



Draft Minutes

WORKING GROUP 2 (CELTIC SEA & West of Scotland)

Tuesday 05 July 2022 | 13:30 – 17:30 CET

1. Welcome and Introductions

The Chair welcomed all participants. The agenda was adopted as drafted. No apologies were received in advance of the meeting.

Action points from the last meeting included:

1	Preparation of NWWAC advice on Celtic Sea Technical Measures following report from STECF do be done through dedicated Advice Drafting Group or through existing Landing Obligation Focus Group.
	ADG has been established and met twice (May and June 2022) - advice in preparation to be discussed under item 4 of the agenda.
2	Secretariat to follow updates from ICES considering the possible delays in publication of advice. Once more information is available, the NWWAC could consider preparing a list of priorities to submit to ICES.
	Email sent to the Commission on 22/03 who responded that there was no delay in ICES advice
3	In relation to EU-UK TAC setting, NWWAC should identify a list of key stocks on which the AC could focus its effort to provide advice in time before the Commission discusses its proposal in negotiations with the UK.
	Email sent to members on 27/06 – further discussions under agenda item 2 and 3

2. ICES advice for the Celtic Sea

The presentation is available [here](#).

The Chair welcomed the ICES ACOM Vice-Chair Joanne Morgan to present the ICES advice.

The advice was released on 30 June. Advice to be released in autumn includes whiting 7bc, e-k, *Nehrops* Functional Units 16-17, 19-22, and red gurnard (3-8).

Cod (7e-k)

- Catch advice = 0 t, no change
- Mixed fisheries advice will be provided in autumn

Haddock (7b-k)

- Catch advice \leq 11 901 t (-25%) due to low recruitment and downward revision of stock size
- Stock includes the south of division 7a (rectangles 33E2-3)



Black bellied anglerfish (7, 8a, b, d)

- Catch advice $\leq 23\,958$ (+28%) based on MSY
- Benchmarked in 2022
- Now Category 1 stock
- Under combined TAC with white anglerfish

White Anglerfish (7, 8a,b,d)

- Catch advice $\leq 34\,476$ (+0.59%)
- Benchmarked in 2022
- Substantial change in F and recruits but not perception of stock

Hake (3.a, 4, 6, 7, 8.abd)

- Catch advice $\leq 83\,130t$ (+10.8%) based on MSY
- Benchmarked in 2022
- SSB now females only – total stock size on average 71% higher

Megrim (7b-k, 8a, b, d)

- Catch advice $\leq 24176t$ (+5.3%) based on MSY
- Benchmarked in 2022 resulting in new reference points
- New assessments for all (A4A) method applied
- Revised discard estimates
- Removal of commercial indices
- Perception of stock status has not changed
- The ICES advice is for *L. whiffiagonis*, whereas the TAC is for *L. whiffiagonis* and *L. boschii* combined

Plaice (7f, g)

- Catch advice $\leq 402\,t$ (-77%) due to change in method
- Caught in mixed fishery with sole, high discard rates (38 % during 2019- 2021)

Pollack (6 and 7)

- Catch advice $\leq 3\,360t$, based on precautionary approach
- Only commercial information available
- Catches have declined since the late 1980's, lowest in 2019-2021
- Fishing pressure considered to be below reference points.
- Stock size unknown

Sea bass (4b-c, 7a and 7d-h)

- Catch advice $\leq 2\,542\,t$ (+14.7%) due to an increase in stock size
- Catch not split between commercial and recreational fisheries
- Under advised catch, stock expected to decrease remaining below MSY $B_{trigger}$
- EU MAP: Catch: 2133 – 2542 t (F_{MSY} : 2542t)



Sole (7f,g)

- Catch advice \leq 1338 t advice (+0.075%) based on MSY

Sole (7h-k)

- Catch advice \leq 213 t (no change) based on the precautionary approach
- Little information on stock identity, possibility of 2 stocks based on fishery distribution
- Sampling was lower in 2020 and 2021 due to the COVID pandemic

Black scabbardfish (NE Atlantic and Arctic Ocean)

- Catch advice \leq 4 214 t (-6%)
- Advice for 2023-2024
- Status cannot be assessed
- Migrates though the Northeast Atlantic
- Advice not split by area because of changes in catch proportion in the different areas

Alfonsinos (subarea 1-10, 12, 14)

