



## DRAFT MINUTES

### WORKING GROUP 2 (CELTIC SEA & West of Scotland)

#### Hotel NH Collection Santiago de Compostela

Tuesday 14 March 2023

09:00 – 10:30 CET

#### 1 Welcome and introductions

The Chair Suso Lourido Garcia welcomed all participants. Apologies were received in advance of the meeting from Anais Mourrada (CNP MEM), Kenatea Chavez (ANOP), Jean-Marie Robert (LPDB). The agenda was adopted with a change of schedule, item 5 will be addressed before item 4.

#### Action points from the last meeting (09 September 2022, virtual)

1	Secretariat to update and finalise the choke traffic light tool based on today's discussions taking into account previous NWWAC advice. <a href="#">Done</a>
2	Secretariat to circulate link to benchmark report on hake <a href="#">Shared on 11 November 2022</a>
3	Secretariat to organise ad-hoc meeting on hake with members of ADG Technical Measures and including invitation to other observers <a href="#">Request sent to ADG members on 11 November and on 14 February, but not enough interest to organize meeting – Discussion needed with WG2 members on how to progress on this.</a>
4	The Secretariat to contact the other relevant ACs to initiate a joint submission on the VME topic <a href="#">Joint NWWAC/SWWAC letter sent to the COM on 10 November. Response received on 14 December.</a> <a href="#">The Commission requested STECF to deliver an opinion on socio-economic aspects and ICES to deliver an updated scientific advice on the list of areas.</a> <a href="#">An invitation from DG MARE was circulated yesterday for the virtual meeting on 25 April.</a> <a href="#">Update from Ed Farrell on ICES ADG VME under agenda item 4.</a>
5	The Secretariat to circulate additional information on North Sea cod workshop if and when available <a href="#">Arthur Yon attending on behalf of the NWWAC. Update under agenda item 4.</a>
6	The Secretariat to circulate additional information on developments and stakeholder consultation of the offshore wind in the CS by Crown Estate if and when available <a href="#">Presentation by SWFPA under agenda item 2</a>



## 2 ORE developments in Celtic Sea - Raymond Hall, SWFPA

The presentation can be found [here](#).

Raymond Hall is the Renewable Energy Policy Officer for the Scottish Whitefish Producers Association (SWFPA). He has been involved in ORE both practically as a fisherman since 2008 and now in this full time role since December 2021. His presentation gave an overview on the ORE developments in the Celtic Sea and the process these went through with Crown Estate, also up to speed with physical next steps i.e. surveys.

Hall stated that no agreements have been signed yet and no developers have been chosen so far. There are a lot of procedures to go through before consent can be obtained. That's where the fishing industry could have input, specifically when a project goes through environmental impact assessment. He felt that the fishing industry needs to object to offshore developments as this is the biggest threat to the industry.

The Crown Estate began engagement in December 2020, with an invitation to the market to come forward with views on how best to accelerate the development of floating wind in the UK. Interested market participants confirmed both strong capability and appetite to develop a market for floating wind in the Celtic Sea, refining their proposition from 1GW to 4GW. Engagement with the fishing industry only started in June 2022. The Scottish industry was not contacted until the SWFPA made contact with the Crown Estate providing their input.

Pre-consent surveys are the next step. There are two categories:

- Consenting/environmental, which feeds into the EIA;
- Informational/technical, which is more developer-led to give them more indications on the seabed and the appropriate anchoring system.

The METOCEAN and FLIDAR surveys have been deployed already though they were only marked for deployment in mid-2023, for a period of 12 months. They collect data in relation to swell heights, passive acoustic and wind speed. Bird and marine surveys are scheduled for Q2 2023 for 2 years with observations from vessels. The geophysical surveys are scheduled to start in Q2 2023 and static gear will likely need to be moved. This should involve compensation for fishermen. Geotechnical surveys are scheduled for Q3 2023. These normally last 4 to 6 months.

