

SIAG meeting minutes 22/07/2020

Chair: Barrie Deas (NFFO)

Attendees: Aoife Martin (Seafish), Holly Kaiser (Seafish), Barrie Deas (NFFO), Claire Pescod (Macduff Shellfish), Colin Bannister (SAGB), Ewen Bell (Cefas), Harry Wick (NIFPO), Jim Evans (WFA), Joanna Messini (Defra), John Balls (NDFA), Andrew Wheeler (Wheeler Consulting), Les Lawrence (Dorset fish), Martyn Youell (Waterdance), Mike Roach (HFIG), Patrick Smith (DAERA), Sarah Clark (Devon and Severn IFCA), Sarah Horsfall (SAGB), Richard Hoskin (MMO), Helen Hunter (Defra), Stella Bartolini (Defra), Beshlie Pool (South Devon and Channel Shellfishermen), Tony Delahunty (NFFO), Paul Trebilcock (CFPO), Brian Pawley (NFFO), Jon Davies (Defra).

Apologies: Andrew Brown (Macduff Shellfish), Mark Moore (Dartmouth crab), Paul Brown (Brown and Bright), Jim Portus (SWFPO). Dom Thompson (Jersey Fishermen's Association), Bill Brock (BNFS)

Action number	Description	Responsible	Timeframe
1.	Update the Governance paper to reflect meeting feedback. Agreed that the governance paper would be circulated and discussed at each meeting.	Seafish	Ongoing
2.	Look into the funding options to ensure the group has enough representation from industry i.e. paid expenses for fishermen.	Seafish	Before next meeting.
3.	Include a standing agenda item on international issues at future meetings.	Seafish/Defra	Before next meeting.
4.	Review the draft Shellfish Fisheries Plan paper and send comments to the Chair	All	End of August.
5.	Convene a special meeting to further consider the proposed Shellfish Fisheries Plan, once comments on the draft paper have been received.	Seafish	End of August.
6.	Comments or questions or comments on the FOIF Action Plan to be sent to Seafish.	All	Immediately.
7.	Circulate minutes from the most recent WMG	Seafish	Ongoing.

Update on actions from last meeting:

All actions from the last meeting were reviewed and are summarised below:

- **Chair of the SIAG:** Nominations for the chair of the group were gathered and it has been agreed that Barrie Deas (NFFO) will remain chair of the SIAG. Tony Delahunty was nominated to be chair of the CMG and will adopt this role going forward.
- **Membership of the group:** Some progress has been made to engage with the devolved administrations; Welsh government is engaged with the whelk group and Northern Ireland (DAERA) is involved in the Crab group. Discussions are ongoing with Marine Scotland.
- **Fisheries Minister:** It has not been possible to formally invite the Fisheries Minister to attend a SIAG meeting but the intention is still to invite her at a future date.

- **Understanding current shellfish legislation:** Defra has completed a list of all legislative measures applying to shellfish species which was circulated to the group prior to the meeting.
- **Shellfish management plan:** The sub-group met to discuss the proposed content of a Shellfish Fisheries Plan. A draft paper has been tabled for discussion.

Review of membership and governance principles of the SIAG:

Governance: A draft paper on a proposed shellfish governance model was circulated for discussion. This paper also included a set of 'Rule of Engagement' in lieu of a ToR. The proposed governance model consists of two tiered approach with an overarching strategic shellfish group supported by species management groups.

It was agreed that it is important that the SIAG does not duplicate or hinder the work of other groups around the country who have similar objectives. Therefore, it is the responsibility of the representatives around the table to communicate the work of the SIAG to the groups they are also sitting on and vice versa.

SIAG members supported the proposed governance model

The 'Rules of Engagement' were also discussed and two points were raised:

- The Participation principle should be amended to include a reference to members supporting the implementation of the groups actions
- The Advocate principle should be amended to acknowledge that there will be times when individual members may not be in a position to support specific actions; this is acceptable provided members continue to work within the spirit of compromise

Membership: The intention of the group is to represent the broad spectrum of interests of the shellfish industry. Given that the group is so new it is unlikely yet to fully represent the full spectrum of industry interests however the door remains open to new members and existing members should encourage other interested parties to get engaged. How we communicate the values, goals and objectives of the group so that the right people are aware of the work underway and how they can get involved is also important. Using the communication channels of the current members will be integral to ensure that fishermen are targeted and brought into the process.

