



DRAFT MINUTES

WORKING GROUP 1 (Irish Sea)

Monday 03 July 2023 | Ghent / Zoom

1. Welcome and introductions

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

Action points from the last meeting (13 March 2023, Santiago de Compostela):

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| 1 | Secretariat to check with ICES if any research (ongoing and/or planned) on cumulative effects of ORE developments is available. If not, recommendations should be developed by the AC requesting that this topic is investigated. |
| | <p>In March 2023, ICES organise a Workshop on a Research Roadmap for Offshore and Marine Renewable Energy (WKOMRE) to create a research roadmap to better coordinate science on offshore renewable energy development - identifying scientific capabilities and services that ICES can provide to meet transboundary science needs.</p> <p>The report from the workshop was published in May 2023. It includes short, medium, and long-term actions, objectives, and goals for a strategic approach for ICES to address the challenges presented by offshore and marine renewable energy development. In the medium and long-term, the goal is full implementation of ecosystem-based management. In particular, medium term objectives for 2024-2026 include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">a) The development of Best Practice Guides for:<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Monitoring impacts objectively to determine, positive, negative or neutral outcomes of offshore wind development on project and regional ecosystem scale- Assessing cumulative impacts from offshore wind and offshore and marine renewable development projects at the species, sector, and regional ecosystem scaleb) The evaluation of the effect of offshore renewable energy development on ecosystem structure and function, including cumulative effects and potential ecosystem-scale impacts. <p>In the meantime, there are several working groups in ICES working on ORE, for example:</p> <p>The Working Group on Offshore Wind Development and Fisheries (WGOWDF) addresses the challenges of coexistence for these two industries, including the impacts on fishery operations and fishing communities, fishery-independent surveys and fishery-dependent data, and marine habitat alterations.</p> |



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| | <p>The Working Group on Marine Benthic and Renewable Energy Developments (WGMBRED) explores the environmental impacts of coastal and offshore developments. The Working Group on Offshore Renewable Energy (WGORE) links science from groups on specialist topics (seabirds, benthic ecology, fish ecology) to its application in planning, consenting and regulatory processes. The Working Group on Cumulative Effects Assessments in Management (WGCEAM) will develop pressure state relationships for all the main human activities in the marine environment (including offshore wind), their pressures and how they impact the different ecosystem components.</p> <p>ICES has been contacted regarding dates of future meetings of interest to the NWWAC, awaiting response.</p> |
| 2 | <p>NWWAC to recommend the COM that ICES is requested to include climate change impacts on cod spawning – specifically increasing seawater temperature - into the stock assessment.</p> <p>Sent on 9 May and awaiting for response</p> |
| 3 | <p>Comments made on exemptions to the Landing Obligation should be taken into account in the preparation of the AC advice on the Discard Plan 2024 by the Focus Group Landing Obligation.</p> <p>Submitted on 17 April, STECF evaluation published – more information at the choke analysis workshop on 4 July</p> |
| 4 | <p>Follow up on recommendations included in the Fishing Opportunities 2023 advice in relation to the Irish Sea and consider new issue raised on pollack assessment (mismatch between landing and catch data).</p> <p>To be addressed under item 2 of the agenda. Pollack issue to be addressed in WG2 as the stock is part of the ICES advice for the Celtic Sea.</p> |

2. ICES advice for the Irish Sea by Joanne Morgan, ICES ACOM Vicechair (slides available here)

Before diving into the presentation of the stock advice, Joanne Morgan explained that for the stocks managed by the EU and the UK advice was provided on the basis of MSY or Precautionary Approach. The EU MAP option was also provided in the catch scenario table if available. Advice for Nephrops, elasmobranchs and cod 7a will be released in autumn

Cod (7a)

The WG encountered some problems in their assessment and advice is expected in autumn. No change is expected.