As the development of offshore wind is government led, avoiding impact with fisheries is difficult, however, impact should be reduced and/or mitigated for. For co-existence to work, early engagement and communication are vital. Developers must properly communicate with the fishing industry. The fishing industry should be involved at the very start before lease options have been granted by governments. EIA should provide a detailed survey, modelling and stakeholder engagement to quantify potential impacts. This is where the fishing industry could have input to object to offshore windfarms.

Export cables are also very problematic. Early engagement should be done prior to lease option in this case as well, especially because local knowledge from fishermen can keep disruption to a minimum and could potentially save the developers time and money. Once a cable is laid, overtrawl verification needs to be a priority, as it is a safety concern for vessels. Another huge concern for the industry is electromagnetic fields from buried export cables and dynamic array cables in the water column.

The developments planned for the Celtic Sea are all floating installations so that the impact of cables is



a high threat. The precautionary principle has never been implemented. There are too many uncertainties as cumulative impacts and effects on marine ecosystems are largely unknown.

Future considerations must include the involvement of the fishing industry on the cable routes. Ports will need to increase in size to be able to accommodate the increasing sizes of wind platforms. Moreover, wet storage of floating platforms before being transported to the development site will become a huge problem for the inshore fishers.

Hall concluded by repeating that good communication between the company fisheries liaison officer and the fishing industry is essential to allow a good communication stream with the fishing industry and the development. However, it is yet unclear who the successful developer will be for the Celtic Sea sites.

The Chair thanked Hall for his presentation and stated that fishermen in Galicia share their Scottish colleagues' concerns.

John Lynch referred to the presentation made in WG1 for the east coast of Ireland which is also slated for big developments. He wondered if the UK fishermen had any input into the location and/or shape of the proposed sites.

Hall responded that that two years of consultations were held with Marine Scotland and the Crown Estate during the Wind Scotland developments. Fishermen's comments were taken on board and fishing data was considered and approx. 50% of the sites were changed. Going further offshore means it is all floating wind which means no fishing will be possible as the anchoring system and there is no ambition for developers to bury the cables.

Norah Parke asked if Hall had any additional details regarding surveys and any data regarding potential damage.

Hall responded that the developers contract the survey vessels in using large vessels that have been used for oil and gas previously. There is no information available regarding potential damage.

Parke explained that in Ireland that outside the 12 mile limit to permission is needed and surveys can be carried out without informing the fishing industry. Concerns are related to impact on crustaceans for example. She added that KFO has a possible project lined up to show that a different approach is possible with full inclusion of the fishing industry.

Hall stated that in Scotland surveys are under scientific research and no license is needed. However, a small work permit is needed for this from Crown Estate Scotland.

Alexandra Philippe referred to the precautionary principle and agreed that the impact on biodiversity is unknown. The Commission has a high ambition for wind development and therefore this is likely to happen. She felt that tradeoffs will need to happen between the industries but wondered how the fishing industry could prepare for this. Regarding MSP she asked if the UK was planning to have wind farms in MPAs.

Hall stated that there may be an ambition to put offshore wind energy developments in MPAs as there is the potential in certain areas that bottom trawling could be banned. The Highly Protected Areas are scheduled for designation as well which will mean no developments at all. Regarding the trade offs, he



highlighted that floating offshore means no fishing at all and the question is what effect the effort displacement will have on stocks. Fishermen understand that some form of renewable energy is needed, however, these developments are built for energy export, but the question is who will be the buyer as all EU countries are developing their offshore energy sectors as well. Scotland is planning for 40GW, though only 4-Gw is needed for self-sufficiency.

The Chair stated that in Galicia exporting of energy is also considered and planning is going ahead without prior consideration of the fishing industry. The industry has to face these things head on over the next few months.

