

Isle of Man Scallop Management Board
Minutes of the meeting held at DEFA in St John's on 23rd May 2018

Present: Walter Crozier (WC – Chairman), Karen McHarg (KMch – DEFA), Geoffrey Boot MHK (GB – Minister), Isobel Bloor (IB – Bangor University), Billy Caley (BC – Isle of Man Seafood Products Ltd), Phil Comber (PC – Manx fisherman), Domhnall MacLachlainn (DML – Scottish fisherman), Carrie McMinn (CM – AFBI), Geoffrey Chambers (GC – ANIFPO/NI Scallop Association), David Beard (DB – MFPO), Mark Roberts (MR – Welsh fisherman), Juan Canipa (Manx fisherman, Scott Merrick (A M Seafoods), Rebecca Richardson (RR – DEFA, Minutes)

1. Apologies

Neil Milsom (NM – DEFA) and Brian Horne (BH – Manx fisherman).

2. Discussion with DEFA Minister on SMB first year of operation

Roundtable introductions were made. The Minister welcomed everyone, in particular new members Juan Canipa and Scott Merrick, who was there in place of Peter Merrick. He praised the board's chair Walter Crozier for his steer of the board as well as his 'non-partisan and precise' advice to the Minister. He reminded board members they were to consider conservation.

The Minister explained that an interim decision tree was being worked up to help define how we take decisions in relation to the Fisheries Management Agreement, and that Brexit posed a big challenge. The Manx government had a team in London that day to meet DEFRA colleagues and we hoped to be able to secure best possible market access.

A board member queried the role of the board and confidentiality. It was explained that the board is an advisory group and that information was confidential until released by the Isle of Man Government, which informs or consults with its neighbouring fisheries administrations.

3. 2018 queen scallop assessment

A PowerPoint presentation was given on the Isle of Man Spring Scallop Survey and Stock Assessment – a 14 day survey held in April 2018 aboard Bangor University's Prince Madog. Tows were undertaken using both king and queen dredges. The survey results showed a continuing downward trend in post-recruits over 55mm and a slight increase in recruits under 55mm for the first time in four years. Landings and landings per unit effort had declined in Area VIIa. Landings are now at a level seen in the early 1990s.

PC left the meeting at 11am.

The 2018 survey data showed there had been a further decrease on the west coast, while there were positive signs of recruitment at East Douglas, Point of Ayre and Ramsey Bay.

In conclusion, the estimated biomass had reduced and science recommended a harvest of no more than 340t (~20% of estimated stock biomass).

GB left the meeting at 11.09am.

The board discussed the stock assessment and the recommendations for this year's queen scallop net and dredge fisheries.

The board, last year, adopted the ICES measure for Category 3 stocks to set the total allowable catch to a 20% reduction/increase, which followed the biomass trend. The total allowable catch (TAC) for the 2017 queen scallop fishery was 992t and therefore with the downward trend seen meant the TAC would reduce this year (by 20%) to 794t. The chair encouraged the board to do more in terms of conservation and suggested the introduction of specific area soft targets to more accurately manage the TAC.

The MFPO agreed in principle to the 20% maximum change for the TAC as previously agreed, but considered more detailed surveys were required prior to the introduction of specific area TACs. The MFPO's interpretation of the results of the Ramsey Bay survey, which involved 64 tows sampling a larger area, was that stock had moved eastwards by 2km, and therefore suggested that this demonstrated the need for detailed surveys.

It was agreed that the area at Targets needed surveyed, including the closed box as it potentially had the highest densities. Science agreed that for area specific TACs more detailed surveys were needed, which should be industry

led. An industry survey can be undertaken at Targets in June, but there was not time to survey other areas prior to the fishery opening.

The MFPO suggested our stock changes follow what happens in the wider Irish Sea and that nothing was being done to manage this apart from a three month queen scallop fishery closure. (See minute 8).

AFBI indicated that queen scallop stocks in the Irish Sea appeared to reduce last year. AFBI was due to undertake its annual queen scallop survey this June, which will include some stations in Isle of Man territorial waters.

The fishing ground at Targets was discussed, in particular that:

- The ground is not self-recruiting, but reliant on spat from Ramsey Bay which had perhaps gone elsewhere.
- Whether there is a 'natural cycle' with queen scallop stock at Targets.
- That intensive fishing could be affecting the ground.
- The closure of Targets meant it would also close for the king scallop season, which was considered by MFPO to be unacceptable.
- Closure of Targets would force smaller vessels to the Chickens where it is too deep for them to fish.

