

Isle of Man Scallop Management Board

Minutes of the meeting held in the DEFA Training Room and virtually via Microsoft Teams – 28th September 2022 at 12.30pm

Present:

Peter Duncan	PD	Chair
David Beard	DB	MFPO/Industry Representative
Isobel Bloor	IB	Bangor University
Carrie McMinn	CMcM	AFBI
Juan Canipa	JC	Manx fisherman
Brian Horne	BH	Manx Fisherman
Craig Woodbridge	CW	Manx fisherman
William Caley	WC	Isle of Man Seafood Products Ltd
Jack Emmerson	JE	DEFA
Rebecca Richardson	RR	DEFA (Minutes)

Apologies:

Mark Roberts	MR	Welsh fisherman
Scott Merrick	SM	AM Seafoods
Geoffrey Chambers	GC	ANIFPO/NI Scallop Association

1. Minutes of the meeting 18th May 2022

There were no comments or adjustments to the minutes, which were accepted as having been read.

2. Review of 2022 queen scallop fishery

Prior to a presentation reviewing the fishery, the board was advised that the queen scallop trawl Total Allowable Catch had been increased by 10% to 1047.2 t. Part of the argument for the 10% uplift had been that product kept processors going. It was advised that the previous week IOM Seafood Products sold queen scallop meat into Europe. They planned to send out a couple more orders, and advised that the meat yield had stayed quite well. It was requested DB be kept informed of the yield.

A PowerPoint presentation was given by Dr Isobel Bloor that summarised 23 unique vessels had attended the 2022 queen scallop trawl fishery, with a minimum of five vessels and maximum of 21 vessels in any week. The majority of vessels fished at Targets with good catch rates (catches from Targets totalled 759.57 t). DB informed there were reports of small scallops at Targets, which he hoped was good news for next year. There were very few fishing trips to other grounds during the queen scallop trawl fishery.

Feedback from industry on the additional catch limit on Point of Ayre was asked for, and there was interest in the opportunity to fish there next year. It was suggested that there be a tab on Nestforms catch reporting application to estimate number of queen scallops returned to the sea – **IB**.

Industry raised as an issue the prevalence of spurdog in IOM waters during the queen scallop fishery this year. In England there was a Spurdog Avoidance Bycatch Programme whereby up to 35 t spurdog can be caught and sold. JE agreed he and DB could speak with Cornwall Fish Producers Organisation about this spurdog trial that they are running with the Shark Trust – **JE**.

The board was advised that the queen scallop dredge fishery was to open on 3rd October 2022 with fishing permitted Monday to Friday, and four vessels eligible to take part. Additionally, the board was informed that DEFA is looking to do a long-term-management-plan for the queen scallop fishery, but awaited the board providing a discussion document setting out what they wanted to see.

3. King Scallop: results of 2022 Bangor University and Industry Surveys and Stock Status

A PowerPoint presentation was given by Dr Isobel Bloor summarising the findings of the Bangor University stock survey and industry stock survey for king scallops, both conducted in April 2022.

Bangor found that recruits of smaller scallops in the years 2014-18 declined, but had increased since 2018, and the number of post-recruits followed a similar pattern, although there had been a slight decrease in 2022 compared with 2021. The industry survey found the highest areas for recruits at Targets and Bradda.

The agreed approach for setting the Total Allowable Catch (TAC) is the ICES category 3 TAC calculation approach, whereby the TAC can increase/decrease by 20 per cent depending on the stock status. Last year the TAC was

2049 t, but the actual landings was 1790 t, advised IB. CMcM stated they would calculate based on the actual catch. CW pointed out that a number of vessels did not come to fish last year.

Options to set the TAC were:

- 1) Same as 2021 at 2049 t
- 2) 20 per cent increase on 2021 TAC to 2458.8 t
- 3) 20 per cent increase on 2021 landings to 2148 t

DB stated they rejected 2458.8 t, but recommended to stay at same TAC as 2021 of 2049 t and have the same 700 kg daily catch limit for the start of the season. DB was confident in this decision, as this was the same as the past few years and the fishery had been managed. He thought that in future there would be a better way, perhaps through biomass, to set the TAC. Both IB and DB agreed that using the ICES Category 3 ICES TAC calculation method needed review.

CW stated he personally would prefer a higher daily catch limit so there was not the need to fish every day, while WC as a processor did not want to see more than 700 kg for the first two weeks of the season.

It was suggested that if 1790 t is reached the sub-group of the SMB discuss progress of the fishery.

It was proposed that the daily catch limit be changed for December, which led to discussion on a trial of a higher catch limit, but DB considered there was need to first see how this year's fishery went following the king scallop Capacity Reduction Programme, which has seen the number of vessels able to prosecute the fishery reduced to 65 boats (although 55 were licensed at the time of the meeting).

It was recommended to review the daily catch limit for an uplift pre-Christmas and to explore the option for a pilot scheme in March to see how a higher catch limit might be implemented. It was suggested by PD that the PO provide a catching/landing strategy in preparation for the potential uplift pre-Christmas.

WC raised that having separate king and queen scallop seasons was 'old hat' – but was advised it was a conversation to be had with Department of Environment, Food & Rural Affairs. JE advised that the idea that closed seasons in legislation can never change was something DEFA was looking at. PD advised the PO and IOM Seafood Products work up a proposal document they can provide to DEFA.

It was asked whether industry had any concerns over enforcement of the fishery, to which DB requested vessels should have their decks cleared before they leave the Isle of Man territorial sea. It was suggested vessels should have operational cameras on-board, or otherwise be required to report into port. JE suggested the board could look next year to have cameras or report to port, but could consider this year by licence condition that vessels with Remote Electronic Monitoring camera have it operational.

