



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

MEETING, DOCUMENT

Welsh King Scallop Advisory Group meeting: 29 February 2024

Notes of the meeting held on 29 February 2024.

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Attendees

Stakeholders:

Nicola Cusack (NC), Christopher Chambers (CC), Jim Evans (JE), Natalie Hold (NH), Liam Evans (LE), Mark Roberts (MR), Colin Charman (CCh)

Welsh Government (WG):

Julian Bray (JB) (Chair), Michelle Billing (MB), Alun Mortimer (AM), Bekah Cioffi (BC), Matt Sayer (MS), Tim Croucher (TC)

Apologies:

John Gorman, Stuart Jones, Brett Garner, Ella Brock

1. Welcome

JB welcomed everyone to the meeting, introduced Science colleagues and purpose of the meeting.

2. Review of actions from previous meeting, Overview and Terms of Reference

All actions confirmed as completed and note of meeting accepted.

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Dafydd Davies, a scallop fisher in the under 10m fleet has expressed an interest in joining the group and it has been agreed that he will be added to the membership list.

Action 1: Heading in Item 2 – amend ‘bass’ to ‘king scallop’. AM

Overview of King Scallop FMP – No comments received; the note was accepted.

Terms of Reference – No comments received; the note was accepted.

Discussion

JE – Can a plan for future delivery be produced to support the meetings?

JB – Evidence discussion today will trigger activity and will support any future changes in legislation. Discussion on regulations to follow this meeting. We will then develop a high-level implementation plan for sign off by the Minister. If this is approved a delivery plan will be produced. Likely to be two versions of the delivery plan – high level for the advisory group and a more detailed version for internal use.

3. Evidence priorities

BC delivered science presentation on evidence priorities.

Action 2: Circulate slides and briefing note. AM

Discussion

MR – What do you mean by standardise catch per unit effort (CPUE)?

NH – Different sized boats report different metrics, i.e. days at sea, kW hours, making comparisons difficult. CPUE is an index of different measures and therefore we need to standardise the calculation for different fishery components. Need to build statistical models taking account of all inputs for particular species and understand all the factors, other than abundance, affecting catch.

MR – Where is the Tremadog Bay stock?

NH – Identified in the first year of survey close offshore in Pwllheli area. This area has not been surveyed since due to habitats and static gear in the area.

MR – Scallops not washed up there since early 2000's. No evidence there is still a scallop stock there.

MR - CatchApp – only U10m boats have this. Will other vessels wanting to fish scallop need this? O10m currently use electronic reporting.

NH – Currently 2 ways to capture data from 3 different sizes of vessels. Hopeful for one platform in the future.

JB – We would all like to see more integrated and coherent systems but it is a challenge.

JE

- Thought our understanding was better than being implied and that we would have a better set of indicators to rely on than CPUE as a proxy.
- Tremadog bay and other closed areas which aren't surveyed now have scallops, but we don't know how these contribute to fishable stocks. Important to understand the influence of these areas – warrants further investigation.
- Seabed integrity – presumably looking at the work already done, including the dynamic nature of the habitats and recovery rates.

- CEFAS carbon footprint study – some conflicting information and noise around this. Also, work around blue carbon. Could this be included in the CEFAS work?

BC – Joint work can be discussed for the next stages of the work.

JE

- We have an active fishery transitioning from one characteristic to another. Need to map the evidence needs for the priorities.
- WMFS Funding Round 4 funding launched today. Could this be used for targeted evidence gathering?

NH – Already looking at funding and the staffing implications.

CC – IoM fishers have to fill out an e-log and 'S' form every day, including fishing time, location, no. of operations and catch. Could we think about that and generate the data?

JB – In principle yes, a discussion for the next meeting about how we might improve regulation of the fishery.

4. Bangor University: Scallop research to support FMP - NH

Action 3: Circulate slides. AM

Discussion

MR – Cardigan Bay SAC has large areas where there are no scallops. Separate

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these out and it would be a very different picture.

NH – This is the productivity work. Mapping the scallop boundaries and maximising the survey work. No concern about survey effort skewing results, have looked at the stats and the boxes were designed pre-precise VMS.

CCh – Cardigan Bay wasn't closed for scallop stocks originally; was surveyed and shown to not have designated features. To open a closed area would need to determine feature wasn't present. It was concluded bottle-nosed dolphin would not be impacted >3nm, therefore need to focus on cobble/boulder reef.

JE – Within the evidence strategy HRA does not extend beyond 12nm, but FMP management is to the Welsh zone. Helpful to scope any environmental issues early.

Benthic impacts – contention around the selection of areas; areas with human impacts and no control areas without human impact.

NH – Unlikely to find any area of north Atlantic shelf that has not been impacted by humans. SAC has been closed for a while, nearly 15 years, without evidence of towing. Some areas have small amount of dredging by Bangor University and other areas with no evidence of fishing. There will be grades of impact which can be compared