

Wales Marine Fisheries Advisory Group (WMFAG)

Notes of meeting held on Thursday 5 December 2019, Trawscoed Room, WG office, Rhodfa Padarn – 10am to 4pm

| PRESENT |
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| Nick O'Sullivan, Chair, Welsh Marine Fisheries Advisory Group |
| Jim Evans, Welsh Fisherman's Association |
| John O'Connor, Welsh Federation of Sea Anglers |
| Kevin Denman, South West Wales Fishing Communities |
| Dean Parry, Cardigan Bay Fishermans Association |
| Tabea Wilkes, Wales Environment Link |
| Sion Williams, Llyn Pot Fisherman's Association |
| James Wilson, MSFOMA |
| Brett Garner, Llyn Fisherman's Association |
| Mark Roberts, North Wales Fishermen's Cooperative |
| Gareth Bevington, Deputy Director, Marine and International Fisheries, Welsh Government |
| Julian Bray, Chief Officer, Fisheries Operations, Welsh Government |
| Colin Charman, Senior Fisheries Advisor, Welsh Government |
| Elen King, Team Leader, Stakeholder Engagement & Government Business, Welsh Government |
| Mike Jones, Sea Fisheries Policy Manager, Welsh Government |
| Mark Bloomfield, MSFD Project Manager, Welsh Government |
| Bekah Cioffi, Head of Fisheries Science and Evidence, Welsh Government |
| Hilary Evans, Business, Finance and Comms Manager, Welsh Government (note taker) |

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| 1 | Welcome and Apologies: Chair welcomed all to the meeting and introductions were made. Apologies were received from: Carwyn Thomas, Welsh Local Government Association, Holly Whitely and Emma Wootton Seafish Gill Bell unable to attend (Tabea representing WEL). Trevor Jones unable to attend, James Wilson representing instead. |
| 2 | Introduction – progress since the last meeting: Gareth gave a brief update. <u>Brexit</u> – still poses challenges and the Division are planning for three main scenarios, pending outcome of election. Regardless of political situation Wales still is a member |

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| | <p>state. Discussions have been held with the Minister ahead of December council 16/17 December. We are focussed on securing the best deal we can for Wales.</p> <p><u>Control and Enforcement</u> challenges remain however there is significant work underway – covered in agenda item **.</p> <p><u>Domestic Legislation</u> we have a firm commitment and are pushing ahead with the Domestic agenda. Whelk fishery management consultation to be launched early January. Consultation builds on previous consultation and focuses on authorisations, permits / licences and how we set caps. This will be an 8 week consultation.</p> <p><u>UK Fish Bill</u> needs to be in place by the end of 2020. If current Prime Minister returns there will be a Queen's speech December 19th, which will likely fast track several Bills. Fish Bill likely in the second half of the year.</p> <p><u>No Deal Preparedness</u> - Wales is as ready as it can be, however we are still working on issues around health certificates and border inspection points (BIPs). Control and Enforcement remains a challenge depending on whether there is a continuity agreement. Members raised concerns regarding out of hours provision and cost implications for veterinary inspections, stating certificates could cost approx. £80/cert.</p> <p>A food business operator licence is required to get an Export Health Certificate. Jim reported that the FSA have agreed to provide clear advice and guidance regarding food business operator registration. James stated the need for consistency between Fisheries and Agriculture and all primary producers. Gareth agreed to discuss food business operator guidelines with agriculture colleagues.</p> <p>Gareth informed members new Deputy Director for Marine and Fisheries to be announced next week. [Deputy Director now confirmed as Michael Dowell and is currently heading up the marine and fisheries team at the UK Representation to the EU in Brussels.]</p> <p>Action 1: FSA registration and need for informing all primary producers - Gareth to discuss with Agriculture colleagues. Bethan</p> |
| 3 | <p>I) Approval of notes of meeting held on 19th September Amendment: Page 2, revise wording for Action 9. Amendment: Page 4, revise wording in 2nd paragraph. Minutes approved.</p> <p>II) Progress on Actions from previous meeting</p> <p>Julian reported on actions from the previous meeting, most of which had been completed.</p> <p>Action 6 –Terms of Reference signed on the day by Sion Williams, Brett Garner and Mark Roberts. Email approval of ToR received by Sean Evans, NRW. Now complete.</p> <p>Action 8 – RIA not required for licence condition and only required for legislation. Jim asked to check if legislation is being brought in to enforce <10m electronic catch recording. Further clarification required.</p> |