Haddock (7a)

- Advice for 2024, MSY: Catch $\leq 2,263t$, (-14.5%)
- Spawning stock high in 2022 but declining: above MSY $B_{trigger}$
- F fairly stable since early 2000's: below F_{MSY}
- Poor recruitment in 2020 and 2021 impacting stock
- Decrease in advice due to lower stock size and 2022 recruits revised downwards (retrospective)
- Landings from south of Division 7.a (rectangles 33E2-3) are not considered part of this stock



Plaice (7a)

- Advice for 2024, MSY: Catch $\leq 1,902t$ (-6.7%)
- SSB just above MSY $B_{trigger}$.
- Fishing pressure below F_{MSY} since 2011 but increasing
- Recruitment low since 2016
- Discarding high and variable, 40% assumed to survive
- Decreased advice due to declining stock size and downward revision (retrospective)

Sole (7a)

- Advice for 2024, MSY: zero catch
- Catch increased over last 4 years
- F increasing and above F_{lim}
- SSB was increasing but declined since 2021 and now below B_{pa} .
- Recruitment low in 2021-2022
- Stock size revised downwards (retrospective)
- No catch scenario will result in stock above B_{lim}
- Benchmark planned

Whiting (7a excluding rectangles 33E2 and 33E3)

- Advice for 2024 and 2025, MSY: zero catch (unchanged)
- Stock size is extremely low.
- Spawning-stock biomass (SSB) well below B_{lim} since the mid-1990s
- Recruitment has been low since the early 1990s
- Fishing pressure (F) above F_{MSY} and F_{lim}
- Discarding high; 97% in 2020 on catches of 1118 t
- No NIMIK survey data and low discard sampling 2022 – minimal impact

The Chair thanked Morgan for the information presented and opened the floor to questions.

Emiel Brouckaert thanked Morgan for her presentation. He recalled the advice for sole from previous years which had presented an increase in the stock size which was however not reflected in the catch advice. The return to 0 catch has come as a surprise. He also asked about the data source leading to F being above MSY but biomass being below $B_{trigger}$. Finally, he mentioned that this as a Category 1 stock, but the data used is very general which is possibly what is leading to the benchmark in the autumn. He asked if there was an expectation for additional data to be made available for this stock. He pointed out that a catch scenario which could lead the stock to B_{lim} was available in the catch scenarios, therefore it is not clear why the advice was for 0 catch. He also suggested that some more information may be needed to explain SAM and XSA.

Regarding the catch options, Morgan explained it has to do with the assessment that cannot provide probabilities because it is an XSA assessment.

There is a tendency to overestimate SSB, but it seems to be partly a function in decrease of weight at age, which seems to be lower than assumed. The advice is probably being too high, because SSB is



overestimated. Flatfish are characterized by variable recruitment, the last couple of years it has been much lower after some peaks which might have affected the stock size going down. She added that she was not aware of the details of the upcoming benchmark.

Michael Keatinge added if there was any suggestion that the model might influence the result of the advice. XSA assessments have been used for a long time, but could different models potentially provide for different outcomes?

Morgan stated that some models can take aspects into account that other models cannot, however, if that is the case, this must be considered to arrive at more consistent and realistic results. She explained that XSA was one of the first models developed to take into account age structure so different cohorts can be followed. But there are now more complex models, not necessarily better, but that allow taking more aspects. How errors are handled can be very important and separating out the different types can be helpful. She confirmed she would provide a slide at the Horizontal Working Group briefly explaining the models and how types of errors can be dealt with.

Sean O'Donoghue referred to the advice based on the multiannual plan (MAP) which is built into the catch option table. He referred to the Commission and ICES MoU regarding the use of MAP-based advice and how this is taken up with regards to the UK, especially in relation to the 0 catch option stocks.

He then mentioned the ongoing issue of quality assurance and asked for clarification of how many stocks have gone through the full ICES quality assurance system and how many have only gone through the TAF system.

Referring to haddock, he pointed out the ongoing issue of the interchange of the two statistical rectangles in the south Irish Sea which are included in the Celtic Sea stock assessment and asked for the rationale behind it. He was also concerned regarding the retrospective on the stock size.

Morgan responded that the EU is one of the advice requesters and can ask for the MAP option to be included in the catch options table. ICES do not decide which management option is used but they will not include advice that does not meet the MSY and precautionary standards.

She then pointed out that ICES has put a lot of effort into quality assurance and a lot of stocks are undergoing benchmarks currently or have one planned for a future date. She could not specify how many stocks in the Irish Sea have undergone quality assurance, but it is planned that a link to the TAF assessment will go into the advice sheets from next year onwards.

