



Crab & Lobster Management Group (CMG) Meeting

7th November 2022

Remote meeting via Microsoft Teams

Attendees

Claire Pescod, Macduff Shellfish (Chair)	Jennifer Mouat, NEIFCA
Adam Holland, Northern Ireland Fishermen's Federation	Jim Evans, Welsh Fishermen's Association
Alison Freeman, Fishmongers Company	Jo Pollett, Marine Stewardship Council
Andrew Burn, Defra	Joe Redfern, Whitby Lobster Hatchery
Andrew Wheeler, Wheeler Consulting	John Balls, North Devon Fishermen's Association
Caitlin Turner, Seafish	Kevin Favis, Favis of Salcombe Ltd
Carl O'Brien, CEFAS	Lewis Tattersall, Seafish
Carrie McMinn, Agri-Food and Biosciences Institute	Louis Cattini, Sea Farms
Chris Ranford, CFPO	Michael Roach, Holderness Fishing Industry Group
Christian Proud, MMO	Mike Cohen, NFFO
Colin Bannister, SAGB	Natalie Hold, Bangor University
David Jarrad, SAGB	Patrick Smith, DAERA
Eleanor Holford, MMO	Rachel Irish, MMO
Ella Brock, Seafish	Rebecca Thomas, Falfish
Emily Theobald, MMO	Tim Smith, AIFCA
Fiona Birch, Mindfully Wired Communications	Trevor Bartlett, Devon Crab
Gary Caldwell, University of Newcastle	Udara Nagodavithana, Seafish
Georgia Clack, MMO	
Gwladys Lambert, Cefas	
Helen Hunter, Defra	

Commented [LT1]: Check CMG members list, I think we list Andy as a Fisheries Consultant or Wheeler Consultants. Check previous CMG mins

Commented [LT2]: Any indication of business / sector?

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Apologies

Delyth Dyne, Defra
Don Thompson, Jersey Fishermen's Association
Ewen Bell, CEFAS
Matthew Coleman, Bangor University
Sara Mynott, University of Exeter

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Outputs from Project UK and conclusion of outputs from Southwest Management Workshops (Jo Pollett, Marine Stewardship Council)

1. Following the FIP requirements, and using the discussions held in the workshops, the southwest crab and lobster draft harvest strategy has been developed. This can be seen in Annex 1 of the report: [Project UK south west crab management workshop: Final report](#) (further information on the outputs of the southwest management workshops can also be found in the document).
2. Input was gathered from industry through an online survey and five in person workshops as well as additional written input from industry members. Local crab fishers to the SW of England were encouraged to participate.
3. A range of technical measures, input controls and output controls were discussed (as shown in the report linked above on pp.7).
4. All workshops produced similar outputs, there was a clear consensus emerged for increased enforcement of crab management measures and improved regulations on quality of crab landed.
5. A mixture of license caps and effort controls could be used to ensure management is fair and equal across the fishery to secure sustainable stocks while maintaining socioeconomic wellbeing.
6. Concerns on management approaches have been recorded and there are tools for them to consider the risks and benefits prior to the consideration of any management options discussed.

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7. Information was presented from the outputs of the Project UK report from stakeholder events held in the Southwest of England.
8. The next step in the South-west FIPP project is to make sure the final pieces of information are fed back to the CMG and the relevant information is integrated into the fisheries management plans.

A photo a day: Crab and lobster photo app (Gwladys Lambert, Cefas)

1. CEFAS is working on improving data to input into stock assessments by developing a crab and lobster photo app that could take pictures of individual fishers catch.
2. This would enable them to decipher the length frequency distribution data needed to supplement the stock assessments.
3. A flyer was produced with basic information on how to operate the app, this will be circulated to the CMG in due course.

Declining crab catches in the Southwest (Andrew Burn)

