

Minutes: Round 2 scallops, Principles 1 and 3

Meeting Date: 22nd April 2021

Location: Teams

Attendees	Organisation
AB: Andy Boulton	Waitrose
ABl: Abigayil Blandon	WWF-UK
AL: Andy Lawler	Centre for Environment, Fisheries and Aquaculture Science
BC: Ben Collier	Northern Ireland Gear Trials
BL: Bill Lart	Seafish
BS: Bryce Stewart	University of York
CB: Coco Bagley	Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
CD: Calum Duncan	Scottish Environment LINK
CP: Claire Pescod	Macduff Shellfish
EW: Elaine Whyte	Community Inshore Fisheries Alliance
FdB: Femke de Boer	Scottish White Fish Producers Association
FN: Fiona Nimmo	Poseidon
HF: Hannah Fennell	Orkney Fisheries Association
HW: Harry Wick	Northern Ireland Fish Producers Organisation
JH: Juliette Hatchman	South West Fish Producer Organisation
JM: Jennifer Mouat	North and East Coast Regional Inshore Fisheries Group
JP: Jo Pollett	Marine Stewardship Council
JPo: Jim Portus	South West Fish Producer Organisation
KC: Kenny Coull	Scottish White Fish Producers Association
KK: Katie Keay	Marine Stewardship Council
LB: Lynda Blackadder	Marine Scotland Science
MF: Mairi Fenton	Heriot-Watt University
MK: Mike Kaiser	Heriot-Watt University
MM: Malcolm Morrison	Scottish Fishermen's Federation
MS: Matt Spencer	Marine Stewardship Council
RG: Roy Griffin	Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs
RW: Rob Whiteley	Natural England
SM: Seth McCurry	Marine Stewardship Council
SMA: Simon Macdonald	West Coast Regional Inshore Fisheries Group

Purpose of the meeting

This call was an opportunity for the Steering Group to review progress made against each of the actions under Principles 1 and 3 in the Round 2 scallop Fishery Improvement Project (FIP) action plan before the second annual review takes place. The Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) presented the commercial opportunities for certified scallop products.

Agenda Item 1: MSC commercial update

Seth McCurry, Senior Commercial Manager for UK & Ireland, was invited to provide insights into commercial markets for MSC products, with a focus on certified scallops. Key messages from SM's presentation were:

Markets

- £1.3bn was spent 2019/20 in the UK on MSC labelled products.
- Roughly a third of all retail seafood sales in the UK are MSC labelled , driven predominantly by chilled-prepared and frozen-prepared categories.
- Steady growth seen in UK, larger growth in other markets European: France and the USA, both seen as very receptive to MSC products.

Sourcing policies

- Most major retailers in the UK have signed up to the Sustainable Seafood Coalition's (SSC) codes of conduct – which is voluntary and covers environmental claims made by SSC members in relation to own-brand fish and seafood sourcing.
- MSC is a third-party Standard setter that SSC members, use to make claims around sustainable seafood sourcing. A number of retailers have ambitions for 100% of their range to be independently certified, with Waitrose aiming to achieve this target by 2025 and Tesco by 2030.
- A number of major retailers across Europe and the USA will have similar sourcing policies.

MSC scallop markets

- Six certified scallop fisheries, consisting of four different species.
 - There are a further three scallop fisheries in assessment.
- The first MSC scallop fishery was Patagonian scallop (*Zygochlamys patagonica*) in 2006.
- SSMO Shetland only certified King scallop (*Pecten maximus*) fishery.
- In 2019/20, MSC labelled scallops sold in 26 countries.
- Large markets for MSC labelled scallops included the USA, Canada, France and Switzerland.
- Labelled sales more than doubled between 2015/16 and 2019/20 with consumer spend reaching approximately £126.7 million (2019/20) across almost 300 products (2/3rds were *Pecten maximus*).
- 75% of labelled sales were from the frozen category (prepared and plain).
- In the UK there were 21 stock keeping units (SKUs) in 19/20 compared to 13 in 15/16 with sales doubled over five years 2015/16 – 2019/20.