- Catch advice \leq 179 t (-20%, precautionary buffer applied)
- Advice for 2023-2024
- Two Beryx species : most catch in Azorean EEZ and in Mid-Atlantic Ridge.
- Cannot assess stock status
- PA buffer last applied 2018 so applied again

Blue Ling (6-7, 5b)

- Catch advice 2023 \leq 10 859 t, 2024 \leq 10 972 t

Roundnose Grenadier (6, 7, 5b, 12b)

- Catch advice \leq 3 177t, no change in the advice
- Less fishing activity
- Cannot assess status
- Ban on fishing with bottom trawls in EU waters deeper than 800 m
- PA buffer not applied

Greater forkbeard (1-10, 12, 14)

- Catch advice \leq 818 t (-5%)
- Use the "2 over 3" rule
- No reference points set
- Poor discard sampling
- Status cannot be assessed

Blackspot seabream (6-8)



- 0 catch advice, no change
- Status cannot be assessed
- No information clearly indicating exploitation level appropriate

Whiting (7b-c and 7e-k)

- Catch advice \leq 1715 t (-61%)
- Stock is below Blim
- Increasing retrospective

Additional information is available in the presentation on stocks for which a 2 year advice was given last year, including plaice 7b,c; plaice 7h-k; sole 7b,c; tusk (4, 7-9, a, 5b, 6a, 12b); ling 6-9, 14, 3a, 4a); greater silver smelt (7-10, 12, 6b and other areas).

The Chair thanked Morgan for the presentation and also for the opportunity to connect separately on Zoom on Friday.

Referring to megrim, Cristina Ribeiro explained that there is one additional advice and should be a Cat. 5, to be merged together with the one presented by Morgan. She also added that there is a request for technical service for cod.

Morgan replied that some technical services were released on 30 June, but not including cod.

Patrick Murphy enquired regarding the impact of discards, how reducing TAC will have an impact on this, and how this is calculated? He felt that the changes made to the quota will have knock on effects on the discards. He commented that the size of the hake population is 71% higher overall and that there has been a change in the model in relation to natural mortality, which is higher for younger fish, and that the population size has gone up. He added that if discards are included in the projections there will not be any sliding case to increase discards if the TAC goes down, which means that there is the potential for more discarding as the TAC goes down but no sliding scale to take that into account.

Morgan responded that the calculations differ between stocks and are sometimes based on observer work or logbooks. Each model works differently though. Some of the Cat 3 stocks will decrease the advice according to the discard rate. Specifically regarding hake, the size of 71% higher is overall, there has been a change in the model in relation to mortality.

Jean-Marie Robert wondered why the hake advice takes into account only females and if the catch advice related to both males and females then.

Morgan explained that the sexes grow at different rates and mature at different sizes which the model is trying to take into account. The actual TAC advice is based on the whole stock.

Sean O'Donoghue commented that in his opinion the whole process is unsatisfactory for the ACs who need the physical presence of the ICES advice presenter. He raised the following issues:

- Cod 0 catch advice – technical service expected
- Haddock 7b-k – statistical rectangles & stock ID issue in the Irish Sea; there seems to be a retrospective issue in the Celtic Sea- how much of that is driving the 25% reduction?
- Blackbellied and white anglerfish: they are combined and it would have been useful



- to have the overall catch in the presentation of the advice
- Hake: did the natural mortality levels change? When you do the retrospective the stock is 71% higher and still there is a 10.8% increase – does the natural mortality have a big effect? The ICES advice says that the historical SSB is revised with the benchmark leading to inflated catch advice. If that is the case is there a problem with the assessment?
- Pollack 6-7 – stock structure unknown, Cat 4 stock which needs to be seriously looked at
- Useful to know which stocks have gone through the TAF process

Morgan checked that **cod 7e-k** was not included in the technical service released on June 30. The advice for this will be included with the mixed fisheries advice in the autumn. Regarding physical attendance at AC meetings, she stated that a discussion has started in the ACOM leadership. In relation to the retrospective for **haddock**, it is relatively large for the SSB. One of the main reasons for the lower advice is low recruitment.

She provided additional information on the proportion of the two species of **anglerfish**. The table below is compiled for the last number of years from tables in the two advice sheets.

	black-bellied	white	total
2010	10063	24886	34949
2011	10319	26489	36808
2012	9888	30519	40407
2013	12760	32295	45055
2014	12402	30333	42735
2015	11111	30183	41294
2016	12661	32668	45329
2017	13459	27808	41267
2018	10804	23595	34399
2019	10763	22196	32959
2020	9602	21387	30989
2021	9708	25243	34951

The changes in the **hake** relate to the young fish in the fishery though there is some retrospective in the assessment. This is flagged as a potential issue for the future.

