belgium, the results of which will support a request to STECF from the EC at the recommendation of the AC.

c. The use of benchmark results for multi-species plans (MSP) and/or Multi-Annual Plans (MAP)

EB noted that results from Baltic and North Sea benchmarks had been used to develop MSP and MAPs. An overview of the newly developed plans would be useful as input to the benchmark for the Irish Sea.

There was a request from the meeting to be informed about the latest developments in MAP proposals, where  $F$  ranges were used instead of  $F_{MSY}$ .

**ACTION:** The Secretariat to invite scientists to explain  $F$ -ranges and other relevant building blocks for MSPs and MAPs for the benefit of all AC members at the NWWAC meeting, in July.

#### 4. Irish Sea Cod

The meeting was informed by the EC (Robert Griffin) of the European Court of Justice ruling (1<sup>st</sup> December, 2015) on the application of effort reductions in relation to the cod management plan. The ruling means that the plan is 'back to the unchanged phase', which implies that the harvest control rule (HCR) remains in place in 2016 and that the cod management plan cannot be maintained in its current state. From 2017 onwards, the old text will remain valid unless the plan is updated.

The EC indicated that it agreed that effort reduction alone would not be enough and proposals for a management regime should be developed. Although the basis for an updated plan had not yet been decided, in order to come to a quick solution, the 2012 proposal might be reconsidered. Timing for drafting a new proposal would depend on the Council and EP. Some members indicated that the 2012 proposal might be more restrictive than the current measures, but the EC indicated that new experiences would be taken into account when updating the final proposal. The EC also indicated that it is their intention to split the multi-regional cod plan into smaller parts.



BD stressed the importance of developing a system that can adapt to developments in fisheries and data, which was also signalled 5 years ago. The Irish government representative (Colm O'Suilleabhain) indicated that the use of Delegated Acts for the purposes of MAPs, in accordance with the new CFP, should allow for this more flexible approach although it might be difficult to set up a new MAP with these items integrated before 2017.

#### **5. Mesh size increase for the TR1 fishery in the Irish Sea from 100mm to 120mm**

The Chair informed the meeting he had been asked by members to discuss ideas for possible changes in mesh sizes in TR1 fisheries for haddock.

AMC commented that whilst there maybe biological stock considerations for such a mesh size increase he had no seen them and the semi-pelagic whitefish gear deployed by Northern Irish trawlers exhibited similar selectivity characteristics to the 120mm TRI gear deployed elsewhere. However, he advised there had been some discussion in Northern Ireland about a voluntary TR1 mesh size increase for marketing purposes. John Lynch (JL) agreed with AMC, indicating that bycatches of juveniles were very low in the TR1 fishery. In order to avoid increasing the mesh size as a cosmetic measure, JL indicated that it would be necessary to justify the need for such an increase.

**The meeting concluded** that a technical meeting should be arranged to discuss this point (among others).

#### **6. Summary of actions agreed and decisions adopted by the Chair**

The Chair concluded that a workshop meeting should discuss technical measures (TCMs) in the context of the Landing Obligation. This meeting should review ongoing trials on technical measures for gadoids and evaluate unavoidable discards, such as whiting in Nephrops fisheries, among others.

It was agreed that the workshop would address:

- Chokes;
- TCMs;
- Spatial management;
- MCRS;
- The preparation of input for the ongoing benchmark.

**ACTION:** The secretariat to organise a workshop meeting and invite the necessary experts. If possible the meeting would be held in conjunction with an ICES meeting on Ecosystem Assessment of Western European Shelf Seas (WGEAWESS).



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## Annex 1 – List of Participants

<b>NWWAC members</b>		
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
Heather	Hamilton	ClientEarth
John	Lynch	Irish Fishermen's Organisation
Alan	McCulla	Anglo-North Irish FPO
John	Woodlock	Irish Seal Sanctuary
<b>Observers</b>		
Emily	Baxter	Cumbria Wildlife
Stéphan	Beaucher	Consultant
Andrew	Clayton	The Pew Charitable Trusts
Vera	Coelho	The Pew Charitable Trusts
Gonzague	De Moncuit	Ministère de l'écologie, du développement durable et de l'énergie
Paul	Duane	Sea-Fisheries Protection Authority
Robert	Griffin	European Commission
Juana	Poza Poza	Ministerio de Agricultura, Alimentación y Medio Ambiente
Colm	Osuilleabhain	Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine,
Alan	Addison	SWFPA Skipper Venture II BF 326
Ross	Dougal	SFF
Eibhlin	O'Sullivan	IS&WFPO
Geert	Meun	Dutch Fish Product Board
Jim	Portus	SWFPO
Paul	Trebilcock	Cornish Fish Producer's Organisation
Glenn	Quelch	European Fisheries Control Agency
Kirsty	McGregor	DEFRA
Lydia	Chaparro	Fundació ENT
Daniel	Lefèvre	CRPMEM de Basse Normandie
Loes	Vandecasteele	ILVO
<b>NWWAC Secretariat</b>		
Conor	Nolan	Executive Secretary
Barbara	Schoute	Deputy Executive Secretary
Sara	Vandamme	Project Development and Communications Manager