

Shellfish Industry Advisory Group (SIAG) Meeting

5 May 2021

Remote meeting via Zoom

Attendees

Barrie Deas, NFFO (Chair)	John Balls, North Devon Fishermen's Association
Amber Knight, MacNeil Shellfish Ltd.	Jon Davies, Defra
Andrew Brown, Macduff Shellfish	Leanne Stockdale, MMO
Andrew Rooney, Rooney Fish	Les Lawrence, Dorset Fish and Shellfish Ltd.
Andy Wheeler, Andy Wheeler Fisheries Consultancy Limited	Lewis Tattersall, Seafish
Aoife Martin, Seafish	Mark Moore, Dartmouth Crab Company
Beshlie Pool, South Devon and Channel Shellfishermen's Association	Martyn Youell, Waterdance
Bill Brock, Brighton and Newhaven Fish Sales	Matthew Johnson, Defra
Chloe North, Western FPO	Mike Roach, Holderness Fishing Industry Group
Claire Pescod, Macduff Shellfish	Patrick Smith, DAERA
Colin Bannister, SAGB	Paul Brown, Brown & Bright Shellfish Ltd.
Duncan Jamieson, Defra	Paul Trebilcock, The Cornish Fish Producers Organisation
Ellen Colebrook, Defra	Richard Hoskin, MMO
Harry Wick, Northern Ireland Fish Producers' Organisation	Rosslyn McIntyre, Cefas
Helen Hunter, Defra	Sarah Clark, Devon and Severn IFCA
Jim Evans, Welsh Fishermens Association	Sarah Horsfall, SAGB
Jim Portus, South Western Fish Producers Organisation	Stella Bartolini, Defra
	Trevor Bartlett, Devon Crab

1. SIAG and Cruising Association meeting to discuss static gear marking (Mike Roach, Holderness Fishing Industry Group)

- The Cruising Association approached the SIAG in December to start discussions on marking of static gears. A sub-group of the SIAG (Mike Roach, Beshlie Pool, Andy Wheeler, Lewis Tattersall) held a short meeting with the Cruising Association in March.
- The CA were primarily concerned about inappropriate gear marking, e.g. use of empty bottles, and it was acknowledged that this was more of an issue with recreational fishers than professional commercial fishers. It was noted that the SIAG has no influence over recreational fisheries.
- The CA would like consistency in gear marking regulations around the UK, like those used in Scotland, and prohibition of empty bottle markers and floating pick-up lines.
- In addition to any potential future legislative intervention or guidance there is also a need for education for fishers and recreational boaters:
 - Regarding fishers (particularly new entrants and recreational fishers) there is a need for guidance on appropriate gear marking, and;
 - Regarding recreational boaters, there is a need for education on typical fishing gear construction and avoidance.
- The SIAG sub-group will meet with the Cruising Association and RYA to discuss next steps on this topic.

2. Update on the National Shellfish Fisheries Plan (Aoife Martin, Seafish)

Work on the draft National Shellfish Fisheries Plan, and species-specific (crab, lobster and whelk) chapters, is ongoing.

A first draft of high-level objectives for the NSFP were presented for review. These objectives will form the overarching plan and will be populated with discrete activities that need to be undertaken to deliver the objectives.

It was noted that resources are limited and that the SIAG must set its ambition accordingly.

There was discussion around the occasional mismatch between government policy and some of the industry objectives set out in the draft, for example the industry objective of managing fishing effort contradicts government policy which incentivises moves to stocks or fishing gears which are seen to carry other benefits (e.g. low environmental impact pot fisheries).

The NSFP will be structured as follows:

- Purpose of the plan and overarching outcome;
- Scope including target species and relevant bycatch species, fishing methods, geographical areas, and who owns the plan;
- Overview of the current status of shellfish fisheries included in the plan covering biological, social, economic data and how they are currently managed;
- Objectives, both statutory (aligned with the Fisheries Act 2020) and non-statutory objectives which reflect the priorities of the SIAG;
- Duration of the plan; and
- Tracking overall performance (including annual monitoring reports)

Next steps in this work are to:

- Assemble an SIAG sub-group to work on the NSFP;
- Finalise a draft of the NSFP for review by the SIAG; and
- Create an annual delivery plan which sets out the actions to be addressed that year.

3. Fisheries management plan and Joint Fisheries Statement update (Jon Davies, Defra)

- Under the Fisheries Act 2020 the government has a legal obligation to develop a Joint Fisheries Statement (JFS). The JFS will lay out how the objectives of the Fisheries Act will be met by the UK's four national fisheries policy authorities (MMO, Scottish Ministers, Welsh Ministers, and Northern Ireland department) and will include a list of current or proposed fisheries management plans. The JFS will include information on who leads the plan and the timetable for delivery.
- The JFS will be published by the end of 2022; a consultation on the draft JFS will be carried out in 2021.
- In parallel to the development of the JFS Defra is undertaking work to develop fisheries management plans and are keen to collaborate with groups like the SIAG.
- Defra is working with policy staff and the devolved administrations to identify priority species for specific fisheries management plans, some species will be aggregated and covered by overarching plans.
- The Secretary of State is responsible for preparing and publishing fisheries management plans, this means that the process – including consultation – will be led by Defra and the devolved administration.

