

**Note of Common Language Group (CLG) meeting held at Friends House, London.
Tuesday 22 March 2016**

For the CLG minutes and meeting presentations see:

<http://www.seafish.org/responsible-sourcing/discussion-forums/the-common-language-group>

1. Welcome, introductions and apologies

Mike Kaiser welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Adam Green	Lyons Seafoods
Alan Steele	Traceall Global
Alex Olsen	Espersen
Andy Hickman	Tesco
Andy Matchett	Coombe Fisheries Ltd
Bill Lart	Seafish
Chloe North	MSC
Christina Dixon	World Animal Protection
Dale Rodmell	NFFO
Dave Garbutt	Sealord
David Jarrad	Shellfish Association of Great Britain
David Parker	Young's Seafood
Emma McLaren	Sustainable Fisheries Partnership
Frances James	MacAlister Elliott & Partners Ltd
Hannah Macintyre	Marks & Spencer
Harry Owen	MCB Seafoods Ltd
Helen Jordan	British Plastics Federation
Herman Wisse	GSSI
Huw Thomas	Morrisons
Jim Masters	Fishing into the Future
John Butler	Oscar Mayer Group
Jonathan Shepherd	Seafish Board
Karen Green	Seafish
Katie Miller	Sustainable Seafood Coalition
Katrina Borrow	Mindfully Wired Communications
Klaas de Vos	Environmental Defense Fund
Kristian Teleki	International Sustainability Unit
Laky Zervudachi	Direct Seafoods
Liane Veitch	ClientEarth
Lisa Genasci	ADM Capital Foundation
Maria Westerbos	Plastic Soup Foundation
Martin Jaffa	Callander McDowell
Matt Sowrey	Defra
Mel Groundsell	Seafish
Mike Park	SWFPA

Mike Kaiser	Bangor University (Chair)
Morven Robertson	Friend of the Sea
Paul Leonard	MMO Appointee for the Sussex IFCA
Richard Stansfield	Flatfish Ltd
Stephan Jermendy	Environmental Justice Foundation
Steve Simpson	University of Exeter
Stewart Cuchey	Cefas
Suzannah Walmsley	ABPmer
Thomas Maes	Cefas
Toby Middleton	MSC
Tracy Cambridge	WWF

Apologies

Ally Dingwall	Sainsbury's
Alma Bonillo	Joseph Robertson Ltd
Andrew Smith Iceland	Seafood Barraclough Ltd
Chris Brown	Asda
Chris Leftwich	Consultant
Chris Williams	New Economics Foundation
Elisabeth Whitebread	Greenpeace
Emi Katoh	MRAG
Estelle Brennan	Lyons Seafoods
Giles Bartlett	SAI Global
Jess Sparks	Seafood Scotland
Jim Portus	SWFPO
Jon Harman	Cleugh Maritime
Lucy Blow	New England Seafoods
Marcus Coleman	Seafish
Mark Webber	Ocean-Fish
Mary Beaver	2 Sisters Food Group
Max Goulden	MacAlister Elliott & Partners Ltd
Mike Brummitt	Regal Fish Supplies
Neil Auchterlonie	IFFO
Nicki Holmyard	Consultant
Nigel Edwards	Icelandic Seachill
Nigel Williams	2 Sisters Food Group
Peter Stagg	Le Lien Ltd
Phil MacMullen	Seafish
Sam Stone	MCS
Tom Pickerell	Seafish
Walter Anzer	Frucom

2. Minutes from the last meeting held on 11 November 2015.

The final minutes were accepted as a true reflection of the meeting and have been added to the CLG web page. Attendees were asked to take note of the meeting guidelines. In the following minutes Seafish will provide a link to the various presentations given at the meeting but not summarise the whole presentation. In the main we do not attribute the comments made at the meeting. Papers were sent round and tabled covering the activities of the other Seafish groups (Aquaculture, Discards, Ethics and Skates and Rays) and a list of forthcoming seafood events. A full list can be

found on the Seafish website: <http://www.seafish.org/about-seafish/news-and-events/events>

Matters arising covered the circulation of various links which were sent round in the CLG meeting follow-up email. All the presentations were added to the website. There were requests to look at microplastics as a possible CLG topic. This is on the agenda today.

