

Minutes: UK Scallop Steering Group meeting

Meeting Date: Thursday 1st June 2023

Location: Online

Attendees	Organisation
AH: Adam Holland	Northern Ireland Fishermen's Federation (NIFF)
BC: Ben Collier	Northern Ireland Gear Trials
CD: Calum Duncan	ScotLINK
CM: Carrie McMinn	Agri-Food and Biosciences Institute (AFBI)
CP: Claire Pescod	Macduff Shellfish
EB: Ella Brock	Seafish
EM: Eilidh Milligan	World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF)
EW: Elaine Whyte	Communities Inshore Fisheries Alliance (CIFA)
FN: Fiona Nimmo	Poseidon
JE: Jack Emmerson	Isle of Man Government
JM: Jen Mouat	North & East Coast Regional Inshore Fisheries Group
JP: Jo Pollett	Marine Stewardship Council (MSC)
JPo: Jim Portus	Scallop Industry Consultation Group
KB: Kyle Buchan	Macduff Shellfish
LB: Lisa Bennett	Marine Stewardship Council (MSC)
LH: Lief Hendrikz	World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF)
MK: Mike Kaiser	Heriot-Watt University
ML: Matthieu Lundy	Agri-Food and Biosciences Institute (AFBI)
PS: Patrick Smith	DAERA
RL: Rebecca Lyal	Marine Stewardship Council (MSC)
SC: Sally Chamberlain	Seafish
SJ: Sophie Jenkinson	Morrisons
Apologies	
LyB: Lynda Blackadder	Marine Scotland Science (MSS)
MF: Mairi Fenton	Herriot-Watt University

Purpose of the meeting

1. Discuss the Year 4 annual review and gap analysis completed by Poseidon
2. Updates from devolved administrations on scallop stock assessments
3. Discuss progress with the PhD work relevant to a number of habitat actions
4. Discuss the next steps for the FIP after April 2024.

Agenda Item 1: Annual review and next steps (FN)

After completing the Year 4 Annual Review and updating the benchmarking and tracking tool, FN presented the progress and outstanding actions for the final year of the Fisheries Improvement Project (FIP).

Principle 1: There was a score increase in information and monitoring (PI 1.2.3), and assessment of stock status (PI 1.2.4) to SG >80 in the Clyde and North Sea based on the results of the stock surveys. In relation to harvest strategy and harvest control rules, the development of the English and Welsh waters King Scallop Fisheries Management Plan (FMP) is on target, the Northern Irish Inshore FMP is progressing, and Scottish FMP is behind target.

Principle 2: There have been no score changes in Year 4. The Kingfisher Marine Protected Area mapping work has provided useful information for the habitat PIs, though more input is needed from environmental subgroup (ESG) members to understand where concern remains in relation to specific Endangered, Threatened and Protected (ETP) species and Priority Marine Features (PMFs). Habitats information (PI 2.3.3) also requires inshore Vessel Monitoring System (iVMS) data to understand the <12m vessel fishing footprint. Mairi Fenton's PhD work has helped inform ETP management (PI 2.3.2). Secondary species outcome (PI 2.2.1) remains at SG60-79 until the Scottish bycatch report is published. Lynda Blackadder has commented that the report is still undergoing Marine Scotland Science internal review.

Principle 3: Monitoring and management performance evaluation (PI 3.2.4) in the North Sea increased to SG>80 as a result of the FMP process, but the other Units of Assessment (UoA) remain at SG60 – 79.

Discussion

CD asked whether the habitat outcome (PI 2.4.1) scoring should better account for the lack of spatial data for <12m vessels in areas in the West of Scotland with PMFs. There is a higher risk of impact from <12m vessels fishing in these areas due to their size and accessibility to narrow channels. FN explained that the relevant scoring issue already has a score of SG<60, since management measures are not yet implemented in the designated areas, and unknown fishing footprint of the <12m. However, there is good progress in the iVMS rollout in Scotland on scallop vessels.

MK proposed the Steering Group consider management measures that are not impeded by the absence of inshore vessel data, such as using Vulnerable Marine Ecosystem maps to avoid certain areas and using the outcomes from Mairi's modelled management scenarios. CP agreed with CD on the need to understand the <12m vessel footprint. She listed the bodies contributing to the English and Welsh National FMP development and expects the FMP consultation to open before parliamentary recess in July, with publication by the end of 2023. JP noted that if this FIP follows the pattern of Round 1 FIPs, then workstreams are likely to come to fruition in Year 5 and result in score changes.