The full presentation is available to Steering Group members upon request.

Discussion

CP questioned the receptibility of MSC certified products in European markets, which SM said was increasing but was not as evolved as the UK market. SM noted a growing awareness in Europe of FIPs as a pathway to certification, with a project in the Mediterranean raising the profile of FIPs in Southern Europe. SM said both UK and European retailers are asking similar questions around FIP progress, which highlights the importance of tracking progress publicly on FisheryProgress.

Agenda Item 2: Action 1 – Stock status

This action focuses on the development and implementation of reference points to allow assessment of stock status of scallop stocks in relation to its Point of Recruitment Impairment (PRI) and maximum sustainable yield (MSY). Each Devolved Administration conducts its own stock status research, and representatives were invited to update the Steering Group of progress.

Scotland

LB informed the Steering Group that Marine Scotland Science's population modeller post, that she had announced in the previous meeting, has unfortunately been withdrawn after background checks were not met. Scottish stock assessments will now be conducted by existing staff. Marine Scotland Science has formed a subgroup focussing on King scallops in the Irish Sea and is in the process of collating data needed to conduct an assessment. Work is underway with the preliminary stock status results to be presented at the next ICES scallop Working Group in October.

There were no further updates on reference points as Marine Scotland Science is first prioritising the assessments needed to produce them. All previous stock assessments will become publicly available on a new website, stockassessment.org. LB will update the Secretariat once they become available.

At the end of 2021, the current Terms of Reference (ToR) for the ICES scallop Working Group ends and a new list of objectives for the group will be drawn, which will likely include discussion around reference points as these are very important. LB recommended the Steering Group contacting her with work they would like to explore so it can be tabled for the ICES working Group to discuss.

LB told the Steering Group that the Orkney Sustainable Fisheries had secured funding for 12 months for projects they are delivering but this did not cover funding for surveys. LB offered to share the text they had provided as it might be useful for Action 4.

Northern Ireland

Carrie McMinn of the Agri-Food and Biosciences Institute (AFBI) provided a written update, which the Secretariat read out. The scallop survey took place in mid-February and the standardised catch per unit effort (CPUE) was similar to that in 2020. AFBI is hoping to develop advice sheets that include survey and commercial information for inshore species, including scallops, in 2021.

England

AL said the latest Cefas scallop stock assessments have recently been uploaded to the government website. Stocks that were surveyed in the English component of the North Sea were in a better state than anticipated. AL believed initial results from the scallop surveys indicated they were being harvested at a sustainable level. AL noted that Cefas was tasked with producing candidate reference points, but little progress had been made since the last Steering Group meeting.

Discussion

FN asked AL how the harvest rate had been calculated, believing it was the ratio of landings compared to the total harvestable biomass, which AL confirmed. AL expanded that fishing within approximately 20% of the total harvestable biomass was deemed sustainable, but accurate results rely on knowing the total landings of scallops, both by UK and neighbouring fleets.

LB asked AL whether funding for long-term scallop surveying had been confirmed. AL said Cefas views this as a long-term monitoring plan but noted Defra is undergoing a spending review. AL was optimistic funding would continue. CP said that the Scallop Industry Consultation Group (SICG) Project Steering Board has funding surveys on their agenda each year, but Covid meant that support funding was not possible in 2020. CP also noted the SICG had previously discussed the introduction of an industry science levy to be created in support of survey work and confirmed the SICG will continue to provide support for scallops where possible.

FN said it was encouraging how much work was ongoing. She also confirmed the Year 2 milestone for this action was for updates and that there is not an expected score change and that she would update the target date for reference points from Marine Scotland Science in the action plan to 2022.

