

Isle of Man Scallop Management Board

Minutes of the meeting held at DEFA's Boardroom, St Johns, on 10th August 2017

Present: Walter Crozier (WC – Chairman), Karen McHarg (KMCH – DEFA), , Billy Caley (BC – Isle of Man Seafood Products Ltd), Phil Comber (PC – IOM fisherman), Brian Horne (BH – Manx fisherman), Domhall MacLachlainn (DML – Scottish fisherman), Geoffrey Chambers (*at 10:10*) (GC – ANIFPO/NI Scallop Association), John King (JK - West Coast Sea Products Ltd), Isobel Bloor (IB – Bangor University), David Beard (DB – MFPO), Mark Roberts (MR – Welsh Fisherman), Neil Milsom (NM – DEFA), Andrew Jones (AJ – DEFA – Minutes)

Apologies: Melvyn Reid (MR – IOM fisherman), Carrie McMinn (CM – AFBI)

The meeting opened at 09.38hrs.

1. Welcome and round table introductions

WC opened the meeting and summarised the Ministers note and passed on his apologies for being unable to welcome the board to the meeting. The key objectives were highlighted from the Ministers note which the board was asked to provide recommendations on. Those were as follows;

- 1) Queen scallop dredge fishery.
- 2) Full discussion of the board on the king scallop fishery measures.
- 3) The future of Grandfather Rights (GFR) measures within the Territorial Sea.

Mark Roberts was welcomed and introduced as a new member of the board and brief round table introductions were held.

2. Previous minutes

The previous minutes were agreed by the board as a true representation of the meeting and were signed off by WC.

3. Matters Arising

1. Board constitution review – WC informed the board that the revisions to the constitution are being finalised and that they would need to be presented to the Department's Policy and Strategy Committee before being returned to the Scallop Management Board for acceptance.
2. Queen scallop stock assessment, belly rings – Bangor University reported that it will be implementing a replacement schedule for the belly rings used during the scallop stock assessment surveys, based on the frequency of use per year. 2 weeks use per year.
3. Letter of comfort – DEFA has issued a letter of comfort to reassure owners of vessels licenced to fish for queen scallops that their track record would not be affected should they opt not to fish for conservation purposes.
4. Queen scallop fishery gear preference choice – It was raised that the approach taken by DEFA regarding the letter that was sent to queen scallop fishermen was particularly firm but still allowed some exemptions. DEFA provided clarification on this issue. One member raised concerns that removing dredging opportunities within the territorial sea, coupled with reduced catching capacity outside the territorial sea may in future affect vessels track record to fish with a dredge. It was noted that greater co-ordination with other fishery administrations should be held regarding gear usage.

GC entered the meeting at 10.08hrs.

4. Queen scallop update

Bangor University presented an update on the progress of the queen scallop fishery to the board based on catch data which included a breakdown of landings and vessel activity. Fishing patterns in each area were also covered although some areas had limited data. A discussion was held regarding the potential of incentivising vessels away from the heavily fished area east of Douglas and it was highlighted that this had previously been recommended and proved difficult to implement. It was pointed out that vessels are now moving away from the grounds east of Douglas as landings per unit effort decrease.

The board raised the potential introduction of area specific TACs but the current scientific sampling regime was not designed to allow area specific TAC calculations. Bangor University aim to trial an area specific TAC calculation method using the finer resolution data that is available from Ramsey Bay. Further implications of the introduction of area specific TACs on enforcement and monitoring were reinforced by DEFA.

It was also highlighted that the by-catch gear trials had shown that catch rates were low at Targets and emphasised that the fleet must invest in the future of the fishery by leaving stock to recruit.

Recommendation

The Board concluded that there was no pressing need for additional management measures for the remainder of the queen scallop season, though weekly uptake of quota would be monitored as usual.

9. Fishing outside TS – (Brought forward in Agenda, included agenda item 14. Pan Irish Sea Management)

A board member updated the meeting regarding the level of fishing outside the IOM territorial sea which was described as being “non-stop” since the start of July. It was highlighted that there are some issues with Western Waters (WW) days due to both king scallop and queen scallop both being included in the WW allocation rather than distinct fisheries. The point was made that the 3 month voluntary ban didn’t nearly go far enough to protect the stock within the wider Irish Sea which remains poor in comparison to fishing within the territorial sea.

The Department provided a brief update on progress with the pan-Irish Sea queen scallop initiative.

