

## Minutes: Monkfish Steering Group meeting

Meeting Date: 14 March 2022

Location: Teams

Attendees	Organisation
CN: Chloe North	Western Fish Producers Organisation
CR: Chris Ranford	Cornish Fish Producers Organisation
EB: Ella Brock	Seafish
GC: Gus Caslake	Seafish
HS: Hayley Swanlund	WWF
JP: Jo Pollett	Marine Stewardship Council
JH: Juliette Hatchman	South Western Fish Producers Organisation
MS: Matt Spencer	Marine Stewardship Council
NdR: Nathan de Rozarieux	Falfish
PB: Philip Boni	Coop Swiss
TH: Tim Huntington	Poseidon

### Purpose of the meeting

This call was an opportunity for the Steering Group to review progress made against each of the actions in the monkfish Fishery Improvement Project (FIP) action plan and discuss the timeline of the FIP in relation to the recently agreed extension.

### Agenda Item 1: FIP extension

The Steering Group previously agreed that an extension of the FIP timeline was required due to the impact of covid and Brexit on the progress of some of the FIP actions. The FIP is expected to finish in April 2022, and the Project UK funders have agreed to extend the timeline by two years. After the annual review at the end of March a new action plan will be drafted. At end of the two-year period (April 2024), any potential client group can decide whether to move the fishery into full assessment.

JP highlighted the Fishery Standard Review (FSR) currently underway. The new version of the MSC Standard is expected in Autumn 2022. New fisheries entering the MSC program will have a six month transition period to choose whether to use V2.0 or V3.0, after which point they must be assessed against V3.0. The Steering Group discussed the importance of delivering the FIP actions within the next year to allow the fishery to be assessed against the current standard that the FIP has been working towards. JP said the Secretariat intends to arrange a pan-Project UK webinar to review the impact of V3.0 on the FIPs.

#### Action from Item 1:

1. Secretariat to arrange for a pan-Project UK webinar to review the impact of V3.0 on the FIPs once the Standard has been finalised.

### Agenda Item 2: Stock status, assessment of stocks and harvest control rules

This relates to Actions 1-3 in the FIP Action Plan.

Update from Cefas:

- There is no new advice for monkfish and an update for the assessment will not be conducted until May for release in June. There is currently no update on the genetic study of the two species.
- Waiting for confirmation on information regarding the sampling of commercial catch but the sampling methodology that has been applied since 2017 for monkfish means sampling levels were almost doubled.
- It is likely WKLIFE guidelines will be applied to Category 3 stocks.

Two ICES WKREF workshops were held end 2021 and there has been a call for a third workshop as to build on the initial discussions on the reference point framework. A benchmark is still expected for monkfish this year, and a full stock assessment in 2023.

**Action from Item 2:**

- 1) Secretariat to arrange a meeting with Chloe, Tim and Lisa to review Principle 1 scores ahead of the annual review.

**Agenda Item 3: Secondary species**

This relates to Actions 4-6 in the FIP Action Plan and includes performance indicators (PIs) on outcome, management, information for secondary species. TH said that PIs 2.2.2 (management) and 2.2.3 (information) now score >80 based on the updated catch composition report provided by Cefas. PI 2.2.1 (outcome) was reviewed through the pre-assessment process for Round 3 FIPs in the South West, which includes a productivity susceptibility analyses (PSA) on species that overlap with this FIP. The PSAs are based on new data provided by MMO.

CN said the four South West POs are working on a two-year project with Cefas. This aims to increase information and data collection on secondary species the Celtic sea ecoregion through the use of remote electronic monitoring (REM). This will include data collection on species for which there is not currently enough length frequency data to develop stock assessments.

CFPO already has REM on three vessels, which will be expanded to six vessels across all the POs as Cefas only has six REM systems. An application will seek to fund more REM systems and include financial incentives to fishermen to take part, with a view to launching at the end of summer 2022. The aim of the project is to demonstrate the applicability of using REM to gather fisheries data in the hope it will become a more natural way of collecting data.