Actions from Item 2:

1. FN to update the target date for reference points from Marine Scotland Science in the action plan to 2022.
2. LB to:
 - a. inform the Steering Group when previous Marine Scotland Science stock status studies become publicly available on the new website.
 - b. share the Orkney Sustainable Fisheries update with the Secretariat.

Agenda Item 3: Actions 4 and 5, information and assessment

This agenda item focuses on Steering Group members providing updates on the stock surveys in their region and the development of suitable stock assessments.

Scotland

LB noted that Covid had greatly impacted Marine Scotland Science's ability to conduct surveys, which meant only the Shetlands were surveyed last year. The Orkneys, West Coast, East Coast and the Clyde were not surveyed. However, Marine Scotland Science has been able to survey this year, but is unable to cover the same amount of station points; and owing to only one researcher being allowed on board, had not conducted any bycatch work. LB said it had been logistically challenging and that survey reports are likely to be very different from previous years. She added that although the surveys did not go ahead in most areas, there was accurate length-based measurements conducted on the *Scotia* research vessel. The work will feed into a PhD and LB will share a report when it is available.

Northern Ireland

AFBI's update was provided in the previous agenda item.

England

One of the few liveaboard surveys that were permitted by Cefas last year was for scallop surveys, but they had difficulty surveying all the scallop beds, particularly those in French waters – due to Brexit complications. AL was optimistic that Cefas surveys would go ahead, with the first one scheduled imminently.

Actions from Item 3:

1. LB to share the scallop length-based measurement report with the Secretariat when available.

Agenda Item 4: Action 2 and 3, harvest strategy & harvest control rules

CP updated the group on behalf of the SICG. A national harvest strategy was being devised through a co-management process between the Fisheries Administrations and the SICG. The management suggestions were also submitted to Defra, for English waters, in 2019. A number of issues were highlighted, including latent capacity in the <15m fleet. The co-management process stalled (and has

now resumed) due to the Dogger Bank closure and a couple of actions are now being progressed after confirmation from Defra.

Latent capacity

Defra's intention is to address latent capacity in both the crab and scallop sectors simultaneously. CB said Joanna Messini is working on latent capacity and that she is working on a discussion paper on restrictions for <15s. The draft paper and that the work was in early stages but progressing. CB offered to keep to Steering Group updated on any progress.

Comments from other SICG participants

EW noted that Scotland had completed a latent license review in recent years, and CP confirmed this was for English waters. JPo said Marine Scotland's work had been useful for the SICG as a good template to work from. JPo said that parts of this FIP were part of Western Waters management and the recently published Cefas report will help to progress fisheries management in the UK. He noted that the five-year timeline of the FIP was very short in fisheries management changes, and that the two Project UK scallop FIPs are helping progress change at a faster rate.

CP offered to share the Cefas report on Western Waters Efforts Regime Alternatives with the Secretariat, who can then distribute to the Steering Group. The report includes a literature review of management approaches for the scallop and crab sectors; a characterisation of the fisheries; and summary of management options. CP thanked Cefas and Defra for this useful paper.

Discussion

FN asked CP whether other Devolved Administrations fed back on the SICG proposals. CP confirmed they are involved in the SICG but was unsure how or whether they had provided feedback and noted it is Defra-led. Marine Scotland also have their own Future Fisheries Management workstreams. RG confirmed DAERA was part of the SICG discussion and whilst working closely with Defra, each Devolved Administration will manage its own process and consultations.

JM added there is a Scottish scallop working group with a focus group looking at management measures for the Scottish scallop fleet. They are due to be meeting shortly after these Project UK meetings.

CP asked FN what the group ought to focus on in moving to Year 3 of the action plan. She thanked CP for the full update, and said it would be useful to update the action plan after seeing a timeline and a framework of the proposals from the SICG, as well as how the Devolved Administrations are contributing to actions. The SICG has been pushing for a legislation timeline from government. CP said she would try and provide the answers on timelines and roles and responsibilities after discussing with the SICG.

