

**Minutes of Seafish Northern Ireland Advisory Committee
Held on Thursday 25 November 2021 by video conference**

Attendees

- Members:** Harry Wick, Northern Ireland Fish Producers' Organisation (Chair)
Bob McCoubrey, Mourne Seafood
Carrie McMinn, Agri-Food and Biosciences Institute
Mathieu Lundy, Agri-Food and Biosciences Institute
Dan Whittle, Kilkeel Seafoods
Giles Bartlett, Kilkeel Seafoods
Rosemary Johnston, Kilkeel Seafoods
Ben Collier, Northern Ireland Gear Trials
Andrew Rooney, Rooney Fish
Mark McCaughan, Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs
- Seafish:** Lynn Gilmore, Director of Communications and Engagement
Sally Chamberlain, Regional Manager – Northern Ireland
Lewis Tattersall, Marine Sustainability Manager (in part)
Holly Kaiser, Inshore Fisheries Researcher
- Presenters:** Jenny Lau, Northern Ireland Fishery Harbour Authority
Rachel Walker, Mindfully Wired (in part)
- Minutes:** Phillip Quirie, Project Co-ordinator and Administrator

1 Welcome and apologies

- 1.1 The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.
- 1.2 Apologies were shared on behalf of Ronnie McBride, Paddy Campbell, and Owen Lyttle (Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs); Sam Mawhinney (Denholm Fish Selling); Alan McCulla (Anglo-North Irish Fish Producers Organisation / Sea Source); David Galbraith (Northern Coast Lobster Fishermen's Association).

2 Minutes of the previous meeting, held on 14 October 2020

- 2.1 The Chair invited feedback on the draft minutes. The minutes were approved as an accurate record of the meeting.

ACTION 01: Phillip will upload the approved minutes of the October 2020 meeting to the Seafish website.

3 Actions from previous meeting

- 3.1 Sally confirmed all actions had been completed.

4 **Seafish Executive update**

- 4.1 Lynn took the opportunity to thank Alison Austin for her term as Committee Chair, and congratulated Harry Wick on his appointment to both the Seafish Board and as the new Committee Chair. Lynn then welcomed Sally Chamberlain as the new Seafish Regional Manager in Northern Ireland (appointed in April 2021).
- 4.2 Lynn then explained the Strategic Review Seafish have recently been engaged in, which was driven by the changing nature of the UK seafood supply chain, the increasing demands on Seafish to support the industry to respond and adapt to new and emerging challenges, and an uncertain financial future.

The review is Board-led and also aligned with formal requirements of a Cabinet Office Review, which will ensure the organisation is acting appropriately; has sound governance processes in place; and is fulfilling the role for which it was established. A Strategic Review Steering Group was established by the four Devolved Administrations, with members ensuring the review process is rigorous, independent, and that it satisfies Cabinet Office requirements.

The Strategic Review has focused on:

- Establishing the services and functions that Seafish should deliver in the future (our **Function**).
- How Seafish should be organised to deliver effectively (our **Form**).
- How Seafish should be funded sustainably, whilst ensuring the levy is equitable and that its recovery is efficient and effective (our **Funding**).

Current state of play:

- The Board has agreed a package of measures that set out the future direction of Seafish.
- The recommendations have been shaped by stakeholder views shared during workshops and the online survey.
- The recommendations will enable Seafish to continue to support the UK seafood industry to thrive across the supply chain and ensuring it is financially sustainable.
- The Board is grateful to everyone who engaged with the process.
- The review is now moving to the next phase – Ministers from each of the four Devolved Administrations will be considering the package of recommendations in early 2022.

4.3 Other Seafish news included:

- Seafish [published a response](#) to the DEFRA-published independent review of the evidence of sentience in cephalopod molluscs and decapod crustaceans by London School of Economics.
- Seafish recently launched a climate change campaign, which will be detailed in agenda item 7.
- The SNIAC-commissioned work on the impacts of noise, vibration, and electromagnetic fields on crustaceans has been [published on the Seafish website](#).

Lynn then shared a PowerPoint presentation detailing the context and proposed activities of the Seafish Annual Plan for 2022/23 (Attachment: *01 Seafish Annual Plan 22-23 – Proposed Activity*). Members were then invited to provide feedback to Sally or Lynn after the meeting.