CN said that Cefas are continuing to develop their cuttlefish stock assessment model, which should have its first output within the next financial year and will improve the understanding of cuttlefish stock status.

**Action from Item 3:**

1. Steering Group members to send any additional evidence to TH for the annual review by 21 March.
2. CN to confirm with Secretariat whether a letter of support from the MSC would be helpful in the PO funding application.

#### **Agenda Item 4: Endangered, threatened and protected (ETP) species**

This relates to Action 7 in the action plan. CN updated the group on progress to date:

- She spoke to The Shark Trust about updating the ID and handling guides for boats using their expertise on elasmobranchs.
- CN said she will identify the correct species with The Shark Trust. She will also check with the fishermen whether they need separate resources for beam trawl and demersal trawl.
- The Steering Group needs to decide whether to include the Project UK branding and logo, and/or any of the PO logos across guides.

##### *Clean Catch*

- CR said the app has started to be used by hake skippers but has not been fully rolled out yet due to slight delays from Cefas. Stewart Hetherington at Cefas is coordinating this work and gathering the data. CR offered to send TH information on Clean Catch initiative in relation to hake audit as well as a PDF of how to work the clean catch app. There is also a tutorial on YouTube.
- CN suggested that as part of the updated FIP action plan, other fleets could also trial the Clean Catch app.

##### *Discussion:*

- CR said his boats have handling guidance through the spurdog bycatch programme, so a similar format to this would be a good way to roll it out to other member vessels. He noted that the MSC certified Cornish hake fishery vessels use pingers with gill nets to reduce interactions with ETP species. Any vessel over 12m must use pingers, the number required per net depends on the type of technology in the pinger. The majority used in the hake fishery are more advanced. Using fewer, more powerful pingers helps keep costs lower. Passive acoustic reflectors are also now being trialled as a cost-effective way to reduce entanglement.

##### *Actions from Item 4:*

- 1) CR to send Secretariat:
  - a. Channel and West best practice guide for handling ETP species
  - b. Information on Clean Catch from the Cornish hake fishery
- 2) CN to confirm whether fishermen need separate resources for beam trawl and demersal trawl and to move forward with developing the guide

#### **Agenda Item 5: Habitats**

This relates to Action 8 in the Action Plan and MS updated the group on progress to date.

The MMO have set out a timeline for introducing management measures in all English MPAs by the end of 2024. Until these measures are agreed, the Steering Group needs to determine what it could proactively do to manage the impact of the fishery on benthic habitats. MS updated the Steering Group on the outputs from the last MPA subgroup meeting.

##### *MPA network in the Channel*

- 11 special areas of conservation (SACs)
- 28 Marine Conservation Zones
- Eight special protection areas (SPA)
- Approximately 20% of the surface area of the Channel is designated for protection

*Outputs:*

- Timeline for MPA management priorities in the Channel still to formally be announced.
- Complications remain around the use of iVMS data that is currently in operation.
- Unlikely that IFCA can share iVMS data with other organisations due to original data ownership agreements reached with skippers.
- Further discussion needed with IFCA and Natural England see where in Channel they see as key to reduce fishing footprint, particularly of <12m vessels.

Secretariat will schedule another MPA sub group meeting to better understand what the Steering Group can do ahead of official MMO MPA designation rollout.

*Discussion:*

CN asked whether it was determined in the meeting if the current MPA network is sufficient. MS said there were not any concerns raised about activity outside of the MPA. The two big concerns were the need for MMO management measures to come into force for each MPA and the lack of iVMS information for under 12s in all Channel FIPs.

JH asked if the Secretariat could further encourage the MMO to share information on the MPA management process in the FIP area. JH said MSC should present to Defra on FIPs and their importance so they understand the benefits of the project. This may help with retrieving information.