5. Dredge Fishery

Discussions regarding the arrangements for the queen scallop dredge fishery were discussed. Bangor University noted that there was insufficient evidence from landings per unit effort data to either support or oppose moving the dredge fishery from its current location at Chickens. It was pointed out however that this area is important in terms of territorial sea recruitment.

Recommendation

It was agreed by the board that the dredge arrangement remain the same as the 2016 season on the basis of a Chickens dredge box with a catch limit of 300bags per week which would be recommended to the Minister. The quota for this fishery has previously been agreed.

6. Ramsey Bay Fishery (Including agenda item 7. Area specific sub-TAC development update.

The board was made aware of the 27 tonnes allocated to the by-catch surveys which took place in Ramsey Bay. The gear trials only consumed a small fraction of this TAC and the MFPO wishes to fish the remaining allocation from the FMZ within the Bay.

A board member was concerned that the arrangement of the Ramsey Bay fishery was discriminatory and another added that it was his view that the TAC for Ramsey Bay was separate from that of the rest of the territorial sea. The Ramsey Bay arrangement was clarified by DEFA who reminded the board that the method for allocating TAC for the bay has been in place for 3 years.

The board asked that the Department clarify the legality of the Ramsey Bay agreement with the MFPO
– **KMcH**

It was agreed that a separate TAC be calculated for Ramsey Bay for the 2018 season.

Recommendation

The board is to recommend to the Minister that the remainder of the 27t TAC for the Ramsey Bay Fishery may be taken from the trawl TAC and fished for by the MFPO. A separate TAC will be calculated for Ramsey for the 2018 season.

8. Closed area update – queen scallop fishery

Bangor University delivered a presentation on the Douglas Experimental Recovery Area (ERA) and outlined the research methodology that will be taking place within the area and how the project will progress going forward following the results of phase I.

A general discussion was held regarding the operational aspect of the ERA.

Bangor University pointed out that the site was originally put forward by Industry members of the Scallop sub-group and was validated as a suitable area from both survey densities (which have been shown to be moderate in previous years) and VMS activity (which indicated moderate fishing activity in previous years). The previous presence of queen scallops at commercially viable densities indicates that this area is capable of supporting recruitment under optimum conditions and as such should provide a useful insight into stock recovery. This proposal will introduce both a closure and active management to the territorial sea which hasn't been attempted before and will give useful information on recruitment issues within the territorial sea.

10. By-catch trials

Bangor University outlined the arrangement of the trial nets and updated the board on the progress made to date in the surveys. It has been observed that for the trials that took place at Targets there was a difference between the control and treatment nets but no significant difference between the two treatment types of the trial nets. The next stage of the development will be to ensure that the nets are commercially viable for the industry to use.

MFPO pointed out that the current design of the nets is not as durable as the current industry standard nets. The issue of funding the trial also raised and that it may be necessary to look to the territorial sea queen scallop industry for contributions to the funding of such trials as they are a high cost activity to undertake.

It was agreed that a further report will be made to the Board on conclusion of the trials.

WC asked the board to consider that some of the research work being contemplated to improve management of the fisheries may be eligible for additional funding from external grant sources. It would be important to identify sources of funding that the IOM could bid for, or failing that, organisations from some of the other regions with vessels licensed to fish in Manx waters may be able to draw down funding for this common purpose– **ALL**

Break for lunch 12:00 – 12:30

15. By-catch recording (brought forward)

MFPO outlined the implications of the landing obligations and advised that there may be a potential lead-in of 3 years for the Isle of Man fisheries from 2019. The choke potential of the fishery was highlighted to the board and possible exemptions are now being explored by the MFPO. A summary of the by-catch figures from previous seasons was presented for both inside and outside the territorial sea and it was pointed out that with the lengthening seasons under current management measures, by-catch will become an increasingly significant risk to the fishery.

The board agreed that the Department must consider this a priority area to address in future meetings with the UK FAs, to prevent premature closure of the queen scallop fishery when landing obligations are introduced to shellfish fisheries from 2019 onwards.

11. King scallop fishery and stock assessment

Bangor University provided an update on progress with the king scallop stock assessment and summarised the data used as part of the assessment and the sites used. The data for various sites was then presented to the board. Following discussion, the board agreed that the ICES Category 3 stock advice protocol should be employed to calculate an advised TAC for this fishery. The protocol requires comparison of an average abundance index of the 2 most recent years with the average of the previous 3 years, and any percentage change upwards or downwards is used to raise or lower the previous TAC (or a proxy figure such as average catches, in the case where no TAC has previously been set). A preliminary abundance index of scallop post recruits was available based on survey data of scallops >3+ in age.