5 **Seafish Northern Ireland work update**

- 5.1 Sally presented a summary update of the Seafish work programme in Northern Ireland (Attachment: *02 Seafish NI Update Nov 2021*).

5.2 The Chair noted that it was particularly impressive to see as many as 349 teachers taught via the MaSTE project – the subsequent reach of that number will be enormous, demonstrating the benefit of the project and the value to the Northern Irish industry.

6 Northern Ireland Small Ports Survey

6.1 Holly gave an overview of the draft results of the small ports survey, which was an investigation into infrastructure and facilities at Northern Ireland landing locations with a commercial fishing presence (Attachment: *03 NI Small Port Survey Update Nov 2021*). The final report is being drafted and is expected to be published early 2022.

ACTION 02: Sally will circulate a link to the final report when it has been published on the Seafish website.

7 Climate change and supporting UK seafood

7.1 Lewis presented an overview of the recently launched Seafish climate change activity (Attachment: *04 Climate Change and Seafood*). The presentation explained the importance of climate change to the seafood industry; the challenges, potential impacts and opportunities it brings; and what is being done to support the industry to mitigate and adapt to a changing climate. There is a variety of climate change information, case studies, and assets available on the [Seafish climate change webpages](#). The campaign looks to showcase further case studies of climate change innovation, and Lewis asked committee members to contact him if they know of any other potential case studies.

7.2 Members enquired if Seafish has any knowledge of the development of hybrid fishing vessels, and a brief discussion took place about fuel usage and emissions. Daniel asked if this committee would support a piece of work that Seafish Economics team can carry out to assess fuel usage and emissions in the Northern Ireland fleet from the three primary ports. It was agreed that this piece of work would be useful and should be explored.

ACTION 03: Sally will arrange discussion with Seafish Economics and Daniel to scope a study of carbon emissions in the Northern Ireland fleet across the three primary landing ports.

8 Promoting Northern Ireland Seafood EMFF project update

8.1 Rachel from Mindfully Wired Communications gave a presentation on the Northern Ireland Seafood Trail project (Attachment: *05 Promoting NI Seafood*) which is funded by DAERA through the EMFF. The objective is to increase domestic consumption of locally-landed seafood and locally-farmed shellfish in Northern Ireland, targeting mid-market and economically stretched families and promote Northern Ireland's fishery and aquaculture products, highlighting in particular local species and seafood sustainability.

The development of the Northern Ireland Seafood Trails will encourage people to connect with fishermen, discover new seafood businesses, engage with local fishing communities, taste delicious seafood, and learn new ways to cook and prepare seafood. The project has gone through an extensive research and development phase, and community outreach, and Rachel presented some of the Trails digital marketing assets.

8.2 A discussion followed and members suggested it would be useful to encourage tourists to engage with the seafood trails. It was also suggested Belfast be considered as an additional trail, and Bob agreed to work with Mindfully Wired to explore this.

ACTION 04: Sally will engage with Tourism NI to identify ways of promoting the Seafood Trails to tourists.

ACTION 05: Sally will work with Bob and Mindfully Wired to explore the possibility of creating a Belfast Seafood Trail to add to the suite of town trails and the overall trail map.

9 DAERA update

9.1 Mark provided an update from the Sea Fisheries Policy and Grants team at DAERA:

9.1.1 *Fishing opportunities 2022:*

- Consultations with coastal states including the EU are ongoing. Of most interest are the UK-EU discussions, of which the primary purpose is to agree the Total Allowable Catch for around 70-80 fish stocks shared with the EU.
- For most stocks, the TAC is likely to be set in-line with Maximum Sustainable Yield fish stock advice from the International Council for the Exploration of the Seas (ICES).
- For the Irish Sea, the main difficulty lies with cod and whiting, which are in a poor state and are caught as by-catch in *Nephrops* and haddock fisheries.
- For cod, there is some evidence that factors other than fishing mortality have a greater effect on the change in biomass.
- The whiting stock in the Irish Sea has been at a low level since late 1990s and 90% of Irish Sea catches are below the Minimum Conservation Reference Size. This is a problem for the *Nephrops* fleet, as conventional selection by size is extremely difficult without also losing significant quantities of the target stock.