Patrick Murphy asked about the size of the chain links which are 2m each. He wondered where the materials are going to come from for these large projects. He also asked about the safety aspects for recovery of damaged materials. In addition, he wondered if there was any training regarding the climbing of the structures, and also if any maintenance plans are in place to replace coolants for example. He felt that there was no infrastructure in place yet and they may be built, but maintenance might not be possible.

Hall stated that the training would be developer led. As part of the consenting process in Scotland the operational and maintenance plan must be made available for review. He felt that the problem was that no floating offshore wind farm has been built yet and that developers do not realize how harsh the environmental conditions off the coasts of Ireland and Scotland are.

Juan Corras Arias stated that the problems seem to be the same across the board and the agenda for decarbonization is very ambitious for 2030. He was wondering as there is no EIA regarding these projects and it can be seen in Portugal that fish have disappeared from these areas. He also referred to food security aspects and felt that wind farms should not be developed to the detriment of the people. It used to be thought that renewable energies were inexpensive, but this is not going to be cheap. In Galicia, already 70% of energy is coming from renewables but it is not enough. If developments are set up for export, then the people will not have the direct positive impact. He stated that in Galicia an inclusive approach was in place for stakeholder consultation, which was welcomed.

Manu Kelberine stated that the POs in Brittany answered a survey about the areas regarding vessel movement and was wondering if this information would be considered.

The Chair proposed that the ExCom should approve continued work with the Pelagic AC and reach out to other ACs, such as the SWWAC, to propose collaboration on the topic.

**ACTION:** Continue NWWAC work on ORE developments jointly with other Advisory Councils if possible.

### 3 RAPANSEL project - Julio Valeiras, IEO

The presentation can be found [here](#).

Julio Valeiras is senior scientist of the Spanish Institute of Oceanography in Vigo. His research is focused on fishery biology and ecology of European fisheries, mainly on technical measures to reduce fishing discards, bycatch and impact of fisheries on stocks and ecosystems. He presented on the Rapansel project, related to the selectivity of a new bottom trawling gear for fishing in the Celtic Sea to minimize discards and seeking solutions to the Landing Obligation requirements.



The objective of the Rapansel project is to mitigate the impact of the landing obligation in the mixed trawl fisheries targeting bottom species (megrim, monkfish and hake) in the European waters fishing ground of 'Gran Sol' (ICES Area 7). The project aimed at designing and testing fishing gear with better selective properties and the possible technical solutions to reduce discards and make the fishery more sustainable. Unwanted species to avoid include both gadoids and pelagics and juveniles of megrim and hake.

After having identified selectivity issues and in close collaboration with fishermen and fishing net manufacturers and in cooperation with the fish producer organization of Vigo, 5 trials were carried out between 2018 and 2022. Each device was evaluated based on three criteria:

- escape of unwanted catch (juveniles and pelagic species)
- loss of target species (quantitative)
- operational and practical aspects of the new gear designs (qualitative).

Looking at the T90 codend mesh, the project tested in 2018 the normative codend diamond 100 mm mesh size against the experimental codend diamond 100 mm mesh size, but results were inconclusive. In 2019, experimental codends of both 80 and 100 mm were tested with a mix of mesh(diamond/square/T90) and a square panel 150mm mesh size, which resulted in great reduction of unwanted species, but also significant loss of the main target species, megrim, (19-32%). In 2020, a new 80 mm codend with a 180mm square mesh panel (3m longitude) was tested and resulted in great reduction of unwanted species, but significant loss of commercial hake (55%). This codend was modified and tested in 2021 with a 3.4 m longitude panel mounted 5 m from the end of the codend. The loss of hake was still significant.

In 2022, the normative 100mm diamond mesh codend was tested against a new experimental 80 mm diamond mesh codend, including both a top and side 180 mm square mesh panel (3.40 cm large), located at 5m from the end of the codend. This experimental codend had very positive results in terms of reduction of unwanted catches of megrim (-68%) and hake juveniles (-72%) and also regarding unwanted species such as cod (-44%), haddock (-80%), blue whiting and horse mackerel. While the retained catches of the main target species, megrim, were maintained and even increased slightly (+7.4%). On the other hand, there was a 34.5% reduction in commercial hake catches compared to the normative codend.