Natural mortality taken from Mediterranean hake with minor modifications to consider differences by sex. M was assumed to decrease with age and having a common M for males and females at age 0 and 1 (immature ages) and a higher M for males (because slower size at age) afterwards. M changes at age in 4 breakpoints (ages 0, 1, 5 and 15) with linear interpolations between breakpoints. The breakpoints M are the following:

sex	Age 0	Age 1	Age 5	Age 15
Female	1.19	0.64	0.34	0.2
Male	1.19	0.64	0.4	0.27



Recreational catches for pollack were evaluated in 2020 and more work needs to be carried out here. She felt that the TAF assessment does not necessarily have an impact on the quality of the advice.

Franck Le Barzic asked where the Celtic Sea whiting advice was. Regarding sea bass he felt that there was not a lot of information available regarding recreational fishing. An expansion on French coasts can be observed so when will a new estimate be available for the mortality of recreational fishing.

Regarding mortality Morgan agreed that mortality estimates are based on 2012 models. There is very limited sampling of recreational fisheries preventing the estimation of catch levels.

Emiel Brouckaert pointed out the positive assessment for whiting in the North Sea and was wondering if ICES was involved in matching the stock and TAC advice with North Sea and 7d as the same stock. He was also looking for further explanation regarding the rollover of sole in 7f and g.

Morgan stated that the stock in 7f and g is going up and a small increase can be seen in the SSB. She felt that there was a minor retrospective in the SSB which may be the reason why there is no increase in the advice this year. She added that ICES discussed the rollover in sole during the WG meeting (likely attributed to retrospective downward revision in SSB). The SSB from the 2021 assessment is compared to the SSB in the 2022 assessment for the same years. The 2021 SSB is estimated to be 4% lower in the 2022 assessment than it was in the 2021 assessment.

The SSB in 2023 (starting point for the advice forecast) is also estimated to be a small bit lower than the estimate of SSB for 2022 – so no continued growth in SSB

	SSB 2021	SSB 2022	% difference
2018	5080	5040	-0.8
2019	5793	5846	0.9
2020	5811	5945	2.3
2021	6138	5894	-4.0
2022		6221	

O'Donoghue pointed out that advice for whiting in the Channel is divided in two separate advice: whiting in 7e is covered by the advice for 7b-ce-k issued in July, while advice for the 7d stock is released in the autumn together with the North Sea stock. He asked whether there any effects on the overall advice for the Channel area.

Morgan stated that this is possibly assessed as a separate stock so there would be no direct impact, though O'Donoghue stated that these stocks had always been combined. Morgan added the following information:

The connection between stocks and the impact of advice on one stock on advice from another was discussed during a meeting. She could not find an assessment for whiting with a connection in the population modelling. There does exist TAC that are set across stocks. For example from the whiting 7b-ce-k sheet :

The assessment and advice are for divisions 7.b–c and 7.e–k, including reallocations from rectangles 33E2 and 33E3 of 59 t in Division 7.a.



Whiting in divisions 7.b–c and 7.e–k is fished under a common TAC with whiting in Division 7.d. By mixing the biological and TAC areas for different whiting stocks, it will be difficult to achieve the objective of fishing at maximum sustainable yield (MSY) for both stock areas. Hence, ICES recommends that the TAC area corresponds to the assessment area.

And similarly in the whiting 4-7d sheet:

Whiting in Division 7.d is managed under a common TAC with whiting in divisions 7.b–c and e–k. Management should be implemented at the stock level to ensure that fishing opportunities are in line with the scale of the resource for each of the stocks and the corresponding MSY approach.

Whiting in 6 b was mentioned. Advice for this stock was given in 2021 for 2022, 2023 and 2024 as no more than 7 tonnes in each year.

Brouckaert stated that in his understanding there were two stocks, the North Sea in combination with 7d and the whiting in the Celtic Sea. He was wondering if there was any analysis regarding the separate TAC crossing different areas.

Morgan responded that ICES attempts to provide advice based on the actual population and that changes in the management unit is for the managers to work on.

The Secretariat referred to the Gentlemen's Agreement between the NWWAC and the PelAC and invited expressions of interest for a task force for the work on silver smelt.