Regarding the two statistical rectangles for haddock, Morgan replied she needed to check with her colleagues.

ACTION: ICES to provide additional details on the statistical rectangles in southern Irish Sea in relation to haddock assessment.

Coming back on haddock, the Chair explained that if the haddock from those two rectangles is not included in the Irish Sea, the fish caught in the area still comes off the quota.

Morgan stated that this issue happens for other stocks too where the management area and the assessment area do not match. This creates two problems: 1) the exploitation may not be managed properly and 2) the fishing industry may be affected if they do not have access to both areas.

O'Donoghue suggested that the AC may need to be more specific regarding the issue with haddock in



the advice to be prepared. On the MAP, he queried if the EU could not give the headline advice based on the MAP. He added that TAF is not a QA system and only part of one. He had hoped to see some information on the advice sheet, especially if the stock had undergone TAF or the full QA and added that seeing this information on the advice sheet would improve confidence in the advice. Regarding the conservation aspects of whiting, he stated that ICES has not identified any conservation aspects while the industry has spent a lot of time on improving the fishery selectivity.

Morgan stated that all advice is based on best available science and all are undergoing QA. Work is ongoing now to finish the mapping of data flows, and ICES continues its work on QA. She also clarified that ICES has started to look at non-fishing conservation aspects that are known to have impacts on a stock. It is the first year for ICES including this information in the advice sheet and she will present this at the Horizontal Working Group.

Patrick Murphy thanked Morgan for coming and stated that her presence is greatly appreciated as better discussions can be had when meeting in person. He referred to the advice for sole and asked how SSB for 2025 is projected to be at an extremely low value and why it is felt that this may not recover. He also felt that any other aspects leading to natural mortality need to be explained in the advice sheet. He added that the change in fishing effort needs to be assessed and included. He then mentioned haddock and wondered how the figures for discards for haddock were calculated. Regarding whiting, he also pointed out the massive effort employed by fishers on avoidance. However, there are still no changes in the advice. He added that 0 catch advice and the landing obligation create extreme difficulties for fishermen.

Morgan responded regarding SSB for sole and the related forecast stating that the two most important aspects to account for are fishing mortality and recruitment in 2023. Recruitment has been quite low in comparison to earlier time series. Meanwhile, over the last few years, F has been very high. Those two aspects put together means that even if you don't fish in 2024, the stock size would still be very low.

Murphy felt that what was missing in the advice was the clear indication that the zero advice is not down to fishing mortality, but down to recruitment. Fishers always fish according to the scientific advice.

Morgan added that F in 2023 also plays a role. She concluded that if the advice is changing up or down ICES is trying to provide more detail as to why this is in the advice sheets. This may take a couple of years though. Changes in fishing patterns are included in the assessments, and some will specifically include effort. She could not explain the presence of whiting in the Irish Sea.

ACTION: Comments from members following the presentation of the ICES advice will be taken into account in the preparation of the advice on fishing opportunities by the FG landing obligation.

These recommendations include and are not limited to:

- Information on whether a stock has been put through TAF on the advice sheet
- Use of Multiannual Plans in headline advice where possible
- Clarify in the advice that the conservation status refers to pressures on the stock that are not related to fishing

3. State of Play Phase 1 ORE projects Irish Sea – Dialogue with Captain Robert McCabe, Chair



Seafood/ORE Group

Captain Robert McCabe explained that the Seafood-Offshore Renewable Energy Working Group was established in May 2022 to facilitate constructive engagement, promote best practice and safe operations, and encourage liaison between the seafood and ORE sectors. Currently, 17 Seafood Sector Organisations, 4 ORE Representative Organisations, 3 Government Departments, and 7 State Agencies are members of this group. The Seafood / ORE Engagement in Ireland - A Summary Guide was recently published following agreement among all members. This will be used and tested now during the Phase 1 developments.

Work continues in various sub-groups examining for example, coexistence and related Issues, dispute resolution mechanisms, impact of surveys, activity data, data, and seafood vessel opportunities in ORE.