MK asked if certain areas like the West Scotland are problematic due to data uncertainty, could they be removed from the initial certification area, with the idea to bring them in at a later point. JP said it was a Steering Group decision, and hinges on the ability of vessels to demonstrate where they fish; there are traceability and separation issues if fishers are fishing in certified and non-certified areas. There is potential for the English North Sea scallop stock to be brought into the Round 1 Channel scallop FIP to avoid being held back from regulatory delays in Scotland. CD shared the concerns about scallop management stalling in Scotland and that spatial differentiation should be better considered in the FIP.

JPo and CP supported incorporating the North Sea area into the Channel scallop FIP, and potentially also the Irish Sea if the issues can be resolved. JE asked what the MSC sees as the future for the Irish

Sea, where multiple management jurisdictions come together, and how it can be assessed. FN said that this issue was identified in the pre-assessment, and there is hope for management to eventually align, hence the scores have not increased. The SICG is looking at scallop management at a UK level and is trying to maintain a broad view due to the impact of English and Welsh management on shared stocks.

Agenda Item 2: Stock status updates

Irish Sea (Carrie)

CM shared AFBI's stock assessment updates for the Irish Sea, and results from the 2023 annual survey. From 11th-15th February, 45 stations were surveyed and 1448 scallops were caught and processed. Catch per Unit Effort (CPUE) was highest in areas along the north coast of Ireland, although compared to 2022, only three sample stations showed an increase in CPUE, the rest showed a decrease. The advice sheet for king scallop is here:

<https://www.afbini.gov.uk/sites/afbini.gov.uk/files/publications/Scallop%20advice%202023.pdf>.

AFBI have also produced interactive dashboards explaining how advice is produced, based on fishery trends and the annual surveys:

<https://eservices.afbini.gov.uk/fisheriesandaquaticecosystems/scallop-stock-assessment.html>.

During these surveys, they also identified and recorded all of the bycatch.

Discussion

FN requested the bycatch data by weight and proportion of catch. JPo asked if the assessment sites were chosen for being coincident with commercial catches, and how the industry requirement for 95% of catch being comprised of king scallops is achieved in areas of low density. CM said the survey is randomly stratified. The grid is based on previous surveys, catches, iVMS and industry knowledge. In recent years the total survey area has been amended to remove areas which, whilst previously fished, have since been designated as Marine Protected Areas, in which the use of dredges is now prohibited. FN noted that because sampling had been done using a fine mesh layer, smaller bycatch would be caught and therefore the results are not directly comparable with the commercial vessels catch. This is useful for the FIP as it provides an indication of unaccounted interactions that may be happening on the seabed when using commercial gear and explains why the bycatch reported from these surveys is higher than that observed from landings data. CM said there are on-board observers that would corroborate the data. JE has a student analysing the Isle of Man bycatch data and offered to share the final report once published.

North Sea and English Channel (Lisa)

LB updated on behalf of Cefas. The Lyme Bay area (27.7.e.L) continues to experience the highest exploitation levels, consistently above the MSY target since 2017, and increasing since 2019. In the eastern English Channel (27.7.d.N) the exploitation rate has generally been at or below the MSY target. The only exception is 2018, when an unusually low harvestable biomass estimate combined with unusually high international landings. Exploitation rates in the inshore (27.7.e.I) and offshore (27.7.e.O) areas of the western English Channel have consistently been below the respective MSY target since 2017. The Yorkshire/Durham area (27.4.b.S), and the assessment area to the north of Cornwall (27.7.f.I) have not previously been assessed relative to MSY reference points. With the increased availability of sampling data since the start of the stock assessment project, Cefas are now able to determine MSY reference points for these areas. In Area 27.4.b.S, the exploitation rate has

generally been above the MSY target. The only exception is 2019, when international landings were unusually low. In Area 27.7.f.I, due to the combination of unusually low harvestable biomass and high international landings, the harvest rate in 2019 was a few percent above the MSY target. By contrast, in 2018 and 2020, harvest rates were below the reference point. The report is here [CP017-04-F5 Cefas Report Template \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#).

Scotland (Lisa)

LB updated on behalf of Lynda Blackadder. The Marine Scotland Science 2023 scallop dredge surveys have begun, [Shetland's cruise report is available](#). The West Coast cruise report is in review, and the East coast and Clyde survey will be conducted later in the year.