The new design also provided for better quality, cleaner and less damaged fish and allowed to save fuel costs by reducing the weight of the codend. It is also important to mention the savings in workload due to less triage time for unwanted species and invertebrates (crew works more efficiently, with more time to prepare fish, more rest, greater safety). Overall, the gear helped in reducing the impact of the landing obligation in the fishery. However, the loss of 34.5% of commercial hake remains a significant disadvantage. The fishermen indicate that this selective codend with this design would be more appropriate for this fishery than targets megrim and anglerfish as the most important species. Fewer discards are produced than using the codends currently included in the regulation of technical measures.

The Chair thanked the presenter for his presentation and stated that this tool should be considered for inclusion in the technical measures regulation for voluntary use in ICES 7 based on the promising results. He asked whether any economic analysis was done or is planned to look at costs and benefits from the use of this gear, referring to the loss in hake catch and fuel savings.



Irene Prieto replied that this is definitely being considered as a next step to continue working on the project.

Lynch asked regarding the square mesh panel if it was included five metres from the codend end, this would be 4m less from the current regulatory codend. *“Did you ever try the panel at 9m, as it currently is for gadoid fisheries in the Celtic Sea?”* he asked.

Valeiras stated that during the project four codend designs were trialed, placed at 4m, 5m and 6m. The regulatory codend is at 9m, which is already used by the fleet, but it was decided that the trials started at these new designs to increase selectivity and improve the avoiding of unwanted catches. The best results were found using a panel located 5m from the codend end, greatly improving the selectivity.

Murphy asked if the trials were carried out in areas prohibiting the use of 80mm currently and if this would be used to change the regulation. He also wondered if cameras were used in the nets to see the impact on fish behavior.

Valeiras stated that unfortunately cameras were not used in the trials. Some experimental hauls were carried out with an oceanographic boat and during those trials cameras were placed to observe the behaviour and the escape reactions. The results will be used for the publication of a scientific paper. This work was carried out in Iberian coastal waters and the codend is designed for use in ICES area 7. Future work on fish behaviour is planned. Due to the large size of the panel, fish have a better chance of escaping, for example cod, haddock and horse mackerel.

Kiko Marin highlighted the complexity of the research carried out, especially taking into account the legislative complexity around mesh sizes and the frequent modifications of the technical measures regulation since its application in 2019.

#### **4 Report from recent ICES meetings:**

##### **WKRRCOD (Arthur Yon)**

The workshop on research needs and roadmap for further research on cod in the northern shelf seas (WKRRCOD) was held in Edinburgh on 1-2 November 2022. It was set up by the Northern Fishery Alliance and organized by ICES. Its Terms of Reference included:

- Identify evidence needs necessary to achieve management objectives of cod fisheries.
- Share plans for assessment and advice for North Sea and Celtic Seas cod (+ upcoming benchmark on NS cod and WoS cod).
- Consider knowledge and data sources, potential methods and timetables by which further evidence can be incorporated into the scientific advisory process and identify where industry can provide evidence to underpin modelling and advice.

The resulting recommendations of this workshop included guidance from ICES on what kind of data should be collected and the need to organise pre-assessment sessions to discuss new knowledge in support of annual assessment including intermediate Year assumption. This meeting should be repeated annually in advance of benchmarks. Similar processes as WKRRCOD can be organized by region, focusing on major challenges in the assessment and advice as perceived by the industry. Demersal and pelagic fisheries should be addressed separately. Multispecies/ecosystem expansions could be possible topics in the future.