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| | <p>Action 2: Julian to check with Lisa Barnwell if legislation is being brought in to enforce <10m electronic catch recording. Julian</p> |
| 4 | <p>Outcomes from Brexit and our Seas - Elen King</p> <p>Elen thanked everyone for their input to the consultation. 57 responses received from across the sector. The Minister for Environment, Energy and Rural Affairs will deliver a statement in the New Year and publish a summary of responses. The next step is the development of future fisheries policy for Wales. Elen sought members' views on the process for co-production of the future fisheries policy and how to maximise engagement with the industry.</p> <p>Key points raised during the discussion were:</p> <p><u>Title of consultation</u></p> <p>Members felt the title of the consultation needs to reflect Future Fisheries rather than Brexit to better engage. The consultation was so broad members felt it was difficult to comment. Fishermen were drowning in all the Brexit material and didn't associate the consultation with future policy. Elen explained the next stage of consultation will be important and go into more detail.</p> <p>Gareth acknowledged the ambiguity of the title. He went on to explain the process in developing policy needs to be based on robust evidence. The initial broad consultation will be followed by a more detailed narrative to inform policy statements and associated legislation.</p> <p>Members discussed next stage of process and confirmed they are happy to comment on pre-consultation drafts, with a possibility of having a T&F group to help with the drafting. Mark suggested a simplified plan with focussed timescale was needed.</p> <p>Members stated it's important to consider previous consultations and reflect on issues and barriers to delivery.</p> <p>Members confirmed the best time of year to engage with Fishing industry is late Autumn through to early Spring.</p> <p>Members suggested Facebook is more widely used than Twitter for social media posts.</p> |
| 5 | <p>Control and Enforcement</p> <p>Gareth confirmed recruitment adverts were now live with open days taking place week commencing 9 December.</p> <p>Members were pleased to learn successful prosecution of Belgian vessels.</p> <p>Sion commented on issues with illegal fishing being reported. Members called for action to be taken against these individuals who are fishing illegally. Poaching affects the market and reputation of the industry.</p> <p>There was a discussion about policing poaching and a number of suggestions were made by members:</p> |

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Members re-iterated they are willing to help WG with providing knowledge and information on illegal activity, weather and tidal conditions, in order to help. - Fisheries officers could attend the WFA meetings to glean intelligence - More Fishery officer presence on patrol and visits to restaurants/campsites etc. - Suggestion for anti-poaching posters, minimum landing sizes, regulations. <p>ACTION: Enforcement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Suggestion for publicising enforcement action taken. ACTION: Enforcement - Suggestion for 'Gear in Gear out' pilot being linked to VMS as a method for surveillance – Jim to share paper ACTION: Jim <p>Gareth assured group that WG are securing extra resource and developing a new operating model which will make enforcement more responsive.</p> <p>Action 3: Anti-poaching posters to be put up around camp-sites, landing sites etc. Enforcement</p> <p>Action 4: Publicise Enforcement action. Enforcement</p> <p>Action 5: Jim to share paper on 'Gear in Gear out'. Jim Evans</p> |
| 6 | <p>Domestic Fisheries Policy and Management</p> <p>Julian gave an update and stated team is working well and making good progress. Whelk consultation to be launched in January with simultaneous engagement via Task and Finish group. Mark suggested spatial measures be considered. Colin explained first step is to get basic legislation in place. Specific management measures can then be looked at in the future. These measures could be looked at by the Task and Finish group in the New Year.</p> <p>Julian explained that Scallops is a casualty of the focus on Whelks. The process of getting the whelk consultation through will provide useful learning for future consultations.</p> <p>Three Rivers cockle fishery catch returns - Andy and Jane have done a lot of engagement with industry.</p> <p>The cockle management project – strategically important progress being made, but due to Brexit work, legislation won't be introduced next year. Potential significant implications for cockle trade pending outcome of Brexit.</p> <p>James highlighted implications of a no deal on trade. He also stated Whitford mussels area downgraded from B to C, which would also affect trade. This information came from Stuart Thomas, NRW,</p> |