Jean-Marie Robert stated his surprise that ICES concluded that the cod quota was exceeded due to French fishing. He felt that the quota was actually underused and wondered what figure was sent to the Commission by France. He hoped that ICES could review the final numbers per MS in the fisheries description part in the report and possibly make a modification.

ACTION: Members to send comments on ICES advice and recommendations for issues to be included in fishing opportunities advice to the Secretariat

3. ICES advice for the West of Scotland

The presentation is available [here](#).

Cod (6a)

- 0 catch advice for 2023-2024, technical service available
- Stock structure issues remain
- Issues with discard sampling due to COVID but only limited impact
- Estimation of unavoidable bycatch in the technical service on likely catches in 2022

Haddock (4, 6a, and subdiv. 20)

- Catch advice \leq 137 058 t (+6.5%), based on MSY
- Benchmark in 22, new model with new reference points



- No change to perception of the stock
- Reduced sampling in 2021 due to COVID but impact not significant
- Survey weather issues – model accounts for increased Q1 uncertainty

Haddock at Rockall

- ICES cannot provide advice because of impact of suspension of Russian Federation from participation in ICES activities

Hake (3.a, 4, 6, 7, 8.abd)

- Catch advice $\leq 83\,130$ t (+10.8%)
- Benchmarked in 2022
- SSB now females only – total stock size on average 71% higher

Megrim (4a and 6.a)

- Catch advice $\leq 7\,200$ t (-2%)
- Bycatch in mixed demersal trawl in 6a and 4a
- Advice is for 2 species: *L. whiffiagonis* and *L. boscii* combined.
- *L. boscii* negligible in catches.
- Separate advice for Division 6b in autumn.

Pollack (6 and 7)

- Commercial catch $\leq 3\,360$ t (unchanged), based on precautionary approach
- Limited information available on pollack in this area.
- Catches have declined since the late 1980s, lowest in 2019-2021
- Fishing pressure considered to be below reference points.
- Stock size unknown

Saith (4, 6, 3a)

- Catch advice $\leq 58\,912$ t (+18.7%)
- In 2022, quota in 6 is 9.4% (4644 t) of TAC for the stock
- Sampling lower in 2021 due to COVID but considered reasonable
- A lot of catch options available

Whiting (6a)

- Catch advice $\leq 4\,155$ t (+1%)
- Lack of discard sampling from *Nephrops* fleet due to COVID, which led to a change in the model to estimate catch numbers for ages 1 and 2
- Q1 survey was not carried out due to vessel breakdown

Tusk (6b Rockall)

- Catch advice for 2023 and 2024 ≤ 224 t, landing 197 (-20%), precautionary buffer applied
- Cat. 5 stock
- PA buffer applied



- No directed fishery for this stock

Blue ling (6-7 and 5b)

- Catch advice for 2023 \leq 10 859 and for 2024 \leq 10 972 t

Additional advice published previously:

Cod (6b Rockall)

- Catch advice for 2021, 2022 and 2023: \leq 14 t
- Landings in 2020 = 39 t
- Limited information available
- New survey (SIAMISS) suggests some increase but abundance considered low.
- Stock identity unknown
- Advice based on recent advised catch

Whiting (6b)

- Catch advice for 2022, 2023, 2024: \leq 7t
- Only landings data available
- Catch of 38 t in 202
- Uncertainty on accuracy of historical landings
- Discards uncertain

Tusk (4, 7–9, 3.a, 5.b, 6.a, and 12.b)

- Catch advice for 2022 and 2023: \leq 7 821 t
- Lower catches since 2013
- Catch per unit effort based on the Norwegian longline fleet remains high

The Chair thanked Morgan for her presentation and opened the floor for questions.

Referring to the benchmark for haddock in 6a, Sean O'Donoghue pointed out that though there was a big change on the stock size and fishing mortality, the difference in the advice is only 6.5%. Looking at the retrospective in the advice sheet, it seems highly unusual that the lower the recruitment the higher the spawning stock biomass. He felt that there is obviously a significant effect of the new benchmark to be considered. He also wondered what Category megrim was in.

Morgan responded that megrim is a Cat 1 stock. Haddock has a new assessment which led to an update of the reference points, but the stock status remains unchanged. Recruitment in haddock is sporadic.

4. Technical Measures Celtic Sea

The draft prepared by the ADG has been circulated.