Actions from Item 4:

1. CB to update the Steering Group on Defra's developments on latent capacity after liaising with Joanna Messini.
2. CP to:
 - a. share Western Waters alternatives paper with the Secretariat.
 - b. produce a framework depicting how the differing Fisheries Administrations are interacting with the SICG, and proposed timelines for the SICG management suggestions, which FN can then use to update the FIP action plan.

Agenda Item 5: Action 14, compliance and enforcement

Effective compliance and enforcement are key components of Principle 3 of the MSC Standard, with an action in the FIP's action plan to establish an appropriate system for monitoring vessels within MPAs and other closed areas.

Open Seas has recently written to the Steering Group asking for updates around this action, which highlights the interest there is in the FIP from external stakeholders. The Secretariat has shared the letter with the Steering Group and begun drafting a response based on responses already received. The Secretariat will share the draft response with members next week for review and any additional feedback. Once feedback had been incorporated the plan is to send the response in early May and the Secretariat will keep the Steering Group informed on any further communications.

Updates on iVMS

JP noted that the iVMS rollout in Scotland was scheduled to begin in 2021 and asked if there had been delays caused by Covid and/or Brexit. LB said colleagues had provided an update for her to share. The Scottish inshore fleet is undergoing modernisation to equip commercial vessels with appropriate and proportionate vessel monitoring and tracking systems. This is part of the Fisheries Management Strategy, which sets out the policy initiatives to protect the environment and support a strong and sustainable fishery. Over 30% of Scottish dredge vessels are currently equipped with monitoring systems. Legislation will be introduced in late 2021 to make monitoring systems mandatory. Voluntary installations are ongoing but have seen some delays due to Covid.

Carrie McMinn had provided a brief written update saying iVMS was currently limited to Strangford Lough. RG provided further information for Northern Ireland. Consultations are planned for later in the year to discuss iVMS implementation and that if the technology is to be introduced it would likely be through licence conditions rather legislation and would probably differ from the technology being tested in Strangford Lough.

Discussion

CP believed that the expectation of Marine Scotland legislation is that Remote Electronic Monitoring (REM) is a requirement for all vessels deploying gear in Scottish waters, not just for Scottish vessels. JPo added that REM and iVMS do not necessarily mean the same thing and that he believes it is essential for at least two pieces of corroborating evidence for any vessel found to have breached any rules. VMS/iVMS provides position, course and speed, but does not tell managers whether fishing activity is occurring, but REM does and would be a more useful tool for administrators as well as industry if found needing to defend itself.

FN concluded the agenda item by saying she was happy with the progress and reminded the Steering Group that the Action 14 milestone is for Year 2-4.

Actions from Item 5:

1. Secretariat to produce a draft response to Open Seas enquiry for Steering Group to review and to send response back to Open Seas in May.

Agenda Item 6: Fishery management plan

The Steering Groups is drafting a fishery management plan (FMP), where documentation and progress can be logged in a central document. BL and CP are leading the FIP's FMP and CP presented the most recent updates.

Recent developments to the FMP were the inclusion of more sub-sections to guide each Fishery Administration's information, the first round of inputs from MF's PhD research, and the development of an FMP action tracker. The first round of contacting stakeholders had occurred, and CP thanked those that had already confirmed they were happy to contribute.

Summary of FMP updates:

- Outreach had begun with relevant fisheries administrations and Isle of Man representatives.
- Biology of the target stocks and ecosystem and habitat had already been drafted.
- MF added broad scale habitat maps and was working on other maps that will be added, such as overlaying Lara Leonard's ETP information.
- AL's stock assessment work for the North Sea will be included.
- Secretariat, BL and CP will support the Fisheries Administrations with reviewing and contributing to relevant sections drafted in the FMP .
- BL will be working on the alternative measures report which would feed into Section 5, ecosystem management strategies.
- Section 5 is to be led by the environment sub-group, with sub-section leads to be decided upon in the next meeting.
- Section 7, compliance and monitoring, will be updated by FN who will share a draft in the next few weeks.