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| | <p>Assessing Welsh Fisheries. Evidence gathered from ground truthing in Cardigan Bay helped inform the consultation. Jim reported that the pre-survey engagement was very positively received by stakeholders.</p> <p>Fisheries Management consultation early New Year.</p> |
| 7 | <p>International Fisheries Policy – Mike Jones</p> <p>Mike Jones gave an update on initial quota allocations and subsequent swaps made to bring in extra quota, which have again enabled Welsh under 10m vessels to fish for all important commercial species until the end of the year.</p> <p>Additional quota sought for skates/rays and flatfish stocks in the Irish Sea Bristol Channel. We managed to obtain additional cod, but uptake has been low. We are closely monitoring sole and skates/rays where the Welsh under 10m fleet uptake is <70% for sole and 60% for skates/rays.</p> <p>Quota allocations for Welsh vessels have been increased substantially over the last three months to encourage uptake.</p> <p><u>Proposals for 2019</u></p> <p>ICES have produced their 2020 advice for the major commercial species and overall the situation is favourable for Wales. Much will depend on the final negotiations at December Council but the following outcomes are likely:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increases for sole, plaice and haddock (in VIIa) • Roll overs for skates and rays and sea bass • Decreases for cod, pollack and whiting. <p><u>Bass</u> Science is looking optimistic and supports relaxation of restrictions.</p> <p>Issue of new entrants unable to get permits due to lack of 'track record'. WG to look into permits.</p> <p>Support given by members for developing legislation for not taking berried hens.</p> <p>Suggestion to have future agenda item for all aspects of International Negotiation including policy and trade. ACTION: Julian</p> <p>Action 6: International Negotiation to be put as a standing item on future agendas. Julian</p> |
| 8 | <p>End of Life Fishing Gear – Mark Bloomfield</p> <p>Mark Bloomfield updated the team on the work being undertaken look at evidence based research into end of life fishing gear.</p> <p>The connection between the management of fishing gear and wider scope of marine litter was discussed at the Clean Seas Partnership meeting held in November.</p> <p>End of life fishing gear has been included in the review of the marine litter action plan. The revised plan will be published in the near future.</p> |

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| | <p>Officials are working with the industry to undertake an evidence-based review of commercial fishing gear usage in the Welsh fleet. This evidence will be used in developing a management strategy for end of life fishing gear in Wales.</p> <p>The intention is produce a report within 3-6 months including an inventory of Welsh fishing gear and identifying those opportunities where gear could be recycled.</p> <p>The difficulties around recycling pots was discussed and members suggested recycling feasibility studies were needed.</p> <p>Recycling nets was discussed by members including the need to gather evidence as to where nets/ropes are being used and feasibility of getting nets to Plymouth to be recycled.</p> <p>Members commented on the problems for fishers regarding lack of responsibility for skips in ports, resulting in issues with flytipping. Dean mentioned how he ended up being charged to dispose of a net he retrieved out at sea. The difficulty in disposal does not encourage fishers to retrieve lost gear.</p> <p>Kevin suggested getting buy-in from ports, marinas and local authorities was key to resolving issue of fishing gear disposal.</p> <p>Members suggested research project should be broadened to include disposing rubbish and end of life gear, infrastructure, ship facilities, and join up with rest of Division eg EMFF. The study also needs to assess where the most convenient spot for collecting monofilament would be.</p> <p>Members suggested it's worth finding out what the rest of the UK are doing.</p> <p>Jim commented that the Task and Finish group are meeting mid-January.</p> <p>Jim informed the group that Seafish are currently writing up practice guidelines to disseminate.</p> |
| 9 | <p>Fisheries Science – Bekah Cioffi</p> <p>Bekah introduced herself to the group and gave an overview of the work of the Fisheries Science team which she heads up including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Conduct Operational Fisheries Science (opening and closing fisheries);- Provide Science-Policy Advice (EU Exit, fisheries policy, quota negotiations, Several Orders, HRAs and dispensations/exemptions);- Address Fisheries Science and Evidence gaps (contracting and coordinating data collection on priority Welsh marine fisheries and fishing grounds); and- Attend Relevant Fisheries Science and Evidence Forums (to ensure Welsh evidence needs are represented at a regional, UK and international-level). <p>The focus of the new branch will be to develop a Fisheries Evidence Plan that aligns with the recently published Welsh Marine Evidence Strategy 2019-2025, and establish an Evidence Contract Framework.</p> |