Microplastics in the marine environment and the food chain - science and mitigating strategies

3. The bigger picture - microplastics in the oceans. What is meant by this and how big a problem is it. Maria Westerbos, Plastic Soup Foundation.

http://www.seafish.org/media/1619643/clg_mar2016_plasticsoupfoundation.pdf

This painted a graphic picture of the plastic waste inputs from land into the ocean in 2010 and the development of the microbead coalition campaign. The objective of the campaign is to prevent plastic microbeads in personal care products ending up in the sea. Consumers have been asked to stop using products containing microbeads. The Beat the Microbead app makes it easy to check whether a product contains plastic.

4. Sources, fate and effects of microplastics. Thomas Maes, Cefas.

http://www.seafish.org/media/1619646/clg_march2016_marinelitter_cefas.pdf

Explained the ocean-based sources of marine litter: fishing vessels, cargo ships, stationary platforms, fish farming installations, pleasure crafts and other vessels; and land-based sources including: littering, dumping, poor waste management practices, untreated sewage and storm water discharges, riverine inputs, industrial facilities, tourism and extreme natural events. This also covered the socio-economic and environmental impacts of marine litter; the definition of microplastics; a case study on microplastics in UK sewage treatment waters; the potential biological interactions of microplastics with marine organisms; and marine litter initiatives. The concluding remark was that the only way to manage the marine litter pollution issue is by limiting the input - changing ways and behaviours that cause marine litter to enter the environment.

Discussion

- **Q.** Do microplastics get into fish flesh? **Answer.** There is less risk of direct contamination with fish, more with bivalves. Plastic waste has been food in the fish intestines but not in the fish flesh yet, but we don't really know and more work is needed.
- **Q.** Does depuration alleviate the problem with bivalves? **Answer.** Yes clean water does but of course there is an added cost associated with depuration.
- **Q.** There seems to be a considerable amount of awareness but a lack of solutions. Is there misdirection in the solutions that are being considered such as the Ocean Clean Up project? We all need to be more strategic and careful about building expectations of any one solution. There has been no mention of a circular economy. Are any of the proposed solutions considered viable? **Answer.** There is no easy technical solution and any real solutions are in the distant future. The initial reaction with 'mopping up' projects such as Ocean Clean Up is to clean it up, but they are not the solution. The real need is to change behaviour and stop the pollution at sources rather than clean it up. We can't talk about a circular economy if we keep polluting the seas and adding microplastics to products.

- **Q.** There was mention of a case study on sewage treatment waters. Would filtration remove all of the microplastics? **Answer.** There are likely to be a technological fixes but they are increasingly expensive.
- **Q.** Are bio-plastics as damaging as plastics? **Answer.** How plastics biodegrade is in itself an issue as they simply degrade into smaller particles. Bio-plastics degrade within 50 years.
- There have been requests for bio-degradable netting but this needs to be carefully tested at sea as this type of net creates its own problems as the nets degrade into smaller particles. They do however sink immediately so would catch less once on the bottom.

Action: There is clearly no one singular solution. We could consider whether there was any appetite for another group to look at this more specifically with a forum on microplastics.

UK fisheries

5. Shadow fisheries risk assessments for MPAs. Suzannah Walmsley, ABPmer. http://www.seafish.org/media/1619649/clg_march2016_abpmer_mpas.pdf

Outlined the approach to carrying out assessments of fishing in European Marine Sites (EMS) to consider how to develop and trial approaches to improve evidence for Assessments; gears and how they may impact habitats; spatial and temporal information on fishing activities; new approaches to assessing exposure to fishing; also natural disturbance modelling to inform assessment by developing a model to quantify how often the seabed is disturbed by natural processes, the mobility of sediments and the presence of mobile bedforms, the proportion of time, and the number of days per year, to consider fishing disturbance in the context of levels of natural disturbance and to recognise that fishing results in other pressures and impacts.

