

Crab & Lobster Management Group (CMG) Meeting

9th May 2023

Remote meeting via Microsoft Teams

Attendees

Claire Pescod, Macduff Shellfish (Chair)	Kathryn Whittey, Bangor University
Adam Holland, Northern Ireland Fishermen's Federation	Lewis Tattersall, Seafish
Alex Caveen, University of Hull	Louise Price, MMO
Alison Freeman	Mark Moore, Dartmouth Crab Company
Aoife Martin, Seafish	Michael Roach, NFFO
Andrew Brown, Macduff Shellfish	Nicholas French, MMO
Andrew Burn, Defra	Nicola Lewellen, MMO
Annabel Stockwin, Defra	Noel Martin, Daera
Beshlie Pool, South Devon and Channel Shellfishermen	Oscar Wilkie, Seafish
Carl Davies, Gwen Paul M BS115	Patrick Gray, MMO
Carrie McMinn, Agri-Food and Biosciences Institute (AFBI)	Patrick Smith, Daera
Colin Bannister, Shellfish Association of Great Britain (SAGB)	Rosslyn McIntyre, Cefas
Colin Trundle, Cornwall IFCA	Sarah Clark, Devon and Severn IFCA
David Jarrad, SAGB	Rebecca Treacy, Seafish
Gary Hodgson, Venture Seafoods	Steve Webster, Cumulus
Ella Brock, Seafish	Tom Moore, Defra
Emily Philips, Bangor University	Tim Jackson-Bue, Bangor University
Hannah Clark, Pentire Fishing/ Camel Fish Ltd	Udara Nagodavithana, Seafish
Helen Hunter, Defra	
Fiona Birch, Mindfully Wired Communications (MWC)	
Emily Theobald, Marine Management Organisation (MMO)	
Jim Evans, Welsh Fishermen's Association	
John Balls, North Devon Fishermen's Association	

Apologies

Andrew Rooney, Rooney Fish	Paul Brown, Brown and Bright
Chris Ranford, CFPO	Rachel Irish, MMO
Jim Portus, Scallop Industry Consultation Group (SICG)	Sara Mynott, MWC
Louis Cattini, Seafarms	

Actions from last meeting

1. No substantial update on multiyear strategies and NQS management through the TCA. Any future updates will be communicated by email or be included in future meetings.
2. A standalone HMPA meeting was convened after the SIAG, where members of the CMG, WMG, FIAG and SIAG were all invited. Seafish will keep a watching brief on English and Scottish HPMAs.
3. More regular written updates on FISP projects will be provided by email to the CMG and dedicated time will be allocated to discussing the FISP research at alternate CMG meetings which will have more of a science focus.
4. Seafish met with Bangor University to discuss the soft-shell crab FISP project and the use of meat yield sensors. Seafish took an action to convene a separate meeting with the project team and those with an interest in soft shell crab in the coming weeks.

Open session for members to raise issues of interest

5. No issues raised in the open session.

Fisheries Management Plans

Update on process and timeline for next steps (Annabel Stockwin, Defra)

6. Defra provided an update on what has been happening since the first draft of FMPs have been submitted, the process that will follow and on the legal elements of the FMP:
 - a. The draft FMP has undergone multiple internal clearance stages and has been reviewed from a technical, legal and policy perspective, known as the Gateway Review. These reviews focus on refining the document for the next stage of clearances.
 - b. These FMPs are not just strategies, these are legally binding documents and anything within them means Defra are legally bound to deliver. Because of this, the FMPs are now under review by senior managers and senior legal teams within Defra to make sure there is clarity on where and who these legalities sit with. Delivery of the FMPs will require collaborative efforts from all involved, including industry.
 - c. The FMPs will then go to ministers and No.10 for review and sign off before going to public consultation; there is no date for public consultation as of yet but the CMG will be informed of a date when available.

Update on the consultation process (Tom Moore, Defra)

7. Defra provided a presentation on the consultation summary:
 - a. The FMP consultation will be hosted on a Gov.uk consultation page.
 - b. This will link to two citizen space pages: one for the FMP consultation and one for the strategic environmental assessment (SEA) which accompanies each FMP. Each page will also contain relevant documents as PDFs in the 'related' section at the bottom of the page. Documents included will be: consultation letter, consultation document, draft FMP (including annexes), draft de-minimis assessment.
 - c. Each FMP will have its own consultation document which acts a summary of the FMP and supporting documents and sets out the purpose of the consultation and how to respond. The consultation document will pose a series of questions that stakeholders will be invited to respond to.