The issue of getting active fishermen better engaged in the SIAG was also discussed. The option of covering expenses for fishermen travelling to meetings was considered as a possible option and it was agreed that this would be explored further.

International fisheries implications for SIAG:

It was acknowledged that EU negotiations are currently underway and that the UK will transition out of the EU at the end of December. This will have implications for shellfish fisheries; impacting on exports, the potential displacement of effort by non-UK vessels to non-TAC fisheries, and other issues that we may not yet realise.

Given the importance of international issues it was agreed that a standing agenda item will be including at future meetings. The Defra trade team should be able to support these discussions.

Update on Fisheries Bill:

Defra provided an update on the current state of the Fisheries Bill and how far it has progressed through the House of Lords where a number of key amendments were proposed by opposition parties:

- Prioritising environmental sustainability over other objectives in the Bill
- Designating quota to new entrants.
- Introduction of compulsory Vessel Monitoring Systems (VMS) to be installed on all vessels.

The Government was deliberating on how to deal with the proposed Lords amendments when the Bill arrived in the Commons.

The Bill establishes the framework for how the UK will manage fisheries in the future. Key points to note include:

- A joint fisheries statement will be produced which sets out how each administration will meet the Bill's objectives. The hope is that joint policies will be agreed with the DAs, but recognising devolution, this may not always be possible.
- Fisheries management plans (FMPs) will be the way government develop the more responsive and effective management, which the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) has failed to do. Defra will produce a schedule for FMPs but there is an opportunity for groups like the SIAG to start this work now which can then be included in the Defra schedule.

Outline structure of shellfish fisheries management plan and overview of approach:

SIAG discussed the draft Shellfish Fisheries Management Plan paper. The paper sets out why we need a shellfish management plan and provides possible options and structures that the group could consider. Although two options were presented (national plan versus a species specific plan) it was agreed that a hybrid approach could also be an option.

Comments on draft shellfish fisheries plan paper:

- It was noted that it is important to consider regulatory structures including what role the local authorities might have in implementing the fisheries plan and perhaps this should be included in the overview of the paper.
- The group should not get tied down in the bureaucratic nature of fisheries management; the focus should be the content of management plans; local measures can be implemented in the meantime as the work is ongoing and will contribute to the final objective. Therefore, we should not get unduly caught up in the statutory process and trialling some initiatives in the short term would help us get some of the work underway
- It was suggested that a hybrid approach may be a third option. This would involve developing an overarching framework in the form of a national shellfisheries plan (as described above) and using this to create species-specific plans which could involve a significant amount of regional input to implement.

Any comments on the paper are to be sent back to Aoife Martin (Seafish) or the Chair. To enable a more detailed discussion to occur surrounding this action, a special meeting of the SIAG will be convened to discuss how to progress the proposal.

Update on FOIF action plan:

The action plan was circulated to the group prior to the meeting. Given that time was tight it was agreed that questions or observation on the action plan should be sent to Aoife Martin (Seafish)

Update on Whelk Management Group (WMG):

The WMG is one of the species management groups referenced in the governance paper. Aoife Martin provided an update on the WMG meeting held on 21 July.

- To ensure that all the different groups are clearly understood to a wider audience it has been decided that a website for the SIAG, with pages for the WMG and the Crab Management Group (CMG) also, should be created to draw attention to our presence. However, for the time being Seafish will facilitate this on their webpage and they will also work on a draft press release for each of the groups.
- The WMG is reviewing the effectiveness and appropriateness of existing management tools
- The WMG agreed to some short-term actions which are focussed on data and research to try and understand individual whelk fisheries and stocks and what management interventions may be necessary.

It was actioned that the minutes from the most recent WMG meeting should be shared with SIAG members.

Concluding Remarks

The Chair indicated that notwithstanding the constraints arising from the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, the SIAG had continued to make good progress. The mapping of the current regulatory landscape, and economic dimensions of the shellfish trade, along with an understanding of the potential within the Fisheries Bill to develop fisheries specific management plans, all provided sound foundations for the Group's work. The SIAG should be seen as the umbrella for the vital work taking place within the sub-groups. This would involve coordination but should avoid duplication.

Meeting close