Relevant catch data were presented from 36E5, 37E5, and 38E5 and applied to the change in abundance index, producing a potential TAC of 4003 tonnes. There was some discussion around how to allocate the proportion of the TAC to the territorial sea. Further analysis of the data is required before an effective territorial sea TAC can be reached – **IB**.

An internal stock assessment report will be produced, to be presented to the Department on 29th August and an external report will follow week commencing 11th September.

There was extensive discussion surrounding a daily catch limit for the 2017/18 scallop fishery and various methods of delivering an equitable catch limit for various sizes of vessel. It was agreed that the daily catch limit would start the season at 30 bags (1050kg) per vessel and will be reviewed part way through the season to ensure that it remains appropriate.

Closed areas for king scallop fishery

The board considered closed areas for the 2017/18 king scallop fishery. Banger University recommended a closed area at Targets to protect the recently opened area and noted that the Scallop sub-group had stated that a change to the shape of the Chickens closed area should be considered ahead of the King Scallop fishing season.

Tow Bar Length

The item regarding tow bar length was briefly discussed and it was agreed that there be no change to the tow bar length and this will be discussed again at the next meeting of the board when all board members are present - **AJ**

Recommendation

It was agreed that the following be recommended to the Minister for the 2017/18 king scallop fishery;

- Seasonal, overall TAC target is to be ,using the ICES Category 3 advice protocol (figure TBC.)
- Daily catch limit of 30 bags (1050kg) per day.
- Fishery and catch limit to be reviewed by December, or otherwise as required.

In relation to closed areas, having proposed TAC and bag limits, and having regard to the EDG closed area and other existing closed areas within the 0-3nm zone, the board agreed that there were to be no recommendations for closed areas outside the 3nm limit for the 2017/18 king scallop fishery. The board also agreed that the ERA off Maughold remains at Phase I and does not progress to Phase II.

12. Grandfather rights

A paper setting out the Department's position grandfather rights was presented to the Board for consideration.

The board discussed the need to review the GFR system and it was agreed that with other management measures now agreed, accelerating the removal of the GFR vessels would have no benefit directly on the king scallop fishery.

Recommendation

The board recommends to the Minister that the current arrangement regarding GFR is effective and should be retained as existing effort restrictions and management measures provide adequate protection.

13. Fisheries Zones in 0-3nm

A paper prepared by DEFA was presented to the Board to update on progress with the development of the Fisheries Zones within the 0-3nm area. The Department does not have the vires to licence the FMZ to an external organisation and is now exploring the use of a memorandum of understanding with the MFPO to allow this initiative to proceed.

The Department will report back to the board when further information or progress has been made – **NM**

14. Pan Irish Sea Update

This agenda item was covered under agenda item 9 but it was further suggested that the board should write to the other FA's regarding concerns over both king and queen scallop management within the Irish Sea. This was agreed by the board. – **WC**

15. Any Other Business

Transporting scallops through Isle of Man territorial sea.

A board member highlighted the issue of bringing undersize scallops into the Isle of Man territorial sea after fishing in waters where the minimum landing size (MLS) was smaller than that of the Isle of Man. DEFA advised that their current legislation does not permit undersize scallops to be transported through IOM waters.

It was confirmed that this applies to queen scallops and that vessels should not be landing queen scallops that are less than the Isle of Man MLS to any Isle of Man processors.

The Board asked DEFA to visit the issue of transporting undersize scallops through IOM waters and respond to the board at the next meeting– **KMCH**.

Shellfish Movement Documents

Under food safety legislation, all vessels are required to complete a shellfish movement document alongside all other paperwork which the vessels must complete to be compliant.

A board member asked whether the Department would be able to use the E-Log and VMS systems to collect the same information as was required on the Shellfish Movement Documents JK to provide DEFA with a contact in Scotland to allow DEFA to explore further. **JK** to provide **KMCH** with a contact re. use of e-logs as an alternative to Shellfish Movement documents

Date of next meeting

It was agreed that the next meeting would be held in January but an earlier meeting may be called to review the fishery depending on the progression of the king scallop fishery – **KMCH**.

The meeting finished at 16.20hrs.