GC updated on the Southwest ecological risk assessment. There is a dedicated report being drafted by Seafish that looks at the footprint of various gear types like beam trawl, otter trawl, and gill nets within that area, as well as information on MPAs. Final sign off should be in mid-April.

TH has examined pre-assessment results for other fisheries in the southwest. The habitat PIs were assessed by Gudrun Gaudian, an experienced P2 assessor. Her main concerns are about the impact of mobile gears.

***Actions from Item 5:***

- 1) GC to circulate ecological risk assessment report to the Secretariat
- 2) Secretariat to ask Natural England how often their habitat data is updated

**Agenda Item 6: Ecosystems**

JP asked if there is anything specific to ecosystems to include in a new action plan or will improving the other P2 scores address the ecosystem requirements.

CN said that the Defra fishery management plans have a focus on ecosystem-based fishery management. Bangor University have been researching the impact of fishing gear on habitats and ecosystems, so they may be able to suggest relevant literature to consider during the FIP process. JP asked if the ecosystem PIs could be harmonised with the new Round 3 pre-assessments to help identify gaps that could be picked up by new assessors.

TH said that original ecosystem actions were specific to beam trawl as the original preassessment scored >80 for otter trawls and gill nets, so it is worth reviewing the scores for all three gear types. CN reminded the group that the Cefas Scale Intensity Consequence Analysis highlighted course sediment as a concern. This was discussed previously by the Steering Group and it was determined that the fishery would not overlap with this habitat type.

#### ***Actions from Item 6:***

- 1) Secretariat to:
  - a. review minutes from previous meetings to understand why course sediment was ruled out as a habitat of concern
  - b. ask Bangor University for information on the ecosystem impacts of gear
  - c. check with Defra on how they define ecosystem in the Fishery Management Plans
- 2) TH to review the ecosystem scores based on the Round 3 pre-assessments

#### **Agenda Item 7: Fisheries management plan (FMP)**

MS updated the group on the draft FMP for the FIP as follows:

- **Section 1: Identification and description of fishery**  
Nearly complete with thanks to contributions by WFPO and WWF last year. It requires a review from Poseidon.
- **Section 2: Goals and objectives**  
Additional text on long and short term objectives is still required.
- **Section 3: Fisheries management structure**  
Nearly complete with thanks to contributions from MMO and industry members.
- **Section 4: Harvest strategy and control rules**  
Decision-making frameworks require updates to reflect to reflect Brexit and Fisheries Act.
- **Section 5: Ecosystem management strategies**  
Progress has been made; management strategies needed for ETP and habitats. This might require a sub-group to draft a strategy that can be documented in the FMP.
- **Section 6: Stock assessment, fishery monitoring**  
Nearing completion.
- **Section 7: Compliance and monitoring**  
Nearing completion.
- **Section 8: Fishery performance evaluation**  
No progress on this section yet; guidance notes have been provided by TH on how best to address this section.
- **Section 9: Resources required to implement the plan**  
No progress on this section yet (formation of a client group required).

#### ***Actions from Item 7:***

- 1) Secretariat to add 'long and short term objectives' under chapter 2 to subsequent meeting agenda
- 2) MS to find a decision-making framework from other FMPs (for chapter 4) and JH to review and update for monkfish.

3) CN to draft habitats and ecosystems management strategies

### **Agenda Item 8: FisheryProgress.org social policy reminder**

In mid-2021 FisheryProgress.org introduced social policy requirements for all FIPs reporting on their website. MS provided the Steering Group with an update of progress to date, and upcoming actions and deadlines.

Prior social standards:

- A landscape analysis of social standards that the catching sector members of the FIP already adhere to was previously conducted.
- The Secretariat requested FisheryProgress.org conduct a gap analysis between their new requirements and the content of ILO-188.