4. King Scallop Fishery harvest strategy approach

The industry survey had shown high numbers of juvenile king scallops at Bradda, and DB proposed protecting the area by closing the ground for November/December, and sending a vessel in to sample the ground in January 2023 to decide whether it is fishable.

Neil Milsom, DEFA, joined the meeting.

Maps showing scallop densities on grounds surveyed were reviewed by the board, which decided a northern smaller section of the Targets Restricted Area should remain closed to protect this, but that the rest of the Targets ground should open. It further considered that the Chickens ground and East Douglas Closed Area should open.

The Experimental Research Area (East Douglas) was closed in 2017 and DB presented graphs to show that during the five-year catch rates, north and south of the closed area and within the 0-3 mile had increased, and was concerned that should the area open without any restriction that any advantage, the closure may have, would be lost. He suggested should the area open that there be a days a sea restriction per vessel, but he wanted 0-3nm stakeholders to be consulted.

It was recommended that the Experimental Research Area (East Douglas) remain closed until there had been a meeting of 0-3nm stakeholders to get their input on the closure.

5. Updates

o Long Term Management Plan for Manx scallop fisheries: Jack Emmerson (DEFA)

The board was informed that:

- Scallop dredges a-side technical measures would come into force from 1st November 2022 by licence condition;

- The king scallop Capacity Reduction Programme had seen the number of vessels eligible to fish king scallops in Manx waters reduce from 83 to 65; and
- There remained one vessel in the fishery with Grandfather Rights, whose owner had been informed they would need to replace their vessel/engine by 2024 or drop-out of the fishery.

Further, the board was advised that under the Department's Specific Fishery Authorisation Policy vessels are required to renew their Isle of Man sea fishing licence or they lose the authorisations associated with their vessel. There were five vessels who were yet to take out a licence this year.

Seafish had undertaken an economic study of the fleet and the results were expected in quarter one of 2023, which would provide DEFA with an independent report of the status of the fleet.

o Research Set-Aside Fund: Jack Emmerson (DEFA)

The Research Set-Aside Scheme was trialled for the first time during the 2021 king scallop trawl fishery that allowed, by permit, landing of excess scallops. Payment for the excess scallops raised £9,000 for the Manx Fish Producers Organisation towards the cost of the industry survey.

DEFA had political approval to run the scheme in 2022. There was in-principle approval to extend the scheme in 2022 to UK vessels on the condition that the vessel lands into the Isle of Man, as any permit would have no vires outside the IOM. The board was asked how DEFA should go about extending the scheme, and members were content for DEFA to promote the scheme. It was suggested that the 30 t cap for excess scallops should be retained, but could be reviewed if adjustment was required.

o SMB Review: Chair

The board was informed PD and DB were to undertake a review of the board's membership in the near future. DB stated one of the key issues was attendance with the need to ensure members appointed attended meetings.

o Queen scallop bycatch

Industry raised whether there could be a queen scallop bycatch fishery during the king scallop season, and was suggested it could be looked at by Bangor University and DEFA. DB suggested a trial may alleviate any concerns Bangor or DEFA would have.

o Bulgham Bay eelgrass area

PD proposed a small area in the 0-3nm that has eelgrass be restricted to allow no mobile gear, but DB stated there was a 'continuing nibbling away of access to scallop boats', and while not saying such areas should not get protected, the removal of small areas added up. He raised that Agriculture in the Island got grant support to close off areas, and that 'with no spatial planning we are going to be hit time and time again with closures'.

It was stated that JE was looking at a scheme to award the fishing industry where areas are given up, however PD offered that he could look at off-setting against the industry's carbon footprint. DB stated Agriculture would get both (compensation and off-setting benefits), and fisheries want opportunities to fish and make money.

CMcM raised the possibility of closed areas being enhancement sites with spat collectors.

IB left the meeting at 17:13

The climate change budget was also raised, and JE advised he was making a bid to this fund for a vessel efficiency scheme. JE advised he wished to set up an Industry Advisory Group to discuss big-picture issues such as these.

6. Date of next meeting

It was agreed that the next meeting of the board take place in February 2023.

7. AOB

It was clarified that the king scallop dredge fishery should open on 1st November 2022.

The meeting ended at 17:30

Summary of recommendations

- To set the TAC for 2022 at 2049t (same as 2021) with 700 kg daily catch limit (the fishery to open on 1st November 2022).
- If 1790t is reached the sub-group of the SMB discuss progress of the fishery.
- To review the daily catch limit for an uplift pre-Christmas and to explore the option for a pilot scheme in March to see how DEFA might implement a higher catch limit.
- The board look next year to have cameras or report to port requirement, but this year require by licence condition that vessels with Remote Electronic Monitoring camera have it operational for the king scallop fishery.
- Close an area at Bradda for November/December to protect juvenile scallops, and send in a vessel to sample the ground in January 2023 to decide whether it is fishable.
- Retain closure of a northern smaller section of the Targets Restricted Area to protect this, but open the rest of Targets.
- Have grounds open at Chickens and the East Douglas Closed Area.
- The Experimental Research Area (East Douglas) should remain closed until there had been a meeting of 0-3nm stakeholders to get their input on the closure.

10. Action Points

A tab on Nestforms catch reporting application to be included to estimate number of queen scallops returned to the sea	IB
Speak with Cornwall Fish Producers Organisation about spurdog trial with the Shark Trust	JE/DB
Using the ICES Category 3 ICES TAC calculation method needed review	All
PO and IOM Seafood Products work up a proposal document for DEFA to address queen and king scallop seasons	DB/WC
DEFA to promote the Research Set Aside Scheme for 2022	JE
Whether there could be a queen scallop bycatch fishery during the king scallop season could be looked at by Bangor University and DEFA	IB/JE