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| | <p>Bekah's team are developing a long view of emerging and expanding fishing opportunities to ensure that the appropriate fisheries science and evidence is available when needed to support policy development and decision-making.</p> <p>Bekah outlined some of survey work going on and planned to inform evidence gaps and ultimately a Fisheries Evidence plan.</p> <p>Paul and Greta are doing cockle fishery surveys. They are looking at revising the bird-food model which may keep beds open for longer if birds don't need as many cockle.</p> <p>Llanfairfechan – HRA applied to keep closed for another year to understand sensitivity of the stock and razor clam.</p> <p>Bekah outlined some of the survey work ongoing and tying in with Bangor University on Sea Bass and Lobster. Cefas looking at small pelagic as part of the Celtic Survey and extending that into Welsh water.</p> <p>Current studies into Blue Fin Tuna being led by Cefas incorporating tagging Tuna to look at genetics and better understand movements and activities. The tagging is due to be repeated next year and joining up with England's research.</p> <p>Bekah detailed out WG are working with NRW to report on key evidence gaps to inform a Fisheries Evidence Plan. More detailed evidence gap analysis to be carried out in the New Year.</p> <p>Members suggested existing reports will help with evidence gaps:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Marion Warlow has lots of intertidal stock assessment reports for Cardigan Bay. - Shetland University were commissioned by WG to carry out research a few years ago – Greta will have report. - Barry Thomas, fisherman in Swansea will also have lots of useful information. - Carl Davies and Natalie in Bangor should have information on Brown crab and lobster. - Scott Walker (Cefas) – did a discard and survivability study. <p>Members re-iterated their support for science and offered to provide knowledge on fish whereabouts and for scientists/researchers to go out on their boats.</p> <p>Action 7: Bekah to discuss potential survey work with Colin, Brett, Mark, Kevin & Jim. ACTION: Bekah</p> |
| 10 | <p>Information items & AOB</p> <p>Future meeting dates were discussed and agreed to move the December date from 2nd to 3rd, as Holly Whiteley is unable to make Dec 2nd. Members agreed next meeting dates as:</p> <p>12 March 10 June 15 September 3 December</p> |

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| | <p>Members were unsure of the worth of the proposed 2-page summary. It was suggested the action points should be added to the summary. Members agreed to see the next summary and decide if it is useful for them.</p> <p>Action 8: Action points to be added to the summary</p> |
| | <p>The Chair then drew the meeting to a close.</p> |

| Actions | |
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| Action 1: FSA registration and need for informing all primary producers - Gareth to discuss with Agriculture colleagues. | BJ |
| Action 2: Julian check with Lisa Barnwell if legislation is being brought in to enforce <10m electronic catch recording. | JB |
| Action 3: Anti-poaching posters to be put up around camp-sites, landing sites etc. | Enforcement |
| Action 4: Publicise Enforcement action. | Enforcement |
| Action 5: Jim to share paper on 'Gear in Gear out'. | JE |
| Action 6: International Negotiation to be put as a standing item on future agendas. | JB |
| Action 7: Bekah to discuss potential survey work with Colin, Brett, Mark, Kevin & Jim. | BC |
| Action 8: Action points to be added to the summary | Secretariat |