

Isle of Man Scallop Management Board

Minutes of the meeting held in the DEFA Board Room and virtually via Microsoft Teams – 4th June 2021 at 10am

Present:

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	
Geoffrey Chambers	GC	ANIFPO/NI Scallop Association	
Brian Horne	BH	Manx Fisherman	
Neil Milsom	NM	DEFA	
Mark Roberts	MR	Welsh fisherman	
Craig Woodbridge	CW	Manx fisherman	
Jack Emmerson	JE	DEFA	
Domhnall MacLachlainn	DMcL	Scottish fisherman	
Rebecca Richardson	RR	DEFA	(Minutes)

Apologies:

Scott Merrick	SM	AM Seafoods
Carrie McMinn	CMcM	AFBI

1. Welcome and introductions

DEFA Minister Geoffrey Boot MHK joined via Microsoft Teams to welcome the Board, and to explain that given the General Election in September this may be his last meeting as incumbent DEFA Minister.

He noted that the Board, in its considerations at this meeting, would need to strike a balance between market-demands and fishing effort and he hoped the Board would deliver pragmatic solutions; acknowledging there are still challenges in sourcing crew and EU markets were yet to re-open. In recognition of the ongoing hardship faced by industry, the Minister stated he would seek Tynwald approval later this month for a fifth tranche of the Coronavirus Fisheries Industry Support Scheme to assist Manx vessel owners and seafood businesses.

Minister Boot stated his appreciation for the work of the Board, which he said provided an excellent model of stakeholder and government engagement.

DB stated that the UK Scallop Industry Working Group was now looking to follow a similar industry engagement model as the IOM. Further, he thanked the Minister for his support to industry and acknowledged that some Manx boats and businesses would not be here today without the financial support provided to date.

2. Minutes and of the previous meetings

Minutes of 8th September 2020 and 17th February 2021 were agreed by the Board to be an accurate record of proceedings, and would be uploaded to the website **(RR/PD)**.

3. Review of 2020-21 king scallop fishery

IB presented a review of the 2020-21 king scallop dredge fishery.

The fishery opened on 1 November 2020 and closed on 31 May 2021. Total landings were 1,727t, which was 85% of the overall Total Allowable Catch (TAC). A total of 64 unique vessels prosecuted the fishery, undertaking a combined total of 3,084 fishing trips. East Douglas ground had the highest landings at approximately 750t.

The Daily Catch Limit (DCL) was 700kg per day and around 64% vessels met this limit at the start of the season (November and December 2020), but this fell to 42% at the end of the season. Landings Per Unit Effort (LPUE) was highest in at the Targets Restricted Area.

Industry representatives raised that a minority of smaller vessels had blatantly caught more than the DCL, which was demoralising and there was discussion what else might be done to tackle this behaviour, over and above current enforcement measures, that were reasonable and justifiable.

DEFA Sea Fisheries Enforcement Manager Martin Birchenough joined the meeting at 10:50 am. He explained vessel checks had been undertaken by Northern Ireland fishery officers on vessels which returned to port there, but vessels had checked-out to be within the prescribed DCL. Due to COVID-19 restrictions Isle of Man sea fisheries enforcement officers had been limited on the inspections they could do, but this would change with the easing of border restrictions. Comment was made from industry that fishery officers would be best to target their efforts during fishing operations.

The Board agreed to have a meeting in September or October to discuss industry informed enforcement for the next king scallop dredge fishery season **(PD)**. PD asked if he could be informed of the issues that need discussed **(All)**.

4. Results of Spring 2021 Industry and Bangor University Surveys and Status of Stock Report

DB presented an overview on the industry survey for adult and juvenile king and queen scallops; explaining that slightly fewer sites had been surveyed this year due to funding constraints. Grounds not covered were Point of Ayre (where Bangor University reported few queen scallops) and north-east Douglas (where there was suspected to be few queen scallops).

Industry surveys involved a total of 189 tows:

- 42 Targets;
- 29 Chickens;
- 43 Bradda & Port St Mary;
- 59 East Douglas;
- 16 inshore area Douglas.

In addition, a survey of Ramsey Bay involved 66 tows within the area (except for Maughold inshore area).

IB presented the queen scallop survey analysis that covered both industry and Bangor University surveys, in addition to a brief review of the 2020 QSC season.

In 2020, there were more trawl than dredge landings of queen scallops from ICES areas 36, 37 and 38E5. The total landings were 660t with 26 unique vessels, undertaking a combined total of 315 fishing trips. The Weekly Catch Limit (WCL) was 2,695kg increasing to 3,150kg by week 5. A total of 90% of vessels met the WCL.

- East Douglas ground closed on 8th September 2020 due to drop in LPUE.
- Point of Ayre ground closed on 22nd September 2020 due to low LPUE.
- Extension of 90t to the total allowable catch (TAC) came during week 11.
- Fishery closed on 30th September 2020 as the trawl TAC had been met.

In terms of under-55 mm in 2021 survey there were not any concentrated areas located; but there were very high densities of over 55 mm found in the Chickens Restricted Area, and at the restricted and closed areas at Targets, as well as patches at Bradda.

A large amount of dead shell was evident in the Chickens Closed Area, which was indicative that an event had caused high mortality; the reason for which was unknown. A cable had been laid there in 2020, but queens had also been moved and so may have become distressed, leading to mortality.