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A second meeting will take place in Edinburgh on the 23rd of May 2023, which Yon will attend on behalf of the AC. The aim of this meeting is to list issues from stakeholders and fisheries managers which they perceive as suffering from further knowledge deficits and prioritise recommendations for research to improve scientific advice for cod. The workshop will also look at producing a roadmap for the delivery of future research needs for the management of fisheries on cod and mixed demersal fisheries in southern shelf seas.

#### **ADG VMEs (Edward Farrell)**

Farrell attended the meeting in November 2022. He explained that in September 2020 the EU Commission implemented an act which closed 87 areas in EU waters to bottom fishing. These areas had initially been identified by ICES in their January 2021 advice on Vulnerable Marine Ecosystems (VMEs), which was updated to remove UK waters in February 2022.

In order to develop the VME advice ICES used the data in its VME database to identify areas that contained or might contain VMEs. To collate this information, ICES used a VME weighting algorithm, which is an assessment system with many criteria that follows a series of steps to come up with a VME score and a confidence score. This method produces the 'VME Index', which indicates the likelihood of an area containing a VME, based on the underlying data from the VME database. ICES provided a number of scenario and option combinations for the application of the advice but did not suggest one option was the preferred one. However, in the implementing act the Commission indicated that ICES had advised that Scenario 2 – Option 1 was the optimum combination.

The ICES VME assessment procedure was not benchmarked until May 2022 (WKVMEBM) therefore the closures were based on the advice which in turn was based on the output of a non-benchmarked assessment. In May 2022 the Joint ICES/NAFO Working Group on Deep-water Ecology (WGDEC) met to review, validate and update information of areas where VMEs are known to occur or are likely to occur, bottom fishing footprint, and depth limits in EU waters in relation to the EU Deep-sea access regulation. During the WGDEC meeting, experts identified issues and needs for improving the VME assessment methodology, based on the benchmarked process, and provided recommendations for future assessment procedures. The WG could not complete the required improvements during the meeting and work continued after the meeting. As such it was noted that the resulting assessment did not represent the expert opinion of ICES WGDEC and its individual members.

In November/December 2022 the ICES Advice Drafting Group on Vulnerable Marine Ecosystems (ADGVME) met to review the advice. The ADG identified numerous issues with the assessment which had not been resolved in the interim period since WGDEC. It was not possible to rerun the assessment within the timeframe of the ADG. It decided that the experts were to rerun it over December the ADG was to be reconvened in January (12-13 and 16-17). There was a lot of discussion about what should and should not be included with the advice. The ADG did not have the time or capacity to make a judgement on the effect of scenarios and options on the fishing activity and as such this was to be removed. Further the effort data in the assessment was restricted to mobile bottom contact gear only. Static gear was not included as part of the assessment therefore it should not be included in the advice. Whether or not to present the effort (SAR) data was also a point of discussion which was unresolved.

In January 2023 the ADG could not be reconvened as the work on the assessment had not been completed. The ADGVME has been reconvened on 14-16 March 2023. Farrell is attending it on behalf of the NWWAC and will provide update at the next AC meeting.



## WGMIXFISH (Irene Prieto & Ed Farrell)

Irene Prieto explained that the first part of the meeting stressed the importance of stakeholder involvement in this ICES group. ICES assessments on mixed fisheries have many difficulties. Participants were asked how stakeholders use ICES advice and everyone concluded that the ICES advice was used as supplementary information on top of other information provided by the EU.

Farrell added that essentially the workshop was really just about getting stakeholders and the scientists from the WGMIXFISH to discuss how they were using the data, or if they were using it, and how to improve it. One of their key take home messages is that the outputs of the WGMIXFISH are not advice, and they shouldn't be referenced as such, so they are to be known as considerations now. This because there's a number of uncertainties in the results and at the moment the outputs aren't used by the Commission when it comes to setting TACs. They are only supplemental information which some stakeholders use to identify potential choke issues. Some of the key concerns about the advice which came out during the meeting were on how the mixed fish models actually handle uncertainty in the inputs assessments. *"Uncertainty in the single species assessments is not accounted for and a single figure gets carried through for each of those assessments, compounding the errors and magnifying them as you go further up in the steps"*, he explained.

