

Isle of Man Scallop Management Board

Minutes of the meeting held virtually via Microsoft Teams – 17th February 2021

Present:

Peter Duncan	PD	Acting Chair	
David Beard	DB	MFPO/Industry Representative	
Isobel Bloor	IB	Bangor University	
Juan Canipa	JC	Manx fisherman	
Geoffrey Chambers	GC	ANIFPO/NI Scallop Association	
Jack Emmerson	JE	Bangor University	
Carrie McMinn	CMcM	AFBI	
Brian Horne	BH	Manx Fisherman	
Scott Merrick	SM	AM Seafoods (UK)	
Neil Milsom	NM	DEFA	
Mark Roberts	MR	Welsh fisherman	
Craig Woodbridge	CW	Manx Fisherman	
Robyn Hughes	RH	DEFA	(Minutes)

Apologies:

Domhnall MacLachlainn	DMcL	Scottish Fisherman
William Caley	WC	IoM Seafoods

In attendance:

Rebecca Richardson	DEFA
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1. Long-term fishery management plan (LTMP) - introduction

The need for a long term management plan for the king scallop fishery has been discussed in previous meetings of the Scallop Management Board. In response to these discussions, DB prepared an initial document, which was passed to DEFA and Bangor for comment. Today's meeting was called to discuss the need for an Industry led LTMP, the proposed high level objectives, and what its implementation might entail. The Chair emphasised that consensus from the Board was required in order to support a formal recommendation to the Minister. The need for confidentiality whilst in the preliminary stages was also highlighted.

2. Bio-economic model (DB)

DB gave an overview of the economic trends in the SCE fishery and emphasised that the information provided was to provide a background for discussion. The Poseidon UK Scallop report states that since 2012 there has been a continued decline in landings per unit effort (LPUE) throughout the UK scallop fleet. Reflecting this, the Manx fleet has seen a decrease in the daily catch limit (DCL) and income per vessel and the value of the fishery has fallen to 36% of the 2017/2018 value. Boats dependent on this fishery appear not to be currently profitable. Based on current figures for the Manx fishery, included a target income, stock status and associated quotas and average market price, it was estimated that the fishery could support 27 full time profitable vessels, noting that this figure would be higher if the vessels were not full time. Potential options for the future management of the fishery were presented.

3. Fishery trends and LTMP high-level objectives (IB/JE)

Bangor University presented an overview of the historical context of the fishery, which has seen a downward trend in the number of post-recruits coming through since the 2016 peak. As the TAC is not biomass linked its setting each year has been reactive, with no long term management plan for fishing grounds. A strategic approach is needed to balance out peaks and to allow stock to remain on the ground for multiple seasons. Additionally, the number of vessels with access rights to the fishery has also changed over time. At the start of the 2007/08 season the number of vessels with access to the fishery was over 200. From 2010, licences were restricted to 'qualifying vessels', which had to demonstrate having fished for 50 days over the previous two seasons. Natural wastage of licences further reduced the number of vessels until 2016 when a public consultation on the management of the IOM Scallop Fishery was launched which again restricted licences based on track record. While the current number of licences is significantly less than in previous years it has been raised whether this level of access still presents a risk both to the stock and economic viability of fishing.

In December 2020 the Board submitted a discussion document setting out its high level objectives in developing a LTMP, as follows;

1. A profitable and sustainable fishery for all qualified boats
2. A fishery not dependant on annual recruitment
3. A stock with multiple year classes that can withstand periods of low recruitment.
4. Protection of key environmental features and spawning stocks
5. Protection of high-density juvenile stocks through temporary closed areas
6. Avoidance of displacement of the fleet & negative impacts on sea-bed and stocks within open areas
7. A low impact fishery with reduced sea-bed contact time and consistently high LPUE
8. Reduced carbon footprint
9. Appropriate levels of licenced boats and effort

Having considered the Board's vision, Bangor put forward the following draft high level objectives for consideration and discussion;

1. Restore and maintain good stock status and achieve long-term stock stability.
2. A Harvest Control Strategy (HCS) in pursuit and continuation of the above primary objective, which:
 - i. sets biologically sustainable limits on fishing activity, informed by robust/best available scientific stock data linked to biological reference points (limit and target reference points).
 - ii. manages vessel numbers, access, and effort so that fleet capacity is economically viable within the limits set (i), and with consideration of environmental, economic, and monitoring-control-surveillance (MCS) requirements.
 - iii. utilises harvest control rules (HCRs) with defined limits that are effective, responsive, and enforceable.
 - iv. safeguards against poor recruitment.
 - v. incorporates spatial management.
3. An environmentally-considered fishery, following an ecosystem-based approach
4. An energy efficient fishery
5. The fishery (and stock) is considered in relation to marine spatial planning, marine developments, and wider fisheries management.
6. A high-quality seafood product, produced sustainably, that delivers market access and maximises national (Manx) economic return.
7. A high level of safety and wellbeing for those people working in the industry.