Discussion

- **Q.** Did you consider the use of VMS to draw any conclusions about the level of compliance? **Answer.** There were no spatial restrictions and the level of compliance was not an aspect. This could be useful especially combined with knowledge on whether a gear is up or down.
- Conclusion bullet point 6 is an interesting conclusion. *Uncertainties in habitat extent and condition limit the reliability of conclusions, and should be addressed before restrictive management is implemented.* In essence this is the reverse of how EU MPAS are managed. Data collection is essential but this is expensive.

6. Three months into the demersal landing obligation (LO) – what has been the initial reaction and how has it impacted on the supply chain.

6a. Perspective from Matt Sowrey, Defra.

http://www.seafish.org/media/1619652/clg_march2016_lo_defra.pdf

This is the biggest change in fisheries management for a generation. The landing obligation is being phased in from 2015 to 2019. There was the successful introduction of the LO to pelagic fisheries in 2015. 2016 is the first year of the demersal landing Obligation but there has been no 'big bang'. For year 1, from 1 January 2016, only certain demersal fisheries are affected, based on gear type, sea area and catch thresholds. The quota species affected in 2016 are the following species for certain areas and certain gear types including: haddock, hake, Nephrops, Northern prawn, plaice, saithe, sole and whiting. In 2016 we are not aware of any major issues reported. The current focus is on 2017 – the regional groups of Member States are currently

meeting to decide phasing for 2017; the Advisory Committees are involved; and Defra is seeking industry insight to inform the UK position on 2017 phasing. In 2017 we could see more undersized fish landed and this could be an issue in the future but to date very few ports have registered to handle Animal By-Products. Choke species are an issue in a mixed fishery. Quota management is devolved and there are issues over whether quotas are in the right place at the right time.

6b. Perspective from Mike Park, SWFPA.

http://www.seafish.org/media/1619655/clg_march2016_lo_swfpa.pdf

The LO is a new piece of EU law that makes fishermen fully accountable for what they catch rather than what they land to market which is a complete reversal of previous law. The LO has created a natural move to improve selectivity but there is also the reality that once quota is reached fishing has to stop. The big issue is that choke species (three scenarios described) have the potential to shut down a business. The aim is to put in place comprehensive phasing arrangements for 2017 and beyond to try to avoid any 'big bangs'. The Advisory Councils are trying to look at the extent of the problem and we know that hake and saithe could present issues and have the potential to close down the fishery after 26% and 60% of the year respectively. Our focus is on monitoring the profile of the current catch and there are lots of ongoing projects looking into this whole issue. A graph was used to illustrate the performance of a control/reference vessel compared with the rest of the fleet.

Discussion

- **Q.** The inference is that there has not been an issue this year. Is this because of much better selectivity? **Answer.** Not too many species are involved this year so it is not such an issue but we know that 2017 could be a problem. We want to be ambitious but we are not underestimating the work involved.
- **Q.** How are reference/control vessels selected? **Answer.** Catch quota trials have been running in the lead up to the introduction of the LO but these vessels were incentivised to have cameras on board. In the current situation it is not clear how to encourage vessels to carry cameras. Legislation on this would be a last resort but an agreement on this at Member State level is not easy. Other MS are very opposed to cameras. At a UK level we want vessels to buy into it. Ultimately we need a level playing field.
- **Q.** How is all this being recorded in logbooks? **Answer.** Everything now has to be recorded over 50kg. Discarding of fish is now illegal. Kenn Skau Fischer, from the Danish Fishermen PO reported at the last Discard Action Group meeting that they had seen a marked decline in the number of vessels carrying a scientific observer.
- **Q.** Do we need a platform to make quota trading more transparent? **Answer.** As a fisherman it is not possible to access catch data from another Member State so there is no way of knowing what quota may be available for trade but there would be concerns about opening this up and making it more transparent and the EU will not create a trading platform.
- **Q.** Under a possible Brexit what would change? **Answer.** It is well-reported in the press that the Scottish fishing industry is not in favour of the EU but a Brexit situation would create a lot of problems. Fishing could potentially be one of the easier negotiations but in terms of transparency it would be more difficult.
- **Q.** Discards are banned in Norway could we not just use their example? **Answer.** Early on in the LO negotiations there were attempts to use the example of

Norway where there is a discard ban – they use a bigger mesh size and have closed areas for small fish. However there are views that this is a weak regime and what we want is a more robust regime that is respected and adhered to by the industry as a whole. We have to make this work but it could mean more fleet consolidation. As an industry we have already come a long way. There has already been a significant shift and we always have to be aware of the marketplace.