9.1.2 *Fisheries funding:*

- The Maritime and Fisheries Fund 2021/22 is open for applications, with £1.8m available in respect of grants across fisheries sectors. The 2021/22 fund will support the type of applications that were eligible for support under the previous European Maritime and Fisheries Fund. The funding must be committed and spent by 31 March 2022.
- Around £6m will be available for grants over the next 3 financial years.
- DAERA is now looking at developing a strategy on how this support could be best utilised and will soon be engaging key stakeholder groups on developing the strategy for future support.

9.1.3 *Brown crab measures and consultation:*

- DAERA is bringing in legislation to increase the minimum landing size of edible crab from 140mm to 150mm, and a prohibition on retaining and landing the detached claws of edible crab. The measures have been approved by the Minister and the DAERA Committee.
- DAERA expects legislation to come into effect in early 2022.

9.1.4 *Soft shell edible crab:* DAERA will begin consulting soon on proposals to prohibit the landing of soft shell edible crabs and the selling of soft shell crabs for non-human consumption.

9.1.5 *Inshore vessel monitoring systems:* DAERA is planning to conduct a consultation on proposals for vessel monitoring systems for the under 12-metre fleet.

9.1.6 *Fishing and seafood development programme:*

- Since the last SNIAC meeting, DAERA has gained approval from Department of Finance to procure environmental and technical studies required to take the proposals to develop fishery harbours to the next stage.
- It should be noted that DAERA has not gained approval to construct harbour extensions or other works – just to carry out necessary studies and assessments, which will inform later business cases and decisions.

10 AFBI update

10.1 Carrie provided an overview of recent AFBI activity (Attachment: *06 AFBI Update Nov 2021*), which included brief updates on the lobster science report (final report published [here](#)); the continuation of v-notching in the pot fishing industry; the inshore vessel monitoring system project in Strangford Lough with

tech firm Succorfish; the brown crab assessment sheet (which can be found [here](#)); and scallop observer and survey work.

11 NIFHA Marine Litter Project update

11.1 Jenny gave a detailed overview of the progress of the marine litter project to date (Attachment: *07 NIFHA Marine Litter Update Nov 2021*). The presentation outlined what the project is, progress thus far, and forthcoming activity. It's estimated that 8 million tonnes of plastic enter the oceans every year, affecting marine plants and wildlife, seaside visitors, and the fishing industry. The primary activities in the project plan include:

- Supporting beach cleans across Ardglass, Kilkeel, and Portavogie harbour areas.
- Engaging local fishermen and raising awareness about management of end-of-life fishing gear.
- Encouraging vessels to actively participate in the 'Fishing for Litter' scheme.
- Raising awareness through local media.
- Production of a marine litter action plan.
- Development of local code of practice for harbour users.

12 Date of next meeting and meeting and close

12.1 The Chair thanked everyone for their time and explained that there will be engagement with members on an individual basis to gather thoughts on the future direction of the Advisory Committee. It was agreed the next meeting should be in approximately six months.

ACTION 06: Sally will arrange one-to-one sessions with committee members to gather thoughts and ideas on the future direction of the Seafish Northern Ireland Advisory Committee.

ACTION 07: Phillip will establish a suitable date for the next meeting in March 2022 and arrange accordingly.

No.	Action List	Timeline (Status)	Owner
1.	Phillip will upload the approved minutes of the October 2021 meeting to the Seafish website.	December	Phillip
2.	Sally will circulate a link to the final small ports survey report when it has been published on the Seafish website.	When published	Sally
3.	Sally will arrange discussion with Seafish Economics and Daniel to scope a study of carbon emissions in the Northern Ireland fleet across the three primary landing ports.	February	Sally
4.	Sally will engage with Tourism NI to identify ways of promoting the Seafood Trail to tourists.	December	Sally
5.	Sally will work with Bob and Mindfully Wired to explore the possibility of creating a Belfast Seafood Trail to add to the map.	December	Sally

6.	Sally will arrange one-to-one sessions with committee members to gather thoughts and ideas on the future direction of the Seafish Northern Ireland Advisory Committee.	February	Sally
7.	Phillip will establish a suitable date for the next meeting in March 2022 and arrange accordingly.	March	Phillip