One board member was personally against closing areas. Another stated that a lot of work was being undertaken to 'push' fishermen into areas that were not financially viable or safe for vessels and that if stock was self-recruiting in some of the territorial sea, the board was looking into the matter too deeply. He also suggested incentivising to keep vessels away from the fishery.

The need to be clear on the reasons for closed areas was raised. Real-time closures informed by the fishermen where they see 'smalls' was suggested, but monitoring of such closed areas would be needed.

The chair mentioned that under the ICES rules, if there were particular conservation concerns about threats to the status of a stock, an additional 20% could also be taken off the TAC (to give a 40% reduction on last year's tonnage), but the board was not supportive of this move. There was support to stick with the 20% reduction only. The MFPO considered that a month into the fishery it would be apparent if the 794t TAC was realistic.

Queen scallop dredge fishery

A board member pointed out that no Manx vessels are involved in this fishery and it was unfair dredge vessels are allowed to fish at three times the rate of those in the trawl fishery. Last year, seven vessels took part in the queen scallop dredge fishery. It was suggested that for fairness the same bag limit should apply to both fisheries.

The Department has previously indicated its intention to phase out of the dredge fishery and this would be done on scientific evidence and with a full consultation process. A board member stated he had been approached by three skippers to state there was objection to removal of the dredge fishery.

Concern was expressed about tote bags used in the dredge fishery and it was suggested tote bags need to be checked by enforcement officers or that the vessels be required to have smaller bags. It was pointed out that tote bags are difficult for fisheries enforcement officers to weigh at sea.

It was agreed that the dredge fishery would take place in October with a bag limit and its own TAC, which would come off the total TAC.

GC left at 2.05pm.

Consideration was given to moving the location of the dredge fishery from Chickens, which is thought to be the main recruiting ground for the territorial sea, to Point of Ayre. However, in the absence of any new information the merits of moving the dredge box elsewhere, the board agreed that the location for the dredge fishery should remain at Chickens.

One board member voiced his opposition to the continuation of the weekend fishery ban, which he stated was 'protectionism' and had a major impact on the personal lives of those impacted by the measure.

It was agreed the following recommendations be made to the DEFA Minister (– **WC**):

- Open the QSC TRAWL season on 2 July 2018.
- TAC initially set at 794t, subject to adjustment of Ramsey Bay and Targets each being assigned an area specific proportion of the TAC.
- Industry to undertake the survey of Targets and have the data worked up and made available to the board with input from IB.
- DEFA write to all QSC licence holders to nominate what gear (net or dredge).
- Weekly quota for the TRAWL fishery – 77 bags (pro rata 20% less than previous year).

- Letter of comfort from Department that vessel track record will not be impacted by their non-attendance.
- Requirement to complete bycatch forms for the MFPO.
- Daily catch returns to be submitted and electronic reporting via Nest Forms application.
- Daily reporting into port during the fishery.
- Re-evaluate the fishery in August without a closure.
- Relax management measures, by not imposing a weekend ban.
- To be a pro-rata split of the TAC between the TRAWL and DREDGE fishery. To be defined by the number of vessels indicating gear type - 1/49th per vessel.
- Open the DREDGE fishery on 1 October 2018.
- Equalise bag limit for TRAWL and DREDGE fishery.
- DREDGE fishery to be at Chickens.
- Closed areas:
 - Future consideration of industry-led real-time closures.
 - Closed areas need to be monitored to evaluate success.

4. Brief review of progression of 2017-18 king scallop fishery

A PowerPoint presentation was delivered by IB on the Isle of Man King Scallop Fishery 2017-18, which saw 82 vessels take part and 91% of the TAC fished to date (the fishery runs 1st November 2017 until 31st May 2018). There was a closed area at Targets to protect queens and an environmental research closed area at east Douglas.

The chair recorded his thanks to Fisheries Technical Officer Joy Eaton and scientist Isobel Bloor for providing continually updated information during the course of this fishery.

Mention was made of the commercial sampling scheme, involving vessels being permitted to land bags to allow science to sample and record catch data. The scheme was undertaken by science in conjunction with the MFPO and Isle of Man Seafood Products and meant that science had access to more data than ever before. It was hoped to have more regular sampling next year.

