



CONSEIL CONSULTATIF POUR
LES EAUX OCCIDENTALES
SEPTENTRIONALES

NORTH WESTERN
WATERS
ADVISORY COUNCIL

CONSEJO CONSULTIVO PARA
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Draft Minutes

WORKING GROUP 1 (Irish Sea)

Wednesday 13 September 2023
Teams

1 Welcome and introductions

The Chair welcomed all participants. No apologies were received ahead of the meeting. The agenda was adopted with the deletion of item 2 since no Commission representative was available to attend.

Action points from the last meeting (3 July 2023)

1	Joanne Morgan to provide brief explanation of SAM and XSA at HWG
	Done at HWG meeting on 4 July
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 though 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
	Done – fishing opportunities advice delivered on 9 August

2 Discussion on choke risks in the Irish Sea

The Chair introduced the topic and felt that the remaining problems with the draft discard plan should be considered, as well new choke challenges.

The Chair wondered when the release date was for cod 7a which the Secretariat will check. The Chair recalled that the Commission had committed to developing proposals on how to deal with 0 TAC stocks. The Secretariat advised that the FG LO would take this advice into account once it is published.

The Chair commented that whiting in the Irish Sea is one of the most worked on stocks regarding selectivity and nothing seems to be making a difference. In the ICES advice sheets catches are identified almost as high as the stock biomass which is questionable.

Johnny Woodlock referred to stocks under high pressure starting to breed at smaller sizes. Michael Keatinge offered to identify a source for this fact. Dominic Rihan referred to stocks in the Baltic Sea where this has been observed.



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Regarding haddock, the Chair mentioned a request made for a small de minimis in the past targeted at the vessels targeting haddock specifically using mesh size over 100mm. He recalled that the response was since vessels were using mesh size above 120mm on de minimis was needed. He asked if the Secretariat could look into this.

Emiel Brouckaert expressed his surprise at the ICES for sole in 7a and suggested to repeat what was included in the fishing opportunities advice. He commented that a different outcome would be hoped for based on the upcoming benchmark.

Patrick Murphy commented on the mixing of the haddock stock between the Irish Sea and Celtic Sea and asked that this be identified in the advice body.

Lynch mentioned the high discards for plaice in 7a and the Secretariat will reference this in the advice body.

Woodlock commented on the fact that some of the *Nephrops* prawn grounds will soon be part of the ORE developments and therefore closed to vessels and should this be mentioned.

The Chair felt while this was of high importance to the fishers on the ground, it might not be relevant for the choke advice.

The Secretariat referred to the upcoming Focus Group Spatial Dimension with the PelAC which can address this issue.

The Chair commented that the WG should look into the de minimis for haddock. He also identified in the skates & rays survivability is extended out to 2027 so more work can be carried out.

Woodlock mentioned that discussions between EU and UK on spurdog are very advanced which may impact fishing opportunities for spurdog. In this regard, the Secretariat recalled the NWWAC recommendation to the Member States to include an exemption on spurdog in the joint recommendation for the new discard plan. However, the legal text adopted by the Commission does not include such an exemption.

Rihan stated that the STECF advice was based on what was provided by the Member States. Ireland had provided historic information and made indications for future work, but no more information was submitted. Another issue that ICES pointed out is that survivability between trawl and static gears can vary a lot for spurdog, as for elasmobranchs in general. Many factors would have to be considered. However, he pointed out at the contradiction in the legislation because if on one hand the landing obligation applies, on the other there is a clause in the TAC & quota regulation saying individuals over a certain size need to be thrown back at sea, even if there is no advice on survivability on this species. The 100cm size limit seems to be there for political reasons only.

The Chair pointed out that from a fisher's point of view the 100cm size limit has kept bycatches very low.

Murphy asked if the evidence should not be asked for regarding the survivability of over 100cm.

Rihan stated that the rationale was to protect spawning females as the fishing effort was centered on



spawning females. He cautioned that the directed fishery may then be prohibited.

Lynch agreed that this was a valid question but how to phrase it would be difficult.

The Secretariat asked if it would be better to direct this question at the MS or the COM.

Rihan stated that the Commission is ultimately who agrees this with the UK so the question should be directed there.

Woodlock stated that France and UK had the greatest interest in spurdog, the former fishing a lot in Irish waters off the Southwest and West at the time.

Brouckaert referred to the inclusion of the spurdog in the advice on the joint recommendation and was wondering if a response was received following this. He proposed that a letter should be sent to the Commission and Member States asking for clarification on why this has not been taken into account.

ACTION: Members will send comments on the choke traffic light tool to the Secretariat

ACTION: Chair and Secretariat will follow up on haddock de minimis exemption.

ACTION: The Secretariat will draft a letter to the Commission and Member States regarding the non-consideration of the spurdog exemption.

3 Input on UK consultation on discard reform

Deadline 9 October

Main topics:

- Priority fisheries
- Catch accounting options
- Measures to avoid or reduce unwanted catch
- Discard prevention charge
- Exemptions

The Chair proposed to follow the example of the other WGs and for members to send their inputs by 20 September.

The Secretariat mentioned that Arthur Yon, FROM Nord is drafting a response to the UK consultation on REM on behalf of the AC.

The Chair felt that some of the proposals could create difficulties for Irish fisheries but that it is good overall that the UK is looking into this. He felt a for proper consideration a detailed look would be needed to also identify unintended consequences.



Brouckaert recalled the DG MARE/Defra meeting in the previous week and referred to the fact that the UK focused on quota and trying to ensure sufficient quota. He felt they are looking at changing their overall policy which all vessels in English waters will have to follow. However, the Commission has agreed a discard plan under the EU fisheries policies which is not valid for the UK. As the exemptions in the UK are expiring at the end of this year, their objective is to have something in place by 2024.

Aodh O'Donnell felt the AC needed to be careful that not all FMPs are applicable to the UK as a whole but possibly only to England, Scotland and Wales.

ACTION: Members to provide the Secretariat with written comments on the UK Discards Plan by the 20 September.

4 AOB

The Chair mentioned that Vice-Chair Norah Parke will be retiring next month and thanked her for all her work and support. He reminded participants that a new Vice-Chair will need to be elected at the next meeting.

5 Summary of actions agreed and decisions adopted by the Chair

1	Members to send comments on the choke traffic light tool to the Secretariat
2	Chair and Secretariat will follow up on haddock de minimis exemption
3	Secretariat to draft letter to the Commission and Member States regarding the non-consideration of the spurdog exemption
4	Members to provide the Secretariat with written comments on the UK Discards Plan by the 20 September.

Participants

NWWAC members	
Emiel Brouckaert	Rederscentrale
John Lynch (Chair)	IS&EFPO
Patrick Murphy	IS&WFPO
Aodh O'Donnell	IFPO
Norah Parke	KFO
Johnny Woodlock	Irish Seal Sanctuary
Experts & Observers	
Michael Keatinge	NWWAC Director
Kylie Kronal	Flemish Government



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Dominic Rihan	BIM
NWWAC Secretariat	
Mo Mathies	Executive Secretary
Matilde Vallerani	Deputy Executive Secretary