Catch sampling data has been quality checked and national catch-at-age estimation has been completed for all Scottish stock assessment areas (up to 2022). Preparation of survey indices is ongoing. Provisional assessments will be undertaken in the next few months.

Actions from Item 2:

- CM to share bycatch data from AFBI's surveys with FN.
- Secretariat to follow up with JE about Bangor University data on bycatch around the Isle of Man

Agenda Item 3: Scallop Industry Consultation Group (SICG) update (JPo)

JPo explained the SICG's involvement with the MMO's consultation and decision to close ICES areas 7d and 7e in summer 2023. Regarding the FMP development, the SICG Working Group was set up in 2019 and is a co-management group of catching sector and fishery managers. The SICG WG has been developing the English and Welsh king scallop FMP. The FMP document was submitted to fisheries administrations in February, which was reviewed by the gateway review committee for Tranche 1 FMPs. The FMP will be out for consultation before the parliamentary recess, after which it will be signed off by the Secretary of State by the end of 2023. The SICG are working on an implementation process.

Agenda Item 4: Habitat impacts – PhD update (MK)

MK shared MF's update on her PhD analysis. MF has created a number of maps which show where there is overlap between ETP or sensitive habitats and fishing activity at the C-square level; these indicate areas where management could be considered. A next step is to quantify the catch from each C-square and run an analysis which removes the least economically beneficial fishing areas – to consider, for example, the trade-off between food production and environmental damage. MK shared the potential spatial and effort management scenarios proposed by the Steering Group that Mairi will model and gave a final call for other modelling scenarios. MK noted that there is weakness in conservation data due to the lack of standardised surveys, and that there is a need for vessel positioning data to be available from the government to improve effectiveness of management advice.

Discussion

SC asked if there is a date range for the ETP species records included. MK will check with MF, though suspects it is all records across all time. JE asked to what extent the analysis takes account of the

increased spatial data from Isle of Man (IoM), due to the scallops iVMS polling eight times more frequently than the statutory levels on <12m vessels. IoM have had <12m vessel iVMS reports since 2013, so MK agreed it may be a useful case study to see if the spatial extent differs between <12m and >12m vessels. JE said >12m vessels can also fish within 3nm of the Isle of Man with a special license.

CP acknowledged the excellent work completed so far and asked for timelines on the modelling results to help support the development of the FMP. MK indicated the results should be available soon.

Actions from Item 4:

- Steering Group to send any final management modelling scenarios to Mairi Fenton.
- MK to check with Mairi on the date range of the ETP species records used in the maps for SC.
- MK/Mairi to consider that the IoM vessels have much higher iVMS polling rates than other jurisdictions and determine if/how this might influence the analysis.
- MK/Mairi to consider using the IoM <12m vessel iVMS data as a case study to see if spatial extent differs from >12m vessels.

Agenda Item 5: ETP – Clean catch + ETP guides (RL/LB)

RL attended the Clean Catch UK Annual Steering Group meeting in Bristol. The project lead, Joanna Murray, confirmed that the app will be ready for skippers to trial in June, following the completion of key updates by the app developers. The purpose of the trials is primarily to test usability and functionality of the app at sea, though the data collection can start to inform the Endangered Threatened and Protected (ETP) species PIs. Macduff and the Southwestern Fish Producer Organisation have volunteered to participate in the trial, and additional volunteers are welcome.

LB thanked the Environmental subgroup (ESG) for completing the ETP list prioritisation exercise. FN will review the feedback and consider the scientific literature to make finalise the list, which will be divided into the three fishing regions. The ESG will be asked to assist with any missing species images from the prioritised list. Additional support may be required from the ESG to understand the restrictions on certain species, particularly non-elasmobranchs; this can be further discussed ahead of the next ESG meeting.

Agenda Item 6: iVMS and REM data (LB)

There have been delays in the MMO-led iVMS rollout due to technical challenges with some of the iVMS units. Following a complete rollout, a statutory instrument will also need to be drafted before iVMS becomes a fully legal requirement. Only then can the Steering Group request access the data through a Freedom of Information request.

The Secretariat is also awaiting the publication of an analysis and outcome report on Remote Electronic Monitoring (REM) by Marine Scotland, who will share a link with LB when it is ready. Marine Scotland's intention is to release fishery footprint maps through an FOI request when it can be suitably anonymised and aggregated.

Discussion

MK noted that if the devolved administrations aggregate the iVMS data before releasing it, it will reduce granularity and increase margin for errors.