Discussion:

- Members raised a concern around consultation timeframes and how many stakeholders will need adequate time to respond to all three of the shellfish FMPs. Since the three FMPs will be going up for public consultation at the same time, there is concern that a period of 12 weeks will not provide sufficient time to review and reply to all FMP documents in sufficient detail. Fishers expect to be extremely busy in the period of public consultation and providing them with only 12 weeks may not be realistic. Defra acknowledged this and suggested that the 2-page executive summary for each FMP may aid stakeholders in responding to the online consultations.
- A request was put to Defra to give people as much notice as possible and be realistic around consultation time frames.

Update on the engagement and communications (Nicola Lewellen, Defra)

8. Defra presented a high-level overview on engagement and comms in FMP process:
 - a. High-level overview of who is / has / will be involved: delivery partner, Defra, ICF and the consultation contributors.
 - b. FMP products are available in the form of posters and flyers. Posters can be printed at home while flyers will be printed and sent out by Defra once ordered. Anyone interested in the products can order them via an online order form [here](#).
 - c. Defra held two FMP webinars in March focused on the tranche 1 shellfish FMPs and more events are to follow during the consultation period, expected to cover both tranche 1 and tranche 2 (finfish) FMPs.
 - d. Upon consultation launch, Defra are planning a consultation roadshow. The aim of the roads is to return to locations delivery partners have already visited with the option of adding some other locations which were flagged during the initial phase of stakeholder engagement delivered by Seafish in late 2022.

Discussion:

- The stakeholder engagement events for the development of the draft crab and lobster FMP were formatted to present stakeholders the aims and objectives of the FMP. These events were quite presentation heavy. Members discussed the possibility of the consultation events to be less information heavy, rather centered around gathering responses which could be used as part of the consultation. Defra stated that the current plan is to have events aimed at informing stakeholders on the consultation process, enabling them to fill in the consultations in their own time. However, suggestions will be taken into consideration and a solution may be to involve extra staff to collate responses from event attendees.
- There were concerns on the timeline and consulting during the peak summer period and the need to manage fishermen's time. Members were keen that any open dialogue at the in-person events could serve as an accepted consultation responses.
- A member acknowledged that the previous stakeholder engagement event in north Devon discussed the draft crab and lobster FMP, however, in the last year a few fishers have taken up whelk fishing in the area. The member explained how fishers would benefit with a consultation event focused on the whelk fishery, as well as crab, and stressed how important it is that it is not overlooked.
- A member was concerned about the lack of face-to-face events in Wales and mentioned how Welsh fishers would benefit from events in both the north and the south of Wales.
- Members advised that if Defra need to get fishermen into the room, it can't just be information dissemination. If there is room to expand consultation as a straightforward tick box questionnaire, there will be a better turn out.
- Members felt that there should be alternative ways to feed into the consultation, to reflect both the volume of information that will be consulted on, timeframes available, and the need for many stakeholders to respond to multiple consultations at the same time. Defra will take this information back and consider how they will capture what happens at events.
- Clarity was sought on the content of products created by Defra on informing the public of the consultation. Defra stated that the flyers are species specific and have content which relates to the questions. Defra is exploring the possibility of having videos which would go into greater detail on the FMP content.
- The MMO Regional Fisheries Group Team, is available at hand to help with any public consultation events. The option of attending the Regional Fisheries Groups is welcome.

In depth FMP session (Lewis Tattersall, Seafish)

9. Seafish presented a deep dive into the crab and lobster FMP which included:
 - a. Contents of the FMP and what will be included.
 - b. The scope and status of fisheries and what it covers i.e. fleet characteristics, fishery and fishing methods, regional information and an overview of current national level management.
 - c. The updated shared shellfish principles (formerly shared shellfish objectives).
 - d. The updated crab and lobster objectives.
 - e. The future fisheries management strategy and what that lays out.
 - f. Proposed initial management interventions.

Discussion on shared shellfish principles (formally shared shellfish objectives):

- A question was posed on why the shared shellfish objectives were renamed 'principles' and where they now fit into the plan. Seafish mentioned that the details on delivering the shared shellfish principles are now found within the annex for the FMP to be more streamlined and to reduce the content in the main body of the document. The move to the term 'principles' reflects the anticipated shared ownership of the actions laid out in the principles given that some aspects are focused on ways of working (e.g. increased collaboration) or are not directly related to objectives laid out in the Fisheries Act 2020 (e.g. trade, animal welfare, and supply chain cohesion).
- Members raised a query in reference to the SIAG being a focal point of collaboration in drawing together the draft crab and lobster FMP, given that the SIAG is a UK wide group, and the FMP only applies to English waters. Seafish stated that this has been clarified in the annex, which references that the SIAG is a pan-UK group, but the FMP only relates to English waters.