4. Trade and cooperation agreement update (Ellen Colebrook, Defra)

- Negotiations are ongoing with the EU to establish sensible tonnage limits on non-quota stocks that can be taken by UK vessels from EU waters and vice versa.
- Defra is considering how best to support the UK fleet in managing the incoming tonnage limit.
- Tonnage limits will be frozen at an average of the 2012-2016 reference point until multi-year strategies are developed.
- The tonnage limit will not be applied at an individual vessel level (i.e. vessels that entered the fleet since the 2016 reference period will not be excluded from fishing for non-quota stocks).

Discussion session

- Concerns were raised about the likelihood of displacement of fishing effort from EU waters into UK waters as tonnage limits set based on a 2012-2016 reference period are not likely to accurately reflect current levels of fishing effort. This is particularly an issue in fisheries which have grown significantly in recent years, such as the German Bight brown crab fishery.
- There is a need to hold broader non-TAC discussions as the tonnage limits will apply to a range of shellfish and finfish species across a wide range of fisheries and limits will impact a wide range of fisheries either directly (imposed limits on catches) or indirectly (displacement of vessels from EU waters back into UK waters).
- The SIAG should explore options around establishing a shellfish TCA subgroup allowing different shellfish fisheries to better understand the details of ongoing negotiations and to engage with government more effectively. It was also acknowledged that this is not just a shellfish specific issue and that it would make sense to broaden such a group out to capture all fisheries likely to be affected by these changes. It was agreed that the SIAG would lead on establishing such a group.
- The seasonality of both the crab and whelk fishery means that more immediate steer is needed for industry regarding likely tonnage limits for 2021.

5. Update from the species management groups

5.1 Update from the Crab & Lobster Management Group (Claire Pescod, Macduff Shellfish)

- The CMG met on 27 April 2021. Work is ongoing on the development of the crab and lobster chapter of the NSFP.
- Defra prepared a non-paper on latent capacity and discussions were held at the CMG, though it was agreed that this should be brought to the SIAG as an overarching shellfish issue.
- Cefas has undertaken a review of management measures used in crab and scallop fisheries around the world. The research was funded by Defra and will be used to inform future work around exploring alternatives to the Western Waters effort regime ([full reports from this research can be found here](#)). Discussions are ongoing around next steps regarding the WWER though this may include CMG workshops and potentially a call for evidence.
- Concerns about the use of soft (white) crab for whelk bait were raised in both the CMG and WMG. It was acknowledged that this is a complex issue spanning both groups and as such a short-term cross-CMG/WMG working group will be established to explore the topic further. To initiate discussions Seafish and the CMG science sub-group will prepare a short discussion paper focused on defining the problem and posing questions that need to be answered.

5.2 Update from the Whelk Management Group (Aoife Martin, Seafish)

- The WMG met on 29 April 2021. Work is ongoing on the development of the whelk chapter of the NSFP.
- The WMG science sub-group has created and launched a questionnaire which aims to gather anecdotal information from whelk fishers on whelk stocks which will be used to improve understanding of whelk stock boundaries and target future biological sampling efforts. The WMG is also working on developing the research plan which details the research that will be needed to help answer some of the outstanding fisheries management questions. This will be a key input into the whelk chapter of that National Shellfish Fisheries Management Plan.
- Several WMG members attended the North Western Waters Advisory Council whelk focus group as observers and there was further discussion on how the WMG should continue to engage with this forum.
- Initial discussions were held on effort management in the whelk fishery.

5.3 Update from the Scallop Industry Consultation Group (Jim Portus, SWFPO)

- The SICG met in March 2021 to discuss setting of Western Waters effort regime limits for Q2.
- Following the publication of Cefas work on management alternatives to the WWER< the SICG is evaluating how this work aligns with the SICG proposals made in 2015 for improved management of scallop fisheries.
- A joint management proposal has been raised by the NWWAC Channel Working Group which proposes closures of areas of the eastern Channel (in EU waters) and ring size increases.

6. Latent capacity in the shellfish fleet

- Latent capacity in the fleet has been raised as a significant issue in both the CMG and SICG. As an overarching shellfish fishery issue the topic has been raised to the SIAG.
- While not a specific issue in whelk fisheries there is a concern that any action taken to limit capacity (either through measures to reduce latent capacity or through implementing the TCA for non-quota stocks) could have an impact on whelk fisheries at a time when the focus needs to be on limiting effort,
- The SICG has asked Defra to carry out a call for evidence to understand the nature of the problem and if it needs to be resolved. The CMG is in favour of requesting that crab and lobster fisheries are added to a joint call for evidence alongside scallops.
- Any call for evidence is only to better understand the problem, not to make any management decisions.

Actions

Action no.	Action	Responsibility
6.1	Schedule a meeting of the SIAG static gear marking sub-group and the Cruising Association and RYA. SIAG members interested in joining this meeting should contact Lewis Tattersall	Lewis Tattersall, Seafish All SIAG members
6.2	Source and explore marine entanglement/incident data to better understand the scale of the gear marking/entanglement issue and the main sectors impacted.	SIAG static gear marking sub-group
6.3	Circulate structure slides and draft objectives document on the NSFP for preliminary feedback	Lewis Tattersall, Seafish
6.4	Assemble an SIAG National Shellfish Fisheries Plan working group to draft the NSFP	All SIAG members
6.5	Explore options around engaging with the wider catching sector (finfish) and with Defra on the TCA and tonnage limits for non-TAC species.	Chair
6.6	Discussions on access to marine space to be added to the next SIAG meeting	Lewis Tattersall, Seafish