- **Comment.** Cameras on board vessels are not the sole answer. EMFF could fund cameras but it is the resources needed to monitor the footage that is more of an issue.

7. Report from the Malta Seaweb Seafood Summit. Led by Seafish.

To focus on key themes and perspectives, new debates, emerging issues.

Phil MacMullen delivered a ‘virtual’ synopsis of his views of the Summit. Key points:

- The proportion of industry delegates varies widely. In Malta around 50% of delegates were from eNGOs with the others coming from industry, governments, academia, consultancies, certifiers and so on. Thai industry, government and enforcement staff were the largest single contingent!
- For Seafish this was a very good event. In Malta we were very visible and had a strong presence in the proceedings as well. The result was that our events were very well attended and produced good follow-up. We, as Seafish staff, were frequently buttonholed for more details, proposals for collaboration and so on. There were four areas where we were clearly global ‘thought leaders’: supply chain ethics, economic impact analysis (landing obligation), the Responsible Fishing Scheme and RASS; and there was a real buzz around discussions in these areas.
- **Key themes - Ethics in the seafood supply chain.** Complete acceptance by industry of the scale and significance of the issues, a review of the existing tools to tackle problems and identification of the need to rationalise and standardise these into an effective strategic process towards elimination of labour and other abuses. A key area of continuing abuse is at sea. There was a clear consensus for a clear benchmark standard for ethical supply, based on values expressed by FAO and probably mediated by GSSI, rather than the chaotic introduction of multiple schemes by different campaigning bodies.
- **Key themes - Future scenarios.** Population growth, income/demographic changes, categorising protein types, (managing) demand patterns for proteins, environmental stressors and their impacts including ocean temperature and pH changes, the relative impacts of various aquatic and terrestrial production systems, management issues and productivity potential, and the need to increase aquatic protein supply. The inevitable conclusions focused on the urgent need both to increase responsible and robust aquatic food production and to manage consumer perceptions in order to increase demand.
- **Key themes – Sustainability.** With much attention paid to raising consumer awareness and generating trust in the supply chain.
- **Key themes - Impacts of towed gears on the seabed and the non-commercial assemblages of communities that live there.** New perspectives with a new global review showed conclusively that a significant proportion of fishing grounds are not impacted because of the patchy nature of fishing, and that overall the impacts of towed gears are less than had previously been assumed. This has only been revealed by examining vessel tracks at high

resolution. These and other findings have great significance for issues like effort management in sensitive areas, advice on the sourcing of seafood based on fishing methods and the certification of fisheries by bodies that have historically 'marked down' towed gear fisheries. Also how to 're-educate' consumers who were now convinced that, for example, all seafood caught by towed gears was unacceptable...?

- **Key themes - A review of management options for fisheries that are deemed to be 'data-deficient' and often therefore assumed to be badly- or un-managed.** Newly-developed protocols could now rapidly assess an appropriate alternative approach to management and fishermen were well able to – and must – play a significant role in the management process.
- **Key themes - Reviews of initiatives to combat IUU fishing, improve traceability, describe provenance and engage consumers, related increasingly good news.**
- **Key themes - The increasing influence of GSSI on fisheries and aquaculture certification standards was welcomed.** Issues of trust and the respective roles of industry, governments, enforcers, campaigners and consumers.
- **Key themes - The EU Landing Obligation.** A complete reversal of previous EU law. Fishers are now responsible for what they remove from the sea which reverses the burden of proof for compliance.

Discussion

- It was a bit North American centric, but also very good to see that what we do in the UK is acknowledged as world leading. The event was great for networking and sharing experience. The focus on trawling was particularly interesting. There was also great diversity in the number of workshops.
- The North American domination was evident - on the Tuesday afternoon all the panellists were North American. On the Wednesday afternoon there was much more diversity but all interesting workshops were at the same time. There was lots of positive feedback about UK initiatives and we should consider what we can do about influencing the agenda going forward.
- The Global Ghost Gear Initiative side event was very well attended.
- There was a strong focus on traceability with examples of small scale fisheries and supply chain 'face ability'.

