

North Western Waters Regional Advisory Council

Working Group 4 – Irish Sea
Tuesday 2nd March 2010
14.00-17.30 h
MARM, Madrid

MEETING REPORT

Chairman: Lorcan O’Cinnéide
Rapporteur: John Crudden

1. Welcome

The Chairman opened the meeting at 14:00h and welcomed the WG members, observers and the EU Commission representative, Ken Patterson. No apologies were received.

- Adoption of Agenda

The meeting heard that the Irish Seal Sanctuary had submitted a paper to the Secretariat which proposed the closure of the Irish Sea to trawling however it was received just one day before the meeting and therefore too late for circulation. It was agreed to allow discussion of the paper under agenda point 3 and to circulate the paper for the next WG4 meeting. The Agenda as circulated was adopted.

- Adoption of Report of the last meeting (Paris, 8th July 2009)

A question was raised by industry representatives about the status of the proposed workshop on Spurdog management mentioned under AOB. Since the decision taken at December Council the situation had got worse from an industry perspective leading to significant levels of discarding and calls were made for the workshop to be reinstated. It was the opinion of the meeting that this was an issue of shared interest for all Working Groups. The Commission’s view was that the ban had considerable political weight behind it and believed that the RAC would not be able to change the decision.

Action: It was agreed to produce a discussion paper as a starting point with input from science, industry and NGO’s and to convene a workshop together with other RACs and follow-up meeting with the Commission at a later stage. Jane Sandell was proposed as the person to begin this work.

The report of the last Working Group meeting was agreed.

- Election of Deputy Rapporteur

Alan McCulla had not been able to attend meetings as often as he liked thus placing an added burden on the Secretariat to deputise for him. John Crudden allowed his name to go forward for the position of Deputy Rapporteur seconded by Joe Maddock and John Woodlock and he was elected by unanimity of all members for an indefinite period.

2. Review of Commission's responses and analysis of outcomes of December Council on fishing opportunities for 2010 for Irish Sea stocks.

As no representative from ICES could attend the meeting it was difficult to discuss the item in a meaningful way. No formal general advice was put forward from the Working Group on Irish Sea stocks but Nephrops was the principle stock of concern. A focus group was held in Edinburg in November 2009 to discuss the specific advice.

The Commission's response was that management of Nephrops was problematic and it needed to split them into more manageable units. This split up of the units was a subject of concern from the industry point of view and would cause considerable displacement of effort and relative stability issues. The commission said that it needed to manage all stocks sustainably and if ICES advises that other stocks be divided into similar functional units it would do so but was willing to engage further with the RAC on the subject. It was suggested from all sectors that it was important to manage Nephrops as a mixed stock fishery and therefore to carry out a multi species analysis before implementing new management measures.

Action: The WG4 should re-engage with science and industry during 2010 to progress with work and try to reach some consensus on management options.

In relation to other stocks of interest the health of the plaice stock was seen as very optimistic; however cod continued to be an enigma. It was suggested that there were other environmental factors affecting cod such as climate change. The Secretariat mentioned the RECLAIM project in this regard and proposed to invite someone from the project to give a presentation to the next WG meeting. It was also noted that the Commission would never give up on conservation measures to prevent a write-off of any stock on economic grounds.

3. Review of management measures for Irish Sea Stocks: proposed way forward.

- Outcomes of Focus Group Meeting on Irish Sea (Belfast, 30th September 2009)

Disappointment was expressed about the attendance particularly from the industry in the South of Ireland. There was wide divergence of opinion on the state of cod in the Irish Sea with considerable criticism of the Commission and the manner of its management. Cuts of 25% year-on-year would result in a 0% TAC in 2-3 years time. A number of questions were raised as to why cod has not recovered and the possibility that other issues are involved was expressed. There was also great unease expressed about where cod recovery is going. The RAC needs to address these questions and to take them into account in any follow-up on recommended actions from the Focus Group.

Notwithstanding the fact that their paper on the Irish Sea would not be officially discussed at the meeting, as a matter of courtesy the Chairman invited the Irish Seal Sanctuary to give a brief outline of a paper it had presented to the Secretariat, however not in time for circulation, which called for a ban of all non-selective fishing methods in the Irish Sea with the aim to protect both nursery and spawning areas.