It was considered that having the TAC had meant that the fishery had not declined as quickly. It had also worked well for a local processor and had appeared to have kept prices stabilised. One board member stated fishermen would be happy to continue with the 700kg daily limit in the future. The chair stated this proposal would be noted, but would only be taken up if appropriate for the level of stock. The next stock assessment will enable a decision on bag limits.

It was agreed that the daily catch limit of 700kg would remain in place until the end of the season.

5. Minutes of the previous meeting (14th December 2017)

The minutes were agreed to be a correct record and were signed by the chair.

6. Matters arising

Action points from the meeting of 14th December 2017 were reviewed and updates given.

- Ramsey Bay harvest strategy background papers – Papers were supplied to the chair and a copy could be supplied to anyone else who wanted one.
- Consideration of whether the Minister will consider individual matters after a query about transportation of undersize scallops through the territorial sea – The chair advised that the board could not make recommendations on legislation and enforcement matters. A board member reported that Marine Scotland was to consult in the future about increasing the minimum landing size from 105mm to 110mm.
- Harmonisation by AFBI with Isle of Man commercial king scallop sampling – AFBI confirmed it intended to start king scallop commercial sampling and had obtained details on the measuring boards required.
- Planned meeting of the board in January 2018 and concerns about non-compliance with the daily catch limit – The meeting did not take place and the concern had led to additional enforcement measures.

7. Update on 0-3NM Fisheries Zones

There was an MFPO gentlemen's agreement between those who could fish the 0-3NM to only fish 525kg per day, which most people had adhered to. Plans were progressing to set up an Association to manage the 0-3NM, with a company having been set up. A board will be set up to make recommendations to the Scallop Management

Board on fishing the inshore, particularly in terms of catch rates and landings. There will be a signed Memorandum of Understanding between DEFA and the MFPO regarding the management of the 0-3NM.

8. Update on Pan Irish-Sea queen scallop management

There was to be a meeting of the UK-wide Scallop Industry Consultation Group (SICG) in June and in the meantime the three month compulsory closure to fish queen scallops in areas 6A and 7A, until the end of June, had, so far, been adhered to. An increase of the minimum landing size, from 40mm to 50mm, cannot be achieved by the UK fisheries administrations through licence condition and would need to be done by statutory instrument.

A brief summary of the Isle of Man stock assessment would be sent to the SICG to inform their discussion – **IB**.

A suggestion by a board member that the group should be looking at both king and queen scallops, received support from other industry representatives.

9. Any Other Business

- Funding of surveys

It was pointed out that MFPO members were funding industry surveys and this could not be expected to continue. Presently, only the MFPO's Ramsey Bay survey is funded differently; being funded through the king scallop TAC.

The board noted the need for industry surveys to be funded across the board and board members were encouraged to find ways to make this happen. SM suggested that a number of pence per kilo could go to the MFPO for the product caught during surveys, which happens for another fishery now under a voluntary scheme involving processors. More details were to be provided – **SM**.

It was also agreed the Department would speak to the Minister about funding surveys through the Fisheries Grant scheme – **KMcH**.

- Landings Obligations

The MFPO had had several meetings with DEFRA about landings obligations and had established that nowhere will get a blanket exemption for discards. The MFPO would look to demonstrate the disproportionate cost of landing discards. There has been an exemption to land skates and rays and we may get an exemption for plaice if we can prove a high survivability rate.

- Classification of vessels

A board member suggested that if there are to be area specific total allowable catch rates in future, there was the need to classify vessels that are part of that fishery in terms of size and gear type.

- AIS

Over 15m vessels are required to have their AIS switched on at sea, but one board members raised this as a security concern as this information is publicly available.

10. Date of next meeting

The board will next meeting will be in August to re-evaluate the queen scallop fishery; no date was decided.

The meeting ended at 4.01pm.

Action Points

- Chair to write to the Minister outlining agreed recommendations for the queen scallop fisheries – **WC**.
- A brief summary of the Isle of Man stock assessment would be sent to the SICG to inform their discussion – **IB/KMcH**.
- Details of operational voluntary scheme for processors to pay for surveys – **SM**.
- The Department would speak to the Minister about funding surveys through the Fisheries Grant scheme – **KMcH**.