Action: CLG (and Seafish as a sponsor) to write to Seaweb about the agenda for the 2017 Seattle Summit.

8. Latest developments

8.1. An update on the European Maritime Fisheries Fund. Matt Sowrey, Defra.

http://www.seafish.org/media/1619661/clg_march2016_emff_defra.pdf

UK EMFF allocation is €243m: Core (industry support) - €146m; Enforcement/control - €45m; and Data collection - €52m. To date since 18 January 2016 there have been 76 expressions of interest, 47 applications have been submitted and 18 applications accepted. A different approach is being used this time. There are different criteria and not all will be open all the time. It is likely to become more targeted. The focus is on gear selectivity, aquaculture, ports and harbours (CFP-focussed), processing, marketing, health and safety on board and Fishery Local Action Groups (FLAGs).

Discussion

- **Q.** Are these figures for the UK or England? **Answer.** UK wide.

- **Q.** There is an issue over solvency/cash flow because this fund is paid retrospectively. This would seem to exclude those applicants who can't front load expenditure and don't have sufficient cash flow. Can this be addressed? **Answer.** That is the way the fund operates, and this is dictated by EU legislation. The offer of funding is usually enough for the Banks.
- **Q.** Speed of access is another issue. This should be an enabling fund – is there a fast track application route for smaller funds? **Answer.** We are trying to adopt a slightly less risk adverse approach but have been penalised in the past for taking short cuts.
- **Q.** The £52m data collection fund – is this only accessible by Government under the Data Collection Framework? **Answer.** Yes but there is not enough there. Government departments will have to make up the shortfall.
- **Comment.** There have been issues in the past with the Marine Management Organisation (MMO) but it does look like the MMO wants to engage with industry more.

8.2. AIPCE added water task force. Alex Olsen, Esperson.

This is a global initiative with co-operation between industry, AIPCE-CEP, National Fisheries Institute USA, Seafish, scientists and industry experts. This issue is being looked at in a pre-competitive way and brand protection, with the intention to share data, intelligence and reference materials. This group is looking at water fraud and the variety in water content levels relating to species, season, wild/aquaculture, different processing techniques and the different added water techniques.

8.3. Update on the Global Sustainable Seafood Initiative. Hermann Wisse, GSSI.

http://www.seafish.org/media/1619664/clq_march2016_gssi.pdf

This explained and updated the group on the latest developments re GSSI. Eight schemes agreed to take part in the pilot tests. GSSI has just published the first benchmark for public comment on the Alaska RFM with comments invited by 5 April 2016. There are seven clear steps in the process. The GSSI has an ecological approach and aims to 'operationalise' the FAO Code of Conduct on Responsible Fisheries which provides the framework.

Discussion

- This is a great project. The inference is that if people do not apply to be judged under the GSSI process that they are not as worthy. **Answer.** We want to promote a positive message and the hope is that suppliers will start asking for schemes to be recognised by the GSSI.
- **Q.** Do you have confidence in the robustness of the tool? **Answer.** We have complete confidence and know this tool is important to our partners and the supply chain as a whole.
- **Q.** Has any thought been given to benchmarking Fishery Improvement Project standards and emerging markets? **Answer.** We have been considering this. There are ongoing discussions with the partners about next steps.

Action: Circulate link www.ourgssi.org/

8.4. Sustainable Seafood Coalition. Katie Miller, SSC.

This explained and updated the group on the latest developments re the SSC. The partners are now focusing on FIPs with a UK focus and engagement with the catching sector, and there are five objectives linked to this, as well as work more closely with Project UK.

Action: Circulate link <http://www.sustainableseafoodcoalition.org/>

9. Date of next meeting

The date for the next meeting is Wednesday 29 June at Friends House, London. The CLG Steering Group will meet to discuss the agenda for the next meeting. Any ideas for agenda items should be sent to k_green@seafish.co.uk