4. Process for development and introduction of a scallop LTMP (DEFA)

NM laid out the process for development and introduction of a LTMP. Firstly the need for such a plan and the high level objectives must be agreed and sent to the Minister as a formal recommendation from the SMB. Given the extent of the measures which could arise from the proposals, it is likely that the Department would have to undertake a formal consultation in line with the requirements of the Fisheries Act 2012 and the Fisheries Management Agreement 2012.

If the Minister agrees to move forward on a LTMP, then a consultation document would be developed by DEFA in consultation with the Board and Bangor University before being sent for consideration at the Department's Policy and Strategy meeting. The results of any consultation would also need to be considered at this meeting before any changes could be considered for implementation. It was highlighted that as the dates of these meetings are fixed certain fixed milestones are already in place.

5. Discussion

The Board agreed that a long term plan for the scallop fishery was needed and that to continue with 'business as usual' was not sustainable. .

There was some discussion about the LTMP objectives, and their importance in providing a framework for action that had come from the Scallop Management Board as industry representatives, and that it is from this industry driven template that government can take action.

The Chair asked the Board if it stood behind the high level objectives set out by Bangor University or if there was anything that needed to be amended or added. The Board agreed that the objectives were good, however it was raised that point 6 should refer to raising economic return for all stakeholders, rather than the current wording of 'maximises national (Manx) economic return'. It was noted that the term was intended to mean anyone with a stake in the Manx fishery, and the Board agreed that this would be amended for clarity. One member raised that while all the points in the objectives were good, it represented a long term plan and that in

order to progress with the overall aim of improving the stock it would be useful to prioritise points. This was agreed by the rest of the Board.

There was a discussion around what measures should be included as part of these objectives, such as an increase in MLS and decreasing the environmental impact of the fishery. A Board member highlighted the importance of wellbeing and the need for stakeholders to have a sense of ownership of the fishery and increased security.

It was also noted that there appears to have been further and recent natural wastage of licences in the Northern Irish fleet. GC was asked to email the Department with details of this **(GC)**. Reducing the permitted length of tow bars and the use of technology for enforcement purposes was also discussed. The Board agreed that it would include in its recommendation that tow bar length be reduced and limited to 6 aside ahead of any other proposals.

Following the presentation by NM on DEFA processes it was raised that the consultation could be divided into sections, based on priorities. The Board agreed that recognising procedural constraints it would seek to instigate a consultation as soon as possible.

The Board moved onto discussion of the five options presented by DB for reducing full time vessel effort in the fishery. It was noted this is likely to be controversial and that all options presented involved removing licenced vessels from the fishery.

The Board agreed that a tiered approach, similar to option 5, would be the preferred method of reducing full time vessel activity in the fishery as it provided most flexibility and inclusivity.

6. Recommendations

The following recommendations were agreed by the Board to be sent to the DEFA Minister.

1. The Scallop Management Board recommends the Department works with the Board to develop a LTMP based on the proposal from Industry.
2. It is recommended that the LTMP is based on the High Level Objectives discussed and agreed by the Board, noting that the following amendments are to be made prior to submission;
 - a. The words national ('Manx') in point 6 is replaced with the word 'stakeholder's'.
 - b. The items listed in the objectives will be prioritised.
3. To recommend that a public consultation is held to obtain views on management measures arising from the development of the LTMP as soon as possible, recognising procedural constraints.
4. Separate to any consultation process, the Board recommends a reduction in permissible two bar length and number of dredges, while noting that it may also be contained within any consultation process.
5. The Board favours a tiered approach, based on track record, to reduce vessel effort.

7. AOB

The need to engage an independent Chair to the Board was raised. DEFA has drawn up a list of potential names which will be circulated to the Board for consideration. DB wished it to be noted that while PD has been acting as the Chair, DB has been preparing recommendations to the Minister in order for these to remain independent.

A long term plan for Industry Survey funding is still required. DB will be sending DEFA a formal request for grant funding to cover the 2021 survey. It was raised that this could be included as part of the LTMP consultation. The Chair will recirculate the previous position paper to the Board for consideration **(PD)**.

The Chair asked all members of the Board to consider the high level objectives as a basis of consultation headings and to begin considering potential questions for future discussion **(ALL)**.

The meeting ended at 13.40

8. Action Points

Email a list of those vessels expected to be leaving the SCE fishery to the Department	CG
Recirculate the position paper on funding the Industry Survey to the Board	PD
Consider the high level objectives as the basis of proposed consultation headings and questions	ALL