1. Towards the end of August, feedback was received from fishers in the southwest of England highlighting concerns about the status of the crab stocks in the region.
2. This was followed up at the Southwest regional fisheries group (RFS) and concerns about the crab stock was repeated. Attendees of that meeting raised queries of whether the decline in stocks was linked to increased fishing effort leading to declining CPUE.
3. Data are being collected to understand the scale of the problem, with information being sought from IFCAs, MMO and CEFAS. Preliminary review of data suggests a consistent decline in catch rates since around 2017. However data on fishing effort (e.g. pot hauls) are incomplete making analysis more challenging.
4. When CEFAS publish their updated stock assessments later in the financial year, this may point towards the needed actions in parallel to the work of the FMP measures proposed.
5. DEFRA would like to test two options and welcomes views on these: firstly to look at introducing a measure at pace to address these specific concerns in the short term while the FMP is being developed (any evidence from this can also inform the FMP). Secondly, explore the opportunity to pilot and trial proposed new management measures currently under development through the FMP, ahead of national introduction.
6. The potential for a pot limit and other management interventions was discussed. Questions were raised whether industry specifically mentioned pot limitations as an intervention method and if other interventions were also being considered.
7. Defra will continue to engage with the CMG as one primary forum for industry engagement in discussions around this issue.
8. Concerns were raised regarding the CEFAS stock assessments of problems regarding the quality of data input and uncertainties in modelling approaches, this could lead to undermining of stock assessment outputs.
9. There are anecdotal reports of potters increasing the number of pots they fish (and reducing the number of days at sea) in response to the increasing economic costs of operating a vessel. It is also important to consider the types of pots being used as different pot configurations will have different fishing efficiencies.
10. Spatial squeeze is an issue for all sectors, and this is being exacerbated by management changes in other fisheries (e.g. closures to mobile gears / dredges elsewhere leading to displaced effort) and by increased pot numbers on the ground.
11. Concerns were raised about the potential of future pot limits to disproportionately impact smaller, often less efficient vessels.
12. Members reported a similar decline in brown crab catches in Liverpool Bay / North Wales; catches are down by at least 20% or more, compared to that around 4 years ago.

The feedback from the science sub-group (Colin Bannister, SAGB)

1. The CMG Science Sub-group last met on 4th November 2022, the meeting was largely focused on discussion of management options for crab and lobster fisheries. During the SSG meeting two key pieces of work were presented that would supplement material for the management options for UK crab and lobster fisheries. The SSG discussed outputs of the 2020 CEFAS WWER alternatives report and the Project UK FIP workshops held in the SW of England.
2. The SSG discussed evidence requirements of different management interventions to understand what data would need to be gathered in the future and what information is already available.
3. In the initial management interventions, harmonization of MLS was considered a realistic option.
4. A more thorough review is needed on the way that the fleet is segregated for management purposes, to capture significant differences in vessel efficiency between segments of the shellfish fleet. It was suggested that case studies from other fisheries (e.g. IoM) could provide examples of equitable management interventions.
5. Further thought is needed regarding the spatial management of crab stocks across jurisdictional and stock boundaries, the management landscape, for crabs in particular, is already very complex and fragmented.
6. The decline in crabs in the Southwest was discussed and CEFAS provided an overview of catch rates by vessel size around the country.
7. The SSG will be discussing the proposed shellfish carbon footprint FISP project via email.

Update on the development of the crab and lobster FMP, and stakeholder engagement events (Lewis Tattersall, Seafish)

1. The FMP development process is ongoing and at this stage the CMG FMP working group has concluded work on drafting the species-specific objectives for crab and lobster.
2. From November to December 2022, Seafish is delivering a programme of semi-informal stakeholder engagement events as part of the FMP development process. The purpose of these events is to:
 - a. Raise awareness about the development of the Crab and Lobster FMP for English waters.
 - b. Present draft FMP aims, objectives and proposed management intervention to stakeholders and gather feedback on the set direction of travel for English Crab and lobster fisheries.
3. A report summarising the stakeholder engagement events – including attendance at each, and feedback received both through the events and via other contact sources (email, phone) – has been prepared. This report will highlight key themes that emerge from the feedback obtained and is going to be used by the CMG FMP working group to further refine the aims, objectives and proposed management interventions for this FMP.
4. Members expressed interest in having additional events on the east coast of England. Subsequently, an additional event in Whitby was added to capture this feedback.

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In summary:

- * FMP development ongoing, CMG FMP working group has completed work on draft FMP objectives
- * Stakeholder engagement events have been planned around England, the purpose of these events is to:
 - 1 raise awareness about FMP
 - 2 gather feedback (use text from stakeholder eng section of FMP you wrote)

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Summary of management measures and options (Ella Brock, Seafish)

1. Brown crab fishing activity is currently managed under the Wester Waters Effort Regime (WWER). With crab listed as one of Defra's front-runner FMPs, there is now an opportunity to develop and implement improved management measures which deliver desirable outcomes at an appropriate scale.
2. The potential management measures may focus on: controlling fleet capacity (e.g. capping licences / permits), input controls (e.g. spatial / seasonal closures), output controls (e.g. TAC), and technical measures (e.g. regulating gear handling/ design; catch composition - minimum or maximum landing size/ management by sex).