A number of very laudable proposals had been put forward in the past few years and discussed within the WG4 including the discard project, the science/industry partnership, etc. which have not progressed very far and now might be a good time to take radical steps to address the situation. It called on the industry to support this measure as a radical way to allow cod stocks to recover quickly. The Commission's view was that the 25% year-on-year cuts for cod will not necessarily mean an end to trawling in the Irish Sea. While not wishing to anticipate the debate to be held in relation to the proposal, the Chairman did voice his initial opinion that the proposal was not acceptable to him or his organisation. This view was shared by other industry representatives.

Action: the Secretariat to circulate the paper from ISS to WG4 members initially, seeking comments and to put on the agenda for the next WG4 meeting.

Debate was opened up in relation the Cod recovery regulation (1342/2008) and in particular to Arts. 5, 12 and 14 and the different reference periods contained in them which the industry find impossible to implement. The ground rules being set by STECF and the Commission are being changed year to year at considerable cost and difficulty for the industry. The adoption of the "Swedish grid" was a case in point. The WG should call for a revisit of the regulation. The Commission strongly disagreed.

A discussion took place on the usefulness of the grid for the Irish Sea. Additional research and trials are currently taking place to discover its effectiveness and a report will be produced for the Commission.

There were deeply divergent views expressed about the regulation. The Commission said that stakeholders wanted more flexibility – they got it. They wanted less interference from Brussels – they got it. What was the outcome – a further reduction in the cod stocks.

It was suggested as a way forward to introduce voluntary individual cod avoidance plans but the regulation as it stands does not allow for these. There is a long list of criticisms of the CRP from industry but it needs to come up with the mechanisms of avoiding cod itself.

Action: It was agreed that Lorcan O’Cinnéide and Sean O’Donoghue would produce a paper for the next Executive Committee meeting that would detail the shortcomings of the present plan and produce alternatives. Impacts of planned wind farms are to be included.

4. Horizontal issues

- Socio-economics aspects of fisheries management

The secretariat outlined the background of the request for a focus group on the subject. The difficulty was what could be achieved. This topic would be discussed at interRAC level in order to exchange ideas and identify good practices with the aim to define a set of common objectives.

Action: A steering committee composed of RAC secretariat staff and members from the RACs concerned will produce a scoping document defining the key areas of work and topics to be done however it should not be just an academic exercise.

- Reform of Common Fisheries Policy

The RAC had produced a response under difficult circumstances taking into account the range of divergent views. The commission will produce a response to all contributions received in due course (expected date: late April). The small-scale seminar raised a basic philosophical question on whether there is a need for different inshore/offshore regimes. There were significant differences of opinions between representatives of the small and large scale sectors respectively and that this is something that the RAC will need to consider in its responses. The next CFP reform seminar in La Coruña is important for this RAC particularly in relation to the topic of regionalization.



5. Recommendations to put forward to the Executive Committee

- Propose Spurdog discussion paper, workshop and meeting with the Commission.
- Propose to re-engage with science and industry during 2010 to try to reach some consensus on management options for Nephrops stocks.
- Circulate the paper from ISS on management measures for Irish Sea to WG4 members initially, seeking comments and to put on the agenda for discussion at the next WG4 meeting.
- Produce alternative proposals to present Cod Recovery Plan
- Produce scoping document on Socio-economics aspects

The Chairman closed the meeting at 17:36 h

ANNEX I. LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

<u>Name</u>	<u>Surname/s</u>	<u>Organisation</u>	<u>Status</u>
Alberto	Aguilar	Irish Seal Sanctuary	Observer
Iwan	Ball	WWF	Member
Thomas	Bryan-Brown	Manx Fish Producers Organisation	Member
Luc	Corbisier	Stichting voor Duurzame Visserij	Member
John	Crudden	European Anglers Association	Member – D. Rapporteur
John	Daly	Irish Seal Sanctuary	Observer
Barrie	Deas	NFFO	Member
Ian	Gatt	Scottish Fishermen's Federation	Member
Charline	Gaudin	EBCD	Observer
Sam	Lambourn	Chairperson NWWRAC	Chairperson NWWRAC
Joe	Maddock	Irish Fishermen Organisation	Member
Conor	Nolan	NWWRAC Secretariat	Secretariat
Lorcan	O'Cinnéide	Irish Federation of Producers' Organizations (IFPO)	WG4 Chairman
Sean	O'Donoghue	Kyllibegs Fishermen Organisation (KFO)	Member
Kenneth	Paterson	DG MARE	European Commission
Alexandre	Rodríguez	NWWRAC Secretariat	Secretariat
Paul	Trebilcock	Cornish FPO	Member
John	Woodlock	Irish Seal Sanctuary	Member