- Seafish explained how the responsibility and ownership of these principles does not exclusively lie with Defra. Some of these principles will require industry to take the lead or to contribute to initiatives to ensure successful delivery.

Discussion on crab and lobster species specific objectives:

- Member asked for clarification on objective 7, '*explore trade-offs between arrangements for providing access to crab fisheries that will ensure both: environmental sustainability; social sustainability, and economic profitability and sustainability*', and whether it relates to closures, gear conflict or inshore and offshore. Seafish stated that the Fisheries Act lays out a statement around equitable access and this objective primarily relates to inshore and offshore access.
- Members noted the reduced number of species-specific objectives, in particular the objectives concerning management interventions and whether any content had been removed during the Gateway Review process. Seafish responded that nothing has been removed, instead the detail on proposed initial management interventions is now in the section regarding future fisheries management strategy and management interventions as opposed to the FMP objectives.
- A member raised how discussions at the SAGB Crustacean Committee focused on the threshold for evidence gathering when it concerns delivery of management measures. Seafish stated that along with the FMP, the Evidence and Research Plan will be published which contains details on evidence gathering for specific management measures.
- The proposed initial interventions which have been discussed with the drafting group are the management measures for which there is sufficient information to act now; they are not however the only management proposed in the FMP which is based on longer-term development of a harvest strategy for crabs and lobsters with appropriate harvest control rules (and lays out options for what management tools are available).
- Member stated that there is existing evidence to decide on management interventions immediately. In order to harmonize measures, there needs to be collaboration from the DAs, allowing them into the process.
- Members acknowledged that under principle 7 on 'social sustainability and economic profitability', there has been a historic decline in profitability with the increasing volume of gear being worked on the ground.

Discussion on fisheries management strategy:

- Discussing the proposed harmonisation of lobster and crawfish MLS to 90mm and 110mm respectively, members raised how in a matter of weeks, female lobster will begin shedding their shells; consideration must be given to the timing of management interventions with regard to each target species' annual cycle, this will ensure that changes have the maximum, immediate benefit. Members reiterated the need make these management interventions as soon as possible.
- Member raised a concern on the aim to have 'regular stock assessments', noting that currently stock assessments are supposed to be undertaken every second year for crab and lobster, however this schedule is not being met. Since we are two years overdue on a stock assessment, there were questions about the validity of actions taken on the basis of data from over five years ago. Members hope that within this FMP there is a commitment for the regularity of stock assessments.
- Members questioned interactions between regional management and how this will link up with the FMP and the national level management. Seafish explained how there is an opportunity via the FMP to learn from regional management and apply successful principles at a national level. Effort will be directed towards harmonization of measures as appropriate (to deliver fisheries benefits and to simplify the management landscape), piloting finer scale management of CFUs and LFUs.
- Member stated that more resources are needed to the Cefas team to conduct stock assessments.

Crustacean codes of practice

Introduction to the welfare codes of practice (Oscar Wilkie, Seafish)

- 10.** Seafish presented an introduction to the welfare codes of practice.
- a. Seafish are working with the Shellfish Association of Great Britain (SAGB) and the CMG, identified the need to develop Codes of Practice covering crustacea welfare for the UK shellfish supply chain.
 - a. In November 2021, LSE published their government-commissioned report assessing the evidence for sentience in decapods and cephalopods which identified 'strong' evidence of sentience in some species and 'substantial' evidence in others.
 - b. Following the publication of the report, Defra tabled an amendment to the Animal Welfare (Sentience) Bill which attained Royal Assent and was passed into law in May 2022 (Animal Welfare (Sentience) Act (2022)).
 - c. The project to create Codes of Practice is split into two phases. The Phase 1 feasibility study was completed in March 2022 and gathered evidence to help establish the form the guidance will take, how it will be implemented and how uptake could be monitored.
 - d. Phase 2 of the project is the development and implementation of Codes of Practice for the crustacea supply chain, including catching, wholesale and transportation, processing, foodservice and retail.
 - e. Cumulus Consultants Ltd, an independent consultancy with experience producing Codes of Practice and expert knowledge of UK shellfish and European welfare legislation, have been selected by the steering group to undertake the development and production of the Codes of Practice.
 - f. To deliver this work, five panels have been convened to cover different stages of the crustacea supply chain, these are catching sector, processing sector, transport & wholesale, food service, and retail. This work is industry-led, with panels comprising industry personnel and regulators.
 - g. It is expected that Phase 2 will be finished by November 2023, with the publication of the Codes of Practice, produced in multiple accessible formats.

