

Isle of Man Scallop Management Board
Minutes of the meeting held virtually via Microsoft Teams – 8th September 2020

Present:

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| Peter Duncan | PD | Acting Chair | |
| David Beard | DB | MFPO/Industry Representative | |
| Isobel Bloor | IB | Bangor University | |
| William Caley | WC | Isle of Man Seafood Products Ltd | |
| Juan Canipa | JC | Manx fisherman | |
| Carrie McMinn | CMcM | AFBI | (from 11am) |
| Brian Horne | BH | Manx Fisherman | |
| Neil Milsom | NM | DEFA | |
| Mark Roberts | MR | Welsh fisherman | |
| Craig Woodbridge | CW | Manx Fisherman | |
| Robyn Hughes | RH | DEFA | (Minutes) |

Apologies:

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| Domhnall MacLachlainn | DMcL | Scottish Fisherman |
| Geoffrey Chambers | GC | ANIFPO/NI Scallop Association |
| Scott Merrick | SM | AM Seafoods |

1. Welcome and introductions

The Board welcomed Craig Woodbridge following the resignation of Phil Comber. The Board recognised and extend its thanks to Phil Comber for his contributions during his membership.

2. Minutes and of the previous meetings

The minutes were agreed by the Board to be an accurate record of proceedings. The approved minutes will be uploaded to the website **(RH)**.

3. Board matters

It was noted at the start of the meeting that there were not enough members present to form a quorum. It was also raised by Board members that more time to consider certain issues would be welcomed. It was agreed that the meeting would be held and draft recommendations would be circulated to the full Board afterwards. A follow up meeting to finalise recommendations will be scheduled for two weeks' time.

At present the Board Constitution defines a quorum as 7 members. It was suggested that this be amended to read; "the quorum for any meeting shall be 70% of members entitled to participate in the decision-making process." This would allow a quorum to be achieved in times when the Board membership is reduced. There was a brief discussion on the possibility of increasing the Board membership, however this may raise issues in representation.

CM joined the meeting at 11am achieving quorum.

It was agreed that the Constitution be amended to define a quorum as 70% of members entitled to participate in the decision making process.

It was asked if there were any concerns with the current structure of the Board. The Board indicated that it is content that PD act as Interim Chair, with support from DB as Industry Representative, while a permanent replacement is sought in the longer term.

4. Review of 2020 queen scallop fishery

IB presented a review of the 2020 queen scallop fishery.

The Fishery opened on Wednesday 1 July. As of week 10 (beginning 4th September) the landings for the queen scallop trawl fishery are 467.21t of the 557 Total Allowable Catch (TAC). 26 unique vessels have persecuted the

fishery, undertaking a combined total of 229 fishing trips to date. This averages out to less than 1.5 trips per week for each unique vessel. On average 5-6 vessels per week are making a second trip with the majority of vessels catching their quota in one trip per week. In all weeks the total weekly catch available was not reached. The highest proportion was caught in Week 2 (95.6%) and the lowest proportion in Week 1 (80.3%), it was noted however that week 1 was a part-week.

The Board discussed the reasons for not achieving the catch available. While the Board agreed with IB that uncaught catch was in part a result of economics rather than stock availability they also raised enforcement procedures as a factor. There is concern that enforcement practices of weighing bags before water weight has reduced via drip loss is causing fishermen to catch below their legal allowance. NM suggested that Martin Birchenough, DEFA Enforcement Manager, be brought in for a discussion with DB on the changing fishing practices and enforcement policies **(NM)**.

IB continued the presentation, moving onto LPUE data. The overall TAC was subdivided into four main grounds (East Douglas, Chickens, Targets and Point of Ayre). Soft TAC limits for each area were set based on size of ground, survey density and presence of Newly Opened Areas (NOAs). Reaching this soft TAC limit triggers a review of the fishery. The soft TAC has been exceeded at Targets but due to LPUE maintaining high the fishing ground remains open. East Douglas fishing ground was closed to queen scallop fishing on 8th September as, while the soft TAC had not been reached, the LPUE had dropped considerably.

5. Industry Discussion

Just prior to the meeting the DEFA Minister had issued a letter to the Board extending the queen scallop season to 30th September with an uplift in TAC of 90t (a total TAC of 647 for the season). The extension was granted under the following conditions;

- That the TAC does not exceed 647t;
- That LPUE is monitored and reported on a daily basis by Bangor University;
- That individual grounds will be closed if LPUE levels decline below scientifically-advised closure levels;
- That the fishery will close; by ground, or in entirety, if spawning occurs resulting in the loss of roe-on product;
- That fishing concentrate on the Chickens ground, in light of its higher catch rate, quality and population structure.