Actions from Item 6:

1. FN to draft section 7 FMP text to CP, BL and the Secretariat by mid-May.

Any other business:

Project UK annual report

FN said that the annual review was underway and that there were no expected score changes to Principle 1 and 3 actions, but there might be for Principle 2 based on BL's alternative measures report. CP noted that the 2019/20 annual review was useful to share with partners and looked forward to the 2020/21 annual review.

Two PhD students recruited at Heriot-Watt University

MK informed the group that two PhD students were now in place, with funding from the Moray East windfarm which start in May and September, respectively. The first PhD will focus on genetic connectivity to better understand stock structure and will align with a PhD from Strathclyde looking and oceanic connectivity. Part of this PhD will be researching the chemical signature of scallop shells, which could help support the traceability of scallop products. The other PhD focuses on automated monitoring of fishing vessels, using camera and other visioning systems.

CP informed MK that Cefas had recently produced North Sea scallop connectivity, which needed to be added to the FMP, and AL said he would share with the group.

Low impact scallop innovation gear project MK informed the Steering Group that Heriot-Watt and Bangor Universities had secured Seafood Innovation Funding for a new scallop dredge design, which aimed to lift the scallop bag onto skis. The results had not been published but MK said the new gear consistently caught more scallops than the standard gear, with another set of gear trials in June, in Scotland. HW cautioned that these great catches might be due to the perfect conditions MK mentioned, and that in poor conditions the gear might produce very different results. MK said it was a good point to raise and he hoped that the next trials might be done in very different weather.

SMA asked for a copy of the report when it was available, which MK said he could share once it had gone through the peer review process. MK said the new gear aimed to improve fuel consumption and that the project was looking to continue working with the partnered commercial vessel so that the new gear could be tested throughout the year and in differing weather conditions.

The second stage of this project will look at substitute material for the roof of the bag to reduce overall weight, and were in talk with civil engineers at the time of the Steering Group meeting. BL reminded the group that fishermen would need to apply for a derogation to trial the new gear, which MK agreed with and said he was happy to be contacted by interested catching sector partners.

Actions from Item:

1. AL to share North Sea scallop connectivity report with the Secretariat.
2. MK to share gear-trial results with the Steering Group once his report had gone through an initial peer-review process.
3. Secretariat to add recent Cefas North Sea stock assessment report to the FMP.

Meeting Closes

12.00hr

Actions Arising	Responsibility
<u>Stock status</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FN to update the target date for reference points from Marine Scotland Science in the action plan to 2022. • LB to: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. inform the Steering Group when previous Marine Scotland Science stock status studies become publicly available on the new website. b. share the Orkney Sustainable Fisheries update with the Secretariat. 	FN LB
<u>Information and assessment</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LB to share the scallop length-based measurement report with the Secretariat when available. 	LB
<u>Harvest strategy & harvest control rules</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CB to update the Steering Group on Defra's developments on latent capacity after liaising with Joanna Messini. • CP to: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. share Western Waters alternatives paper with the Secretariat. b. produce a framework depicting how the differing Fisheries Administrations are interacting with the SICG, and proposed timelines 	CB CP

for the SICG management suggestions, which FN can then use to update the FIP action plan.	
<p><u>Compliance and enforcement</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Secretariat to produce a draft response to Open Seas enquiry for Steering Group to review and to send response back to Open Seas in May. 	Secretariat
<p><u>Fishery management plan</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> FN to draft section 7 FMP text to CP, BL and the Secretariat by mid-May. 	FN
<p><u>AOB</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> AL to share North Sea scallop connectivity report with the Secretariat. MK to share gear-trial results with the Steering Group once his report had gone through an initial peer-review process. Secretariat to add recent Cefas North Sea stock assessment report to the FMP. 	<p>AL MK</p> <p>Secretariat</p>