Development of the welfare codes of practice (Steve Webster, Cumulus Consultants Ltd)

- 11.** Cumulus presented on the codes of practice to ensure optimal welfare standards for decapod crustaceans:
- a. The aim of the project is to create voluntary codes of best practice for each of the key points of the shellfish supply chain which could be applied by business in lieu of regulatory intervention.
 - b. The objectives of the project are to:
 - i. The production of relevant codes or practice for key stages of the shellfish supply chain
 - ii. The production of best practice guidance for handling and despatch of shellfish in the home.
 - iii. Instructions for how businesses can demonstrate that they are meeting the practices set out in the code.
 - c. The Codes will be developed, defined, and owned by the shellfish industry and will be delivered by having a series of industry panels to identify where risks and potentials problems lie. This is being facilitated by Cumulus.
 - d. The first raft of panel meetings were held in February / March; the panels were presented a map of welfare risk point in terms of storage, procedures, handling and welfare risk points and asked for their input to validate practices and risks. An NGO panel meeting was held in April.
 - e. Cumulus is now drafting 'simple form' Codes of Practice addressing each welfare risk point and the draft will be shared with Industry Panels at several meetings in May. Panels will categorise practices into 'best practice', 'good practice' and 'avoid'.
 - f. Codes will then be drafted in full and panels consulted for final feedback.

Discussion:

- Members questioned whether NGOs sentiments differed significantly from that of industry. Cumulus confirmed that there is a broad consensus on what the welfare risks are, but that NGOs would prefer a quicker adoption of best practice. There are red lines and non-negotiables from an NGO perspective,

such as cooking of live animals at home, but from a Cumulus perspective there are no red lines and all risks and mitigation should be considered to ensure codes are developed collaboratively. The process should focus on setting an appropriate direction of travel for the industry, as opposed to immediately implementing a 'gold standard' approach which may not be feasible.

- Members expressed concerned about the public opinion context and how that will affect the process. They highlighted how these codes cannot be definite and will need to be reviewed and refined at a later stage to ensure they continue to represent best practice and meet wider expectations.
- Members highlighted the need to develop an action plan alongside the codes to identify and list research gaps that might need to be addressed and how this could be achieved.
- Cumulus will be presenting at the SAGB conference and have held the next round of panels and so will be able to provide a further update to the CMG at the next meeting.

Animal welfare update (Claire Pescod, CMG Chair)

12. General update on the Crustacean Compassion Benchmark / Annual Review 2023:

- a. In January 2023, [Crustacean Compassion produced a snapshot report of 2022](#) which reviewed the decapod welfare standards of 30 companies within the UK. No details of these companies were released.
- b. The 2023 review will be publishing information on the 30 companies being reviewed this year which will include company scoring.
- c. The company assessments will be conducted in July by an independent assessment company and will only review information companies have published online.
- d. Preliminary assessments will be available in August 2023, and in September 2023 companies will receive the final assessment and score, with the intention to produce a snapshot report in early 2024.

AOB

13. A written update on the Mid-Channel Conference 2023 was provided by Beshlie Pool and relayed to the CMG:

- a. The conference was a success and well received by colleagues in both the UK and EU.
- b. The mid-Channel blocks for the upcoming 12 months have been agreed with no changes.
- c. A new digital layer for Sodena / Turbowin plotters is available for download from their website. Anyone who has links to vessels using these systems have been asked to reload the layers and replace anything named 'mid-Channel blocks' to ensure they are working with the most up to date charts.
- d. A cross-Channel alliance on matters of spatial squeeze has been agreed, the intention is for UK and EU businesses to work together to communicate the importance of the respective fleets, grounds etc.
- e. The UK scallop fleet were asked if they would volunteer to stay out of the corridors of the mid channel blocks to try and protect migrating crab from effects of dredges, should the levels of displacement from 7.d into 7.e be as significant as 2022; however, this proposal was not agreed.
- f. Any questions on the mid-Channel conference, please contact Beshlie Pool at South Devon & Channel Shellfishermen.

14. Reminder that tickets are on sale for the SAGB conference on 6th and 7th of June 2023.

15. There is an FMP update at the next APPG meeting on 24th May 2023.

Actions

Number	Description	Responsible
11.1	Circulate Defra FMP comms resources and link to order comms materials	Seafish

11.2	Speak to members interested in the FISP-funded research project on soft brown crab	Seafish
11.3	Reach out to specific members about industry-derived data assets	Seafish
11.4	Members interested in joining crustacean welfare panel discussions to contact Oscar	All members
11.5	Circulate additional material on Crustacean Compassion benchmark exercise report when it becomes available	Seafish