3. In 2020 Defra commissioned Cefas to review alternatives to the WWER (Reeves 2020), by comparing worldwide crab fishery management approaches, and the operation of English & Welsh crab fisheries. The primary output was around the 3-S approach - management by Size, Sex, and Season, with the following recommendations: maintain or adapt current size limits and introduce option for seasonal closures as required.
4. Closures could be used to adapt effort levels should stock status decline, but would not reduce fishing effort on their own so should be considered in conjunction with pot limits.
5. Closures could be determined by analyzing 1. Current practice, 2. Availability of other fisheries, and 3. Biological considerations e.g. presence of higher proportions of moulting individuals.
6. Group members were then presented with the outputs of the Project UK southwest Crab and lobster FIP HCR workshops, which gathered industry view on a number of fleet management, effort management and technical measures. Industry views can be summarized as:
 - a. **Fleet management:** Support for agreed reciprocal access for UK & French vessels; capping shellfish permits/licenses; including recreational fishers in permit scheme; and pausing latent licenses whilst management is agreed and implemented.
 - b. **Effort management:** No support for TACs; support for capping number of pots/vessels based on current effort; support for cutting number of pots by X% if stock declines; vessel size classification should be reviewed; effort (KWDs) should be managed by fishing area (not vessel type); days at sea should be introduced for >10s (both inshore and offshore).
 - c. **Technical measures:** Support for a consistent MLS of 160mm (across SW inshore & offshore); banning landing damaged/ berried/ undersized/ soft-shelled crab; seasonal closure of fishing grounds for <10s.
7. Both the Cefas WWER alternatives report and the Project UK southwest HCR workshops report include discussions around the appropriateness of management proposals and how they could be practically implemented in a UK context, to appropriately account for the characteristics of both the stock(s) and the fisheries. This will be a key consideration for the development of future management measures.
8. A query was raised on the point regarding pot limitations being proposed as a suitable management measure, member raised the point that it was not agreed at any point that it would be a suitable management measure.
9. Question raised whether there is any potential for gaining further clarity on mortality rate for crab and lobster and on the current numbers of pots being used now.
10. If pot limitations were to be implemented, greater understanding is needed on the next steps in reducing fishing effort on crab and lobster stocks. Is there a relationship between cutting effort and cutting mortality rates among crab and lobsters.
11. If we are to prioritize pot limits, what resources do we need as a group to prioritize this? Additionally, the list of potential of interventions need to be narrowed down.
12. A timeline will be included alongside the management measures.
13. Concerns were raised around having closed seasons for the crab and lobster fishery, closing would mean that the gear would have to be brought to shore to show that it is not actively sitting on fishing vessels. However, pots are also used in the whelk fishery. Instead of closures, the inshore fleet would be rather inclined to accept a limit on days at sea.
- 1.

Pyridine toxicity to edible crab around the impact of dredging of the river Tees (Gary Caldwell)

2. Research was undertaken to explore the impact of pyridine on crabs, though yet to be published the findings showed that pyridine is considered toxic to crabs at the levels tested under laboratory conditions.
3. The research team reported that the levels of pyridine tested for impact were below the levels recorded by the Environmental Agency from the bodies of the dead crabs.

4. Controlled experiments saw that the pyridine in the water column would cause death to edible crabs.

Further correspondence to the Defra report on the mass crab death (Rachel Muckle)

1. An investigation last year included extensive testing for chemicals in the river Tees estuary which included chemicals such as pyridine. The testing looking at the presence and absence of pyridine concluded that there was no evidence to suggest that pyridine was the likely cause and that naturally occurring algal blooms had occurred in the area that could have led to mass mortality in crabs. [Investigation into Teesside and Yorkshire coast crab and lobster mortalities](#)
2. The testing that happened prior to dredging found no materials licensed for disposal at sea that did not meet international standards.
3. An independent panel of experts is to be set up to assess the evidence surrounding the large numbers of crab and lobster deaths along the NE coastline between September and December of 2021.
4. The report to the investigation summary by DEFRA is linked: [Joint agency investigation into Teesside and Yorkshire Coast Crab and Lobster mortalities investigation summary \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#)
5. Members discussed the differences in findings between research institutes and that no firm conclusions had received consensus on the cause of the crab mortality incident. Members discussed the possible formation of pyridine in the natural decay of crab tissue after death occurs, though this was not confirmed.

Actions

Number	Description	Responsible
1	Circulate SW FIP report	Seafish
2	Consider hosting additional crab FMP stakeholder engagement events on the east coast of England to ensure key ports are covered	Seafish
3	Share information on Cefas' photo app with the CMG when available	Seafish
4	Share outputs of EFRA committee findings on Teesside crab mortality with the CMG when available (early 2023)	Seafish