Phase 1

- 2003 - Construction of first offshore wind turbines on Arklow Bank.
- 2022 – Maritime Area Consents granted for 6 Phase 1 projects on 23rd December 2022.
- 2023 – Four projects successful in ORESS1 Auction results on 11th May 2023. Codling Wind Park (1,300MW), Dublin Array (824MW), North Irish Sea Array (500MW), and Sceirde Rocks (450MW).
- Total capacity of 4 successful projects is 3,074 MW at a Weighted Average Strike Price of €86.05 / MWh. Of this total 2,624 MW is in the Irish Sea.
- Two projects were not successful, Oriel Wind Park (375 MW) and Arklow Bank Wind Park (800 MW). These projects have advised that they remain committed to delivering their projects.

McCabe added that all projects engage with seafood sector in line with agreed guidance. Those projects with MAC and ORESS are proceeding with the planning process with An Bord Pleanála and agree grid connections with EirGrid. Phase 1 projects will develop the offshore grid transmission infrastructure for their projects. For Phase 2 projects EirGrid will develop the offshore grid transmission infrastructure. Phase 2 projects on the South coast will be State led. DECC will publish DMAPs and complete the surveys and the site identification process. The ORESS2 auction will take place in early 2024 for sites identified by DECC. The Seafood / ORE WG will continue its work up to May 2024.

He concluded that all this work is a big step towards Ireland's energy independence but a lot more work is needed.

Tha Chair thanked Captain McCabe for the presentation and added that the Irish fishing industry is committed to adhering to the engagement guide.

Murphy asked if ICES would have any comments regarding the cumulative effects of ORE developments in any particular marine area.

Morgan stated that ICES has a dedicated WG regarding the effects of ORE developments and work to



identify a roadmap for the work is being developed.

O'Donoghue asked what the status is regarding the application of the NWWAC to join the Seafood/ORE. He added that the AC is being inundated regarding presentations by primary developers and suggested that it might be more appropriate to maintain engagement at the level of the Seafood /ORE group and with Captain McCabe,

Captain McCabe explained that he is engaged with members regarding the joining of the NWWAC but no result has been arrived yet.

The Chair added that he felt the inclusion of the NWWAC was critical once the process will move into the area beyond the 12-mile zone.

Justin Morgan thanked the AC for the invite to join the meeting and highlighted the importance of ORE developers and fisheries stakeholders working together.

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

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| 1 | Joanne Morgan to provide brief explanation of SAM and XSA at HWG |
| 2 | Comments from members following the presentation of the ICES advice will be taken into account in the preparation of the advice on fishing opportunities by the FG landing obligation. These recommendations include and are not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Information on whether a stock has been put through TAF on the advice sheet- Use of Multiannual Plans in headline advice where possible- Clarify in the advice that the conservation status refers to pressures on the stock that are not related to fishing |

Brouckaert suggested that as the AC is developing its advice as an additional action point that all comments could be combined and added into the upcoming advice.

The Chair thanked everyone for their participation.

5. Participants list

NWWAC members

| Name | | Organisation |
|-----------|------------|--|
| Emiel | Brouckaert | Rederscentrale |
| John | Lynch | Irish South & East Fish Producers Organisation Ltd |
| Breanainn | O'Beirne | AIPCE |
| Aodh | O'Donnell | Irish Fish Producers Organisation (IFPO) |
| Sean | O'Donoghue | Killybegs Fishermen's Organisation |
| Norah | Parke | Killybegs Fishermen's Organisation |



NWWAC observers

| Name | | Organisation |
|-----------|----------|--------------|
| Alexandra | Philippe | EBCD |
| Johnny | Woodlock | ISS |

Other observers and experts

| Name | | Organisation |
|---------|-----------|--|
| Stephen | Comerford | IWDG |
| Paulien | Depickere | Department of Agriculture and Fisheries |
| Michael | Keatinge | Seaview Marine Economic Consultancy |
| Marie | Lecomte | Marine Stewardship Council |
| Robert | McCabe | Seafood/ORE Group |
| Justin | Moran | Wind Energy Ireland |
| Joanne | Morgan | ICES |
| Eveline | Smith | NL Ministry of Agriculture Nature + Food Quality |
| Dirk | Van Guyze | Department of Agriculture and Fisheries |

Secretariat

| Name | Role |
|-------------------|----------------------------|
| Mo Mathies | Executive Secretary |
| Matilde Vallerani | Deputy Executive Secretary |