

Isle of Man Scallop Management Board

Minutes of the meeting held at AFBI in Belfast on 14th December 2017

Present: Walter Crozier (WC – Chairman), Karen McHarg (KMCh – DEFA), Melvyn Reid (MR – Manx fisherman), Billy Caley (BC – Isle of Man Seafood Products Ltd), Phil Comber (PC – Manx fisherman), Brian Horne (BH – Manx fisherman), Domhnall MacLachlainn (DML – Scottish fisherman), Carrie McMinn (CM – AFBI), Geoffrey Chambers (GC – ANIFPO/NI Scallop Association), John King (JK – West Coast Sea Products Ltd), David Beard (DB – MFPO), Neil Milsom (NM – DEFA), Mark Roberts (MR – Welsh fisherman), Rebecca Richardson (RR – DEFA, Minutes)

Video link - Isobel Bloor (IB – Bangor University)

1. Apologies

None.

2. Approval and signing of the minutes of the meeting on 10th August 2017

The minutes were agreed and signed by the chairman. It was agreed that minutes once typed will be circulated to the board for any comments/amendments after which they will be uploaded to the website – **RR**.

3. Matters arising from the minutes

- Gear selection process concern – DEFA had not yet raised the matter with UK fishing authorities, but was happy to when the opportunity presented.
- Trial allocation of specific area TAC using Ramsey Bay data – The harvest strategy decided on for the king scallop fishery taking place in Ramsey Bay was briefly explained. It was agreed that the full background papers be circulated to the board – **DB**. It was suggested there be a broader discussion of this topic at a future meeting, such as how the strategy might be applied to closed areas.
- Ramsey Bay fishery agreement with MFPO – DEFA clarified that it remains possible to have an exclusive fishery in the 0-3NM.
- Alternative methods of funding research and development within the scallop fisheries – To be discussed at a future meeting.
- Tow bar length – To be discussed at a future meeting.

MR joined the meeting at 9.50am.

- Progress on 0-3NM Fisheries Zones – DEFA and the MFPO had been liaising on this. The Articles of Association and Memorandum of Understanding had been drawn up and a meeting was needed to work out the finer detail, but completion was expected early next year. A voluntary 15 bags limit was in place during the scallop fishery in the 0-3NM, but once agreement was in place the MFPO hoped to implement a days at sea regime for the three mile limit.
- Write to UK FAs over management of wider Irish Sea – The chairman intended to write when he was in a position to better explain the situation inside and outside.
- DEFA to review legislation on transportation of undersize scallops through territorial sea – It was agreed that the relevant technical legislation, being 17 years old, needed to be reviewed, but it remained an offence to have undersize scallops in our waters. Comparison was made by industry to Scotland, which it was claimed had 'adopted a pragmatic approach' on the issue when e-log was introduced. There was discussion on whether there was to be harmonisation of the minimum landing size of queen scallops inside/outside the territorial sea. It was confirmed by DEFA that undersize scallops could be brought to the Island on a non-fishing vessel. As the matter was raised by an individual, it was agreed that the chairman write to the Minister to establish whether he will consider recommendations from the board on individual matters – **WC**.
- E-logs as an alternative to Shellfish Movement documents – The matter was raised by DEFA with the Food Standards Agency and a response is awaited.

4. Review of king scallop fishery 2017-18

a) Presentation on scientific perception of the stock, including analysis of LPUE and survey data – IB

The board was updated on the progress of the fishery, with 785t landed in November and 227t landed as at 13th December (which equated to 73% of the December "soft" target). It was noted that electronic reporting had, so far, been a success. Available data indicated that Landings Per Unit Effort in November 2017 were comparable to 2014 and 2015, but lower than 2016. The number of vessels this year compared to last had

also slightly reduced. Landings for November 2017 were around 37% of landings for November 2016. Consideration was given to the fact that 31% of the overall TAC had been used as at 13th December and the average for this time of year was 33%. Closure of the fishery over the Christmas period was suggested.

b) Additional sampling work

A presentation was made on the commercial sampling work undertaken this year by Bangor University with the MFPO. In our waters, one commercial sampling event per IS box is taking place per month during the king scallop season. The boats involved, under permit, using standard commercial dredges, undertake 60 minutes tows at 2.5 knots (30 minutes in Ramsey Bay) and the fishermen measure all catch using electronic devices. Sample bags are also collected – one red bag containing scallops both under and over the minimum landing size (MLS) and a blue bag with scallops over MLS – which are landed to a processor and subsequently scientifically analysed to give information on scallop size and age frequency, as well as length and weight.

CMcM acknowledge the Isle of Man's work on scallops as 'brilliant'. It was agreed that harmonisation with the Manx scheme be raised with AFBI – **CMcM**. Any UK vessels interested in getting involved in the commercial sampling project were invited to get in touch with the MFPO.

c) Update on enforcement and compliance

DEFA explained that enforcement patrols, factory inspections, and quayside checks as well as office-based vessel monitoring had been carried out. There were a number of 'live cases'. Staffing resource was queried.

d) Evidence from MFPO fishing survey

The commercial sampling survey had been covered (*see Additional sampling work*).

e) Fishing outside the Isle of Man territorial sea

It was stated fishermen were coming to fish Manx waters to maintain their track-record and due to the fact it is a well-managed fishery and there were not the fishing opportunities elsewhere. It was felt that the capacity and availability of stock in our waters needed to be matched and while we were not there yet, the TAC was progress.

f) Discuss king scallop fishery and review management measures (including TAC, daily bag limit level and other possible measures)

It was proposed and agreed that the king scallop fishery close between 22nd December 2017 and 3rd January 2018 inclusive and that the daily 700kg limit would continue until the end of January 2018.