Agenda Item 7: Gap Analysis against v3.0 (JP/ FN)

As part of this year's annual review, Poseidon undertook a gap analysis which compared the current scoring of the FIPs against version 3.0 of the MSC Standard, which came into effect in May 2023.

Principle 1: There are some minor edits to the Standard, including for information and monitoring (P.I 1.2.3) which now requires information to support the harvest strategy rather than the harvest control rules. There are no predicted changes in scores or additional pieces of work for the FIP.

Principle 2: There are now four components instead of five. All species caught by the fishery are now categorised as either 'In scope', or 'ETP/ Out of Scope'. ETP/ Out of Scope species are amphibians, birds, reptiles, and marine mammals; they are not considered for certification. In-scope species are those that could be considered for MSC certification with a P1 assessment but are not the target species. An Evidence Requirements Framework (ERF) has also been developed, which assesses the trueness and precision of data collected. For PI 2.2.1, additional work will be required to determine or document the 'favourable conservation status' of ETP species, which is the level consistent with 50% carrying capacity. Work is also required to determine whether it is appropriate to use the Risk Based Framework for each ETP species. PI 2.3.1. now classifies habitats as 'less' or 'more' sensitive, which is dependent on whether the habitat can recover to at least 80% of its unimpacted state within 20 years if fishing were to cease entirely. Habitats management (PI 2.3.2) now uses the ERF to measure whether the management objective has been achieved. There is also a new ghost gear scoring issue which will need to be considered.

Principle 3: The only changes relate to compliance and enforcement (P.I 3.2.3) as it now requires additional documentation to fulfil the Evidence Requirements Framework.

Discussion

FN confirmed that Mairi has changed the terminology in her habitat research to align with the language in v3.0 but suggested the Secretariat confirm with her. FN also discussed the new ghost gear requirements, and whether Mairi's research includes any analysis or information on ghost gear. The Secretariat will discuss this possibility with Mairi. SC asked who is responsible for monitoring the Clean Catch app, and if there is a timeline to assess any apparent reductions in bycatch. FN said that initially the app was to be used for recording interactions, but with v3.0 now requiring 'evidence of management meeting it's objectives' it is worth having another discussion following the trial of the app, to see exactly how the data can be used.

MK suggested giving presentations to the Steering Group on Heriot-Watt research projects of interest to the FIP. The first is a genetic study on scallop population structure, which may not be directly relevant to the FIP. The second is modifying scallop fishing gear with skids to reduce bottom contact, which also has implications for bycatch, with further work supported by FISP funding for the next 22 months. The third is using machine learning to quantify bycatch composition in scallop catches using a camera mounted over the conveyor belt with onboard image processing.

FN confirmed for CP that any additional work to 'test' the changes required for v3.0 have not been costed, though FN and Rod Cappell have discussed the potential for testing Round 1 ETP species through the RBF process using the current Poseidon budget.

AH asked if there was assurance on how the Clean Catch app will be used, for example if it is simply regarding information collection or will it be used for compliance and enforcement? If the data collected feeds into the latter, then roll out across the industry will be challenging.

Actions from Item 7:

- Secretariat to confirm with Mairi Fenton whether terminology in her research aligns with the language used in the MSC Fisheries Standard v3.0
- Secretariat to discuss with Mairi the possibility of including ghost gear in her analysis.

Agenda Item 8: Future planning for the FIP

The Steering Group need to consider the next steps for the FIP at the end of its current timeline. After April 2024, the MSC will no longer act as Secretariat for the FIP. This means that Steering Group meetings will no longer be scheduled, and Poseidon will also no longer be available to advise fishery stakeholders on how to deliver the FIP action plan. From July 2024, the FIP will be listed as 'inactive' or 'complete' on [Fisheryprogress.org](https://fisheryprogress.org), depending on progress made against the actions, with a public statement available detailing any outstanding actions, accordingly.

Three options were proposed to the Steering Group to discuss and comment on:

Option 1: The fishery uses the time between now and the end of the FIP to address additional actions aimed at meeting Version 3.0 (v3.0) of the MSC Standard. After April 2024, the FIP aims to enter full assessment on v3.0. To do this, the next steps are to:

- Form a client group to take responsibility for the certificate.
- Approach several CABs for quotes to undertake the initial assessment, as well as annual surveillance audits.
- Organise funding for the initial assessment as well as annual surveillance audits.
- Complete a documents checklist and gather all documentation and evidence required to demonstrate that the fishery scores on average SG80.