Scientific recommendations were to:

- Protect areas of high densities of recruits as and when they are detected (none for 2021 – point to discuss)
- Manage harvesting in areas of high densities of post-recruits (lessons: TAR 2016 and EDG 2019 and 2020)
- In-season monitoring of LPUE, landings and fishing intensity within each fishing ground and subarea (RBS.PLUE/SweptArea)
- Consideration of cumulative fishing impacts (king and queen scallop activity in overlapping areas)
- Effort restrictions: i.e. weekly vessel catch limits and restrictions on weekly vessel numbers within managed areas
- Monitoring of yield and roe within each fishing ground
- Economic evaluation of markets and processor limitations (i.e. is there a market, quantity processors can take in a week)

The Board discussed the need for catches be market-driven, and therefore the need to monitor yields and to have flexibility to make decisions to adjust management of the fishery week to week.

5. Queen Scallop Fishery TAC 2021

Bearing in mind the previous discussion, DB proposed 3,150kg Weekly Catch Limit (WCL) with soft total allowable catch (TAC) of 720t, on proviso that there is the market and demand for the product.

DML joined the meeting via Teams at 12:40.

It was proposed that close monitoring in order to manage the fishery could be done by a sub-group that would meet weekly, and that would make recommendations for consideration by DEFA Head of Fisheries.

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

- Queen scallop trawl fishery to open 1st July 2021.
- 3,150kg Weekly Catch Limit.
- Soft TAC of 720t on proviso that there is the market and demand for the product.
- Fishery to be monitored throughout season by sub-group involving PD, JE, DB, IB.
- Sub-group to make recommendations to the Head of Fisheries, which may involve percentage increase in the WCL to make adjustment that aligns with data (based on harvest strategy considerations).

6. Queen Scallop Fishery Harvest Strategy Approach

IB had presented on stock and spatial (fished areas and closed areas) considerations.

PD suggested there should be three metrics/data control mechanisms:

1. Landings Per Unit Effort
2. Fishing Intensity
3. Yields

The Board discussed whether there was need to protect any high density areas of scallops. After discussion, the following recommendations were agreed by the Board to be sent to the DEFA Minister.

- Chickens Restricted Area should be a northern strip on the 3NM limit, where individual licences will restrict access to no more than two days by up to five vessels. Which five vessels access will be managed by the Manx Fish Producers Organisation.
- The Chickens Closed Area outside the 6NM will be closed to queen scallop fishing.
- The Targets Restricted Area, based on the previously-closed area at Targets, will be operated as for the Chickens RA.
- There will be a Targets Closed Area, but the location of the closed box will be north of the previous closed boxes.

The Board discussed the need for improved fishery management outside of the IOM 12NM. DB stated it had been raised at the UK Scallop Industry Consultation Group that there should be a separate effort pot of queen scallops, and that key would be bring in 55 mm minimum landing size.

7. Updates

• Long-Term Management Plan (LTMP) for Manx scallop fisheries

JE updated on progress with the development of the LTMP since high level objectives were agreed in February. There had been ongoing regular dialogue with DB and a draft consultation document had been produced that included long-term as well as shorter-term technical measures. Approval for the content would be required from the Board before it would be presented to the Minister, therefore a meeting would be arranged later this month (**JE**). It was noted that it would be beneficial for members to see the evidence-base for the proposals.

• IOM Species Specific Licences

GC asked about the rules on Isle of Man species specific licences. The Department had become aware that a couple of vessels had been advertised for sale along with their Isle of Man species specific licences. Such

licences are not saleable and automatically return to the Department, and industry would need to be reminded of this policy.

Given there is to be a consultation on the Long-Term Management Plan for king scallops, the Board was asked whether there should be a moratorium on the issue of king scallop licences when a vessel changes ownership.

GC left the meeting at 14.30.

It was decided that wording on the introduction of a moratorium would be circulated to the Board for consideration **(PD)**.

- **Industry survey funding options**

Whether industry survey is required and how to go about funding it would be included in the Long-Term Management Plan consultation.

- **SMB membership and Chair**

The Department was looking for an independent chair for the Board and therefore any suggestions as to who may take up the role were welcomed. It was acknowledged that the current chair is a DEFA employee, but DB put forward recommendations. There was no desire from industry Board representatives to change the chair. It was proposed that DB role should be formalised so that he would become the spokesperson for the Board.

The Board was informed that there would be a refresh of membership to ensure that it had representatives from all sectors. DML indicated he understood he was a member of the board from Scotland and assured the Board he was not moving to live in the Isle of Man.

8. AOB

Nothing noted

9. Date of next meeting

Long-Term Management Plan draft consultation review to be arranged for week commencing 21st June, while a specific meeting to discuss enforcement of the king scallop dredge fishery would be arrange for September/October.

The meeting ended at 15.15

10. Action Points

Upload the approved minutes to the website.	RR/PD
The Board to have meeting in September or October to discuss industry-informed enforcement for the next king scallop dredge fishery season.	PD
Need to inform on topics/issues to be discussed at this meeting.	All
Queen scallop fishery recommendations to be sent to Minister.	DB
Meeting to discuss Long-Term Management Plan draft consultation to be arranged for June	JE
Wording for a moratorium on the issue for scallop species specific licences on change of vessel ownership, in light of the forthcoming consultation, to be circulated to the Board for consideration.	PD