The "soft" targets for January and February were reviewed and these were considered useful indicators to help the Board evaluate progress with TAC uptake. (Soft targets are calculated based on average landings for the month for the last four years (excluding 2016-17) to which a percentage of the TAC is allocated.)

Concern was also raised over the potential negative impact on the fishery from Western Waters decision to allocate 80 days (the highest number of fishing days ever) for the first quarter of 2018. The Department acknowledge it may need to act should there be an impact.

It was suggested that vessels should be made to come into a Manx port after fishing in our waters. Claims were made that some vessels were offending by overfishing in Manx waters; not complying with the requirement for accurate logging of daily catches on the electronic app. There was concern that overfishing undermined the TAC and potentially undermined the steps being taken to achieve sustainability of the stock. It was pointed out that there was no evidence as yet to prove abuse.

DEFA conceded enforcement would be easier if vessels reported to port, but acknowledged it would impact visiting vessels.

The majority felt that daily reporting to Manx ports had to be introduced, but there was an objection, and the board wanted a solution that suited local as well as visiting vessels. Reporting to port combined with a daily/weekly bag limit regime was suggested. It was agreed to meet in January to devise a firm proposal to put forward to the Minister – **All**.

A discussion to decide the considerations for the January meeting took place and WC drafted a checklist, which could be circulated after the meeting.

Suggestions/considerations and concerns raised included:

- All vessels AIS to be switched on, the advantage of which would be 'peer pressure', but objection was raised as fishermen do not wish to publicise their preferred fishing grounds.

JK left the meeting at 2.25pm.

- No more than 30 bags should be caught per day.
- Number of days for weekly limit to be two or three.
- Calculations would need to be done to work out catch per month, which would have to be reviewed and adjusted monthly with reference to the monthly soft target percentage of the TAC.
- The need for an impact assessment to ensure fishing opportunities continue to the end of the season without risk of exceeding the total allowable catch.
- The change may attract more vessels to the fishery, which would then require the number of bags to be reduced.
- Vessels would need to communicate to DEFA whether they would opt to fish daily to weekly, or perhaps only contact if they opt to fish weekly.

As an example, based on a rough calculation using the soft target for February 2018, a scenario to operate a daily fishery at 20 bags and a weekly fishery for two days at 30 bags per day was suggested, which would give a total catch of 588 tonnes for the month.

The DEFA Minister was to be informed about concerns over non-compliance with the daily catch limit and of January meeting to draw up a firm proposal that it is hoped can be in place by 31st January, which will propose a requirement to daily report to ports combined with a daily/weekly bag limit – **WC**.

5. Review queen scallop fishing 2017

a) Summary presentation on the science.

A presentation on the 2017 queen scallop fishery was given; there was an 853t trawl quota, of which 27t was fished in Ramsey Bay, and a 139t dredge quota. Approximate landings, taken from daily catch returns, were 845.5t trawl and 134.2t dredge. There were 38 vessels in the trawl fishery and seven in the dredge fishery.

b) Discussion on queen scallop fishery

It was explained that in future years the Ramsey Bay TAC would be separate from the wider Manx territorial sea queen scallop fishery TAC.

c) Discuss use of individual quotas

In the context of the Manx queen scallop fishery, the chairman felt we were not in a position to introduce individual quotas.

There was a short discussion about smalls and spat movement. Concern was expressed over the lack of smalls in the dredging zone. WC expressed an interest in viewing maps on spat movement, which set out salinity and temperature.

Phasing out of the dredge fishery would need to be a future discussion for the board, it was stated. It was voiced that there were no Manx vessels involved in the dredge fishery in our waters and none of the dredged catch was landed into the Isle of Man.

6. Update on 0-3NM Fisheries Zones

Discussed under agenda item 3.

7. Update on Scallop Management Board constitution

This item was not discussed due to time constraints, but will be taken at a future meeting.

8. Update on Pan Irish-Sea scallop management

A compulsory closure period and the introduction of a queen scallop minimum landing size were expected to be agreed for 2018.

9. Posting minutes to website after each meeting

Discussed under agenda item 2.

10. Any Other Business

None.

11. Review recommendations to DEFA Minister

The recommendations were reviewed by WC.

12. Date of next meeting

Provisionally late January 2018.

The meeting ended at 3.40pm.

Action Points

- Minutes once typed will be circulated to the board for any comments/amendments after which they will be uploaded to the website – **RR.**
- Full background papers on the harvest strategy for Ramsey Bay to be circulated to the board – **DB.**
- Chairman to write to establish whether the Minister will consider recommendations from the board on individual matters, arising from the request to review legislation on the transportation of undersize scallops through territorial sea – **WC.**
- Harmonisation with the Manx commercial sampling scheme for king scallops be raised with AFBI – **CMcM.**
- The chairman to write to DEFA Minister to recommend the continuation of a daily catch limit of 700kg until the end of January 2018 and for the closure of the fishery from 22nd December until 3rd January 2018 inclusive – **WC.**
- Meeting of board to be held in January, to devise a firm proposal for the Minister on the introduction of the requirement to report to port combined with a days at sea regime – **All.**
- DEFA Minister to be informed about concerns over non-compliance with the daily catch limit and of January meeting to draw up a firm proposal that it is hoped can be in place by 31st January, which proposes the requirement to daily report to ports, plus a daily/weekly bag limit – **WC.**