The Secretariat explained that this WG actioned the setting up of an ADG on this topic. Two meetings were held with two letters having been drafted. The AC also requested that the



Commission share any information from the UK on technical measures in the Celtic Sea. The main issue for discussion today is on the conclusions from the STECF report on technical measures in the Celtic Sea relating to the raised fishing line as the ADG would like to propose the removal of this provision. Written comments on the document can be provided by the deadline but the topic on the raised fishing line may need some discussion.

John Lynch explained that the real problem regarding the raised fishing line is that there is not enough quota to operate this gear targeting haddock and whiting and avoiding cod, because other groundfish species are also being avoided (megrin, rays, plaice and monk). In such a mixed fishery, a much bigger quota for the targeted stock is needed to compensate for these losses. While the gear has been performing quite well during trials, there is no opportunity to actually use it.

The Secretariat commented that it might be useful to also propose an alternative when requesting this measure to be removed.

Jean-Maire Robert thanked Matilde Vallerani for her work with the ADG. He felt that the advice contains some good compromise asking mainly if it was actually possible that the cod stock in the Celtic Sea can actually recover. He felt that the raised fishing line issue has been discussed between the MS and the Commission. It seems that this measure is not being used a lot meaning that vessels prefer to avoid using the targeted fishery on haddock in order to avoid this gear.

5. Choke avoidance best practices & Choke ID Tool

The Secretariat referred to the previous WG discussions on the choke tool. Some final updates still need to be made, for example the inclusion of the German quota column in the West of Scotland overview.

ACTION: Members to review the Excel tables and provide comments to the Secretariat in order to facilitate the FG LO in updating the choke tool.

Patrick Murphy mentioned the possible remuneration for Michael Keatinge to continue working on this tool.

José Beltran stated that there was no AOB but wanted to raise the issue of VMEs. These are affecting certain fisheries including passive gear. The COM has decided to proceed with the designation for these areas with special protection. Can the NWWAC look into this to follow up on the establishment of these?

The Chair stated that the NWWAC already sent a letter on this which was sent on 15 June but no response has been received.

ACTION: VME issue to be raised with Director Donatella during the ExCom meeting. Secretariat to check with the PelAC and SWWAC regarding their advice.

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



1	Members to send comments on ICES advice and recommendations for issues to be included in fishing opportunities advice to the Secretariat
2	The Secretariat will distribute the recommendations formulated by the PelAC on Greater Silver Smelt for comments (if needed, a joint task force will be meeting to discuss). Once agreed by the WG, they will be included in the Fishing Opps advice.
3	The Working Group will review the draft advice on Technical Measures in the Celtic Sea by Monday 11 July.
4	Secretariat to share 2022 Choke ID tool following an update on exemptions on technical measures for members to provide comments to feed advice preparation by the FG LO
5	Secretariat to contact PelAC and SWWAC Secretariat to ask about progress of work on VMEs and deep-sea access.

The Chair thanked all participants and closed the meeting.

Participants

NWWAC members		
Jose	Beltran	OPP-7 Burela
Emiel	Brouckaert	Rederscentrale
Juan Carlos	Corras Arias	
Deirdre	Hoare	Independent Consultant
Gérald	Hussenot Desenonges	Blue Fish
Manu	Kelberine	CRPMEM de Bretagne
Julien	Lamothe	ANOP
Franck	Le Barzic	OP COBRENORD
Jesus Angel	Lourido Garcia	OPP77 PUERTO DE CELEIRO
John	Lynch	Irish South & East Fish Producers Organisation Ltd
Patrick	Murphy	Irish South & West Fish Producers Organisation
Aodh	O'Donnell	IFPO
Sean	O'Donoghue	KFO LTD
Jean-Marie	Robert	PDB
Norah	Parke	KFO
Irene	Prieto	ANASOL
Arthur	Yon	FROM Nord
Experts and Observers		
Killian	Chute	EFCA
Marta	del Avellanal	Ministerio de Agricultura Pesca y Alimentación
Juan Antonio	Espejo Leña	Administración Española
Caroline	Gamblin	MSC
Dirk	Van Guyze	Dep. Agriculture and Fisheries
Cristina	Perdiguero Arenas	Secretaría General de Pesca
Cristina	Ribero	DG MARE
NWWAC Secretariat		
MO	Mathies	Executive Secretary
Matilde	Vallerani	Deputy Executive Secretary