The Board briefly discussed the success of soft TACs in monitoring the fishery. An argument was made for changing the terminology used as the numbers function primarily as a threshold for discussion rather than a total allowed in an area. It was also raised that as this number is not biomass linked it should not be used as a monitoring threshold in isolation but when considered with LPUE it is a good mechanism for monitoring. PD will prepare a paper on various options for data management of the fishery and will circulate to the Board for discussion and input **(PD)**.

A member of the Board expressed concern that the complete closure of fishing areas could be done too hastily as LPUE can recover. The possibility of using real time closures to manage the fishery was raised and DB will apply to the Department for a scientific permit to gather more data from the closed East Douglas ground **(DB)**.

There was some discussion on the limitations of the TAC figure and it was suggested that instead of using this figure the fishery could be dynamically managed via LPUE. It was again raised that the aim should be to link the TAC with the available biomass.

5. 2020/2021 king scallop fishery

IB presented an overview of analysis and advice for the 2020/2021 king scallop season. Due to the coronavirus pandemic the Bangor survey was unable to go ahead. The analysis presented was based on the fine scale industry survey.

Two industry vessels surveyed four main 3- 12 nm king scallop fishing grounds: East Douglas (EDG), Targets (TAR), Chickens (CHI) and Point of Ayre (POA) and three main 0- 3nm king scallop fishing grounds: East Coast (ECO), Bradda (BRA) and Maughold (MGH). Survey areas were split into a fixed grid with a resolution of 1 min (longitude) x 0.5 min (latitude).

These survey cells were sampled randomly within each ground with approximately equal effort to ensure relatively even distribution of survey effort across the entire fished ground. Within the territorial sea (EDG, TAR

and CHI) the survey index has increased for post-recruits and decreased for recruits following 1186t of landings reported during the 2019/2020 fishing season. Of the three grounds surveyed in both years EDG and TAR have seen increases in the post-recruit abundance for 2020 whilst there has been no change at CHI. In terms of recruits TAR was the only ground where the survey index had increased from 2019. BRA in the 0-3 nm and TAR in the 3-12 nm have the highest survey densities for post-recruits and recruits.

Although survey data suggests that abundance of king scallops has increased in areas of Isle of Man territorial waters, a precautionary approach was recommended for management of the 2020/21 king scallop fishing season, due to;

- The lack of long-term (5+ years) data required for the ICES Cat 3 data limited approach;
- The observed decrease in the recruit density in the 2020 survey compared to 2019 (with the exception of a small area in TAR);
- Absence of directly comparable 2019 survey data for several fishing grounds (0-3 NM zone areas, and POA); and
- The 2019/20 fishing season landing only 58% of the allocated TAC (1186 t out of 2049 t).

It was recommended that the precautionary management approach for 2020/2021 king scallop fishery should incorporate all of the following three elements:

- In-season reviews: Monthly reviews of the fishery by the SMB or a subgroup for the entire fishery should be scheduled as standard.
- Spatial monitoring and management: Spatial monitoring for each individual ground should be undertaken for each ground as part of the in-season review to allow flexible spatial management (i.e. individual grounds to be opened or closed) based on the real-time data collected by the fishery. High density areas within a ground (i.e. TAR or EDG) may require additional fine scale management to avoid high fishing intensities and excessive fishing mortality.
- Closed area management: The continued management of Newly Opened Areas and current/new closed areas is required to protect high density areas of post-recruits and recruits (king and queen scallops).

It was also advised the when considering the setting of a TAC consideration should be given to the fact that although some recovery has been seen this is based on harvesting 1186t rather than the 2049t set as TAC last season. There should be scope for adjusting the TAC during the season based on fisheries-dependent data and that soft TACs for each ground be set based on last year's landing data which would trigger a review of the ground when reached.

Finally it was emphasised that a long-term management plan for the king scallop fishery is essential for ongoing monitoring, management and recovery of this stock.

6. Industry discussion

It was noted that an AFBI survey of scallop grounds in Northern Irish waters had shown poor results, with the exception of ICES rectangle 374E.

There was discussion on developing a long term management of the fishery. It was noted that good first steps have been made with the use of additional data informing management of the fishery but there were concerns that the grounds will not be able to sustain the current level of effort. It was queried if the normal number of boats are expected to persecute the fishery this year; this will depend on a number of factors including the opening of the Baie de Seine fishery, Brexit considerations, markets and crew.

It was stated by the Board that while the TAC is important the most vital factor would be how the opening of the fishery is managed. It was maintained that in order for the fishery to be economically viable an uplift in the Daily Catch Limit (DCL) is needed. With prices expected to have dropped to £8-£9 a kilo, in order to match last year's earnings the DCL should be raised to 750kg.

The need for well supported recommendations that provided the Minister sufficient information to make an informed decision and that present the thought process behind the recommendations and any anticipated consequences arising from them was highlighted.

The Board recommended the daily catch limit for the 2020/21 be set at 750kg for the start of the season.