Policy statement (ex-Code of Conduct):

- Previously the FIP needed to review and sign up to the FisheryProgress.org Code of Conduct.
- However, this requirement has been revised (March 2022) and now requires a fishery to demonstrate they have a public policy statement outlining a commitment to respect human and labour rights and to provide a description of their policy statement via a template.
- This requirement becomes active in January 2023.

Awareness of fisher rights:

- This requirement has also been revised and requires FIPs to make fishers aware of the fisheries own policy statement.
- This policy statement will be in a template format which FisheryProgress.org will share with FIP implementers.
- This requirement becomes active in January 2023.

Self-evaluation criteria & workplan:

- A general set of risk criteria was listed by FisheryProgress.org which, if met, triggered the requirement of a risk-assessment for the FIP and a workplan to address any issue found.
- The self-evaluation has been completed and a risk assessment triggered due to more than 25% foreign crew in the fishery.
- Next steps are for the Secretariat to identify a consultant to review the FIP's social dimension in more detail and produce a workplan. MS asked the Steering Group to provide suggested consultants.

Vessel lists:

- Key action due in May 2022 is to have accurate vessel lists for each of the FIPs.
- This FIP has had information from the Producer Organisations (POs) and the Steering Group will need to think about how best to get vessel information from any vessels not represented by POs.

Grievance mechanism:

- The fishery needs to have a publicly available grievance mechanism in place for fishers and crew to report human rights abuses.

- This policy does not require the FIP itself to have its own grievance mechanism. Rather, this policy requires the FIP to demonstrate the existence of one or more grievance mechanisms that cover all fishers in the FIP.
- This requirement becomes active in May 2022.

### Discussion

MS said the Steering Group will need to think about how best to get vessel information from those fishermen that are not represented by producer organisations or fishing associations. JH requested more information on what the vessel lists will be used for.

CN asked how FisheryProgress.org wants the grievance mechanism demonstrated. JH noted that ILO188 also has a requirement to have a grievance mechanism, which might be sufficient if complying with the social requirements.

### Actions from Item 8:

- 1) JH to look at the grievance mechanisms required by ILO188 and share with the Secretariat to see whether it would fulfil the social policy requirements.

### Any Other Business

- The Secretariat will submit a response to the JFS consultation on behalf of Project UK. The response will be based on agreed action plans for Project UK FIPs.
- MS will be leaving MSC and Project UK this month.
- The draft minutes will be shared with the Steering Group for review in a few weeks.

### Meeting Closes

16:30

Actions Arising	Responsible
<b>Action from Item 1:</b> 1) Secretariat to arrange for a pan-Project UK webinar to review the impact of V3.0 on the FIPs once the Standard has been finalised.	Secretariat
<b>Action from Item 2:</b> 1) Secretariat to arrange a meeting with Chloe, Tim and Lisa to review Principle 1 scores ahead of the annual review.	Secretariat
<b>Action from Item 3:</b> 1) Steering Group members to send any additional evidence to TH for the annual review by 21 March.	Steering Group

2) CN to confirm with Secretariat whether a letter of support from the MSC would be helpful in the PO funding application.	CN
<b>Actions from Item 4:</b>	
1) CR to send Secretariat: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Channel and West best practice guide for handling ETP species</li> <li>b. Information on Clean Catch from the Cornish hake fishery</li> </ol>	CR
2) CN to confirm whether fishermen need separate resources for beam trawl and demersal trawl and to move forward with developing the guide	CN
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1) GC to circulate ecological risk assessment report to the Secretariat	GC Secretariat
2) Secretariat to ask Natural England how often their habitat data is updated	
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1) Secretariat to add 'long and short term objectives' under chapter 2 to subsequent meeting agenda	Secretariat
2) MS to find a decision-making framework from other FMPs (for chapter 4) and JH to review and update for monkfish.	Secretariat
3) CN to draft habitats and ecosystems management strategies	CN
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1) JH to look at the grievance mechanisms required by ILO188 and share with the Secretariat to see whether it would fulfil the social policy requirements.	JH