Another thing to notice is that in the North Sea and Celtic Sea mixed fisheries advice they only consider category 1 assessments while there are many category 3 stocks within those areas which might be relevant choke species, such as plaice in 7f,g. This issue was raised at the meeting as including other categories would improve the advice. To conclude, Farrell reported that ICES is looking at having more stakeholder involvement before the working group stage each year. There was also a lot of discussion about how to make scientific outputs more understandable and possibly interactive through an app.

## 5 Inputs on new Discard Plan

Through its Focus Group Landing Obligation, the NWWAC is preparing advice to the MS Joint Recommendation on the post 2023 Discard Plan. For this new Discard Plan, the Commission asked MS to review all exemptions in place in the NWW and reflect on their effectiveness/usefulness.

As mentioned during the last Member States Technical Group meeting, the aim of the exemptions review is to show the impact of exemptions. The annual review cycle of this Delegated Act is a heavy administrative burden on both the MS and the Commission and the option of putting exemptions in place for a longer period of time is being considered. The timeline for the process is expected to be similar to previous years: MS need to deliver their joint recommendations by 1 May, STECF will review it in mid-May and the Delegated Act should be in place for the end of the year.

The WG members are invited to reflect on these aspects for those exemptions relevant to the Celtic Sea & West of Scotland: Were the exemptions effective? Are new exemptions needed or should others be dropped? Among the current ones, which could be considered as the most controversial and should be given priority in the review?

**ACTION:** Working Group members are invited to send their comments on exemptions to the Landing Obligation to feed the preparation of the advice on the Discard Plan 2024 being prepared by the Focus Group Landing Obligation. In particular, members are invited to reflect on measures introduced which





resulted in an increase in selectivity and in survivability.

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

1	Continue NWWAC work on ORE developments jointly with other Advisory Councils if possible.
2	Working Group members are invited to send their comments on exemptions to the Landing Obligation to feed the preparation of the advice on the Discard Plan 2024 being prepared by the Focus Group Landing Obligation. In particular, members are invited to reflect on measures introduced which resulted in an increase in selectivity and in survivability.

## 7 Participants

NWWAC members	
José Beltran	OPP-7 Burela
Emiel Brouckaert	Rederscentrale
Juan Carlos Corras Arias	FREMSS
Gérald Hussenot Desenonges	Blue Fish
Manu Kelberine	CRPMEM de Bretagne
Suso Lourido Garcia (Chair)	OPP 77 Puerto de Celeiro
John Lynch	IS&EFPO
Luis Francisco Marin	OPPAO
Patrik Murphy	IS&WFPO
Norah Parke	KFO
Corentine Piton	France Peche Durable et Responsable
Irene Prieto	ANASOL
Erwan Quemeneur	CDPMEM 29
Dominique Thomas	CMEOP
Arthur Yon	FROM Nord
NWWAC observers	
Edward Farrell	KFO
Franck Le Barzic	COBRENORD
Geert Meun	VisNed
Anais Mourtada	CNPMEM
Aodh O'Donnell	IFPO
Alexandra Philippe	EBCD
Johnny Woodlock	ISS
Experts and observers	
Kenatea Chavez-Hey	ANOP
Killian Chute	EFCA
Marta Del Avellanal	Spanish administration
Paulien Depickere	Belgian administration
Caroline Gamblin	MSC
Raymond Hall	SWFPA
Pauline Joyeux	French administration



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Mike Park	SWFPA
Pedro Riveiro	Xunta de Galicia
Julio Valeiras	IOE
<b>NWWAC Secretariat</b>	
Mo Mathies	Executive Secretary
Matilde Vallerani	Deputy Executive Secretary