The Chair queried how long the season could be expected to run at the suggested DCL. This led into a discussion on the possibility of running a 'Days at Sea' or similar scheme. It was asked that DB write a proposal for circulation among the Board before submission to DEFA. NM will look into if the legal structure is in place to support this **(DB,NM)**.

The Board was reminded of the requirement to consult on new management measure under the Fisheries Management Agreement 2012 and that if such a scheme was to be introduced sufficient time for consultation would be required.

The Board recommended that a proposal for 'Days at Sea' or similar control scheme will be drafted by DB and the Board. NM will look into the Department's legal powers in enacting such a scheme.

The Board discussed the TAC for the season and what controls should be used to manage the fishery and protect the stock. It was noted that LPUE would be less useful a management tool for the king scallop fishery than the queen scallop fishery. The continued use of soft TACs based on historical data was considered useful. DEFA emphasised that all recommendations to the Minister need to be clearly structured and be supported by informed considerations.

The Board recommended the Total Allowable Catch for the season be set at 2049t.

The Board turned to discussion of the harvest strategy for the season and the structure of the in-season reviews. It was agreed that these meetings should be opened up to the wider Board with the option to take part via Microsoft Teams. It was again raised that the data used to manage the queen scallop fishery may not transfer to the king scallop fishery in the same way, however all the data collected has value when considered as a whole. It was mentioned that a previous chair of the Board had prepared monthly summaries for circulation. PD agreed to work with Bangor to prepare a monthly update prior to each review meeting.

The Board recommended that in season reviews of the fishery will be conducted monthly via an online meeting which will be open to all members of the Board. PD will prepare and circulate a summary document of the data to the Board prior to each of these meetings.

Management of the NOAs and Closed areas was discussed. The NOA at Targets was considered in detail as the same administration of the area as during the queen scallop fishery will not be possible. It was suggested that access to this area could be managed by way of licence condition limiting the number of days allowed inside, but the Board would like more time to consider this. The Board made the following recommendations for the other closed areas;

The closed area at Bradda to be opened for the king scallop fishery.

The closed area at Targets to remain closed.

High density juvenile scallop areas identified to the east of the Target's closed box will be surveyed using drop down camera by the Barrule. Local vessels with measuring boards will also fish this area and a high density area identified in East Douglas in the first week of the fishery and supply data.

The Board asked for additional time to consider the proposals for the closed area at Chickens.

A separate meeting will be held to discuss the results and closure at the East Douglas Research area. PD will distribute the report and schedule a review meeting (PD).

7. Covid Related enforcement issues

After discussions with Health and Safety, Public Health and the Barrule crew, measures have been put in place to allow boarding of all vessels for inspection.

8. Future king scallop management

The SICG working group are looking at standardising technical management measurements for inshore areas. More information is sought on the Scottish position following proposals to introduce cameras on scallop vessels in Scottish waters. NM advised that Martin Birchenough may be able to provide an update.

The need for a new scallop consultation was put forward by the Board and there is a desire to have this completed before the 2021 scallop season. NM will put together a timeline for the Board and asked that a document be produced outlining the Board's vision for the future management of the fishery and initial considerations (NM, DB).

A meeting will be held during the week beginning 12th October to discuss a Scallop Consultation.

9. Industry survey funding

A paper outlining suggestions for the funding of industry surveys had been circulated prior to the meeting. The current cost of the survey paid for by the MFPO is upwards of £40,000 which this year had been part funded by DEFA via the Agriculture and Fisheries Grants Scheme. A number of options for funding had been examined however the discussion focused on following the UK system of funding surveys via a percentage of landings paid by the processors. This would be a voluntary contribution of 1% of landings from Isle of Man waters with any shortfall to be made up by the MFPO. An association model was also discussed, however it was agreed that a different model could be adopted further down the line.

The Board recommended that to support and inform the Bangor scientific survey the fine scale industry survey will continue, with funding to be sought via a voluntary levy.

10. AOB

There were no other matters to discuss.

11. Date of next meeting

In order to finalise the recommendations before the opening of the scallop season the next meeting will be held on Thursday 24th September via Microsoft Teams.

The meeting ended at 16.40

12. Action Points

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| Upload the approved minutes to the website. | RH |
| Amend and redistribute an amended Constitution reflecting the change in the definition of a quorum. | PD |
| Arrange a discussion between Martin Birchenough and DB on enforcement policies. | NM |
| Prepare a paper on various options for data management of the fishery and circulate to the Board for discussion. | PD |
| Apply to the Department for a scientific permit to gather more data from the closed East Douglas ground. | DB |
| Prepare a 'Days at Sea' proposal for circulation among the Board before submission to DEFA. | DB |
| Look into what legal structure exists to support a 'Days at Sea' scheme. | NM |
| Distribute the East Douglas Research Area report and schedule a review meeting. | PD |
| Prepare a timeline for consultation for completion before the 2021 scallop season. | NM |
| Produce a document with the Board outlining the vision for the future management of the fisheries. | DB |