Option 2: The FIP joins the In Transition to MSC (ITM) program, led by a client group, and continues to work on actions in the action plan to meet Version 2.0 of the Standard. The ITM program provides FIPs with access to certification using Version 2.0, with the understanding that all fisheries must be certified against Version 3.0 by November 2028. FIPs joining the ITM program must:

- Have a pre assessment less than 36 months old and an associated action plan, both verified by a CAB (the scallop pre assessment was updated by Poseidon in April 2023)
- Have an aim to enter MSC assessment at the end of their action plan.
- Have a project manager responsible for delivering the FIP action plan.
- Report progress regularly

Option 3: The FIP joins the ITM program, led by a client group, and uses the time between now and April 2024 to work on actions related to v3.0 of the Standard, with the plan to be certified against v3.0 as soon as possible and therefore get the longest time out of the MSC certificate.

Discussion

CP noted that as Macduff have vessels and are also processors, it is a huge benefit to be part of the FIP and the demand for certification is increasing from UK and EU partners. She hopes Year 5 will see a drive forward in action completion. Regarding FisheryProgress.org (FPorg), if the Steering Group extends the FIP after Year 5 without the MSC as secretariat, could it remain 'active' on FPorg, if a new secretariat is identified. The Secretariat will check with FPorg, as a clear justification for extension on FPorg would be needed. JP also noted that extending the FIP on FPorg would also require the new Secretariat to implement the FPorg social policy.

JP clarified that joining ITM needs to be a decision agreed upon by the whole Steering Group. CP said based on the work outlined in the gap analysis results, working towards v3.0 might not be as difficult as first thought, and supported maintaining progress with the FIP.

AH suggested a separate meeting to decide upon these options, acknowledging that each member will be coming to the decision from their own perspective. CP suggested waiting until FMP has been released for consultation so there's a clearer idea of where the FIP is and encouraged the Secretariat to respond to the consultation on behalf of Project UK. She also discussed only taking certain UoAs ahead for certification and setting up a 'sustainability hub' that helps support FIP groups move into assessment.

MK supported a workshop to inform the remaining Principle 2 actions, with clear objectives and break-out groups to tackle issues. The group agreed that it would be a shame to lose momentum on FIP progress and scientific investment. JE suggested a pan-Irish Sea scallop workshop to help refine FIP areas to move into assessment, which CP supported.

JE said that IoM is very supportive of the FIP's progress and momentum established. Entering the MSC program against the current timeline for the Irish Sea is unrealistic, largely due to varied devolved administration FMP development, hence needing a pan-Irish Sea approach that incorporates all fishing users. MK said there needs to be an independent body with a co-management system to handle management in the Irish Sea which is a huge challenge.

Actions from Item 8:

- Secretariat to check with FisheryProgress.org whether the FIP could be extended and remain 'active' if there was a new secretariat identified.
- Secretariat to facilitate a workshop on the next steps for the FIP and remaining actions.
- Secretariat to submit a formal response on behalf of the Steering Group to the national FMP consultation.

Any Other Business

LB said that an in-person environmental sub-group meeting will be set up in the coming months.

Meeting Closes

Actions Arising	Responsibility
Actions from Item 2: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CM to share bycatch data from AFBI's surveys with FN. • Secretariat to follow up with JE about Bangor University data on bycatch around the Isle of Man 	Carrie McMinn Secretariat
Actions from Item 4: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Steering Group to send any final management modelling scenarios to Mairi Fenton. Mike Kaiser & Mairi Fenton to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • check the date range of the ETP species records used in the maps and share with SC. • consider that the IoM vessels have much higher iVMS polling rates than other jurisdictions and determine if/how this might influence the analysis. • consider using the IoM <12m vessel iVMS data as a case study to see if spatial extent differs from >12m vessels. 	Steering Group Mike Kaiser / Mairi Fenton
Actions from Item 7: Secretariat to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • confirm with Mairi Fenton whether terminology in her research aligns with the language used in the MSC Fisheries Standard v3.0 • discuss with Mairi the possibility of including ghost gear in her analysis. 	Secretariat
Actions from Item 8: Secretariat to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • check with FisheryProgress.org whether the FIP could be extended and remain 'active' if there was a new secretariat identified. • facilitate a workshop on the next steps for the FIP and remaining actions. • submit a formal response on behalf of the Steering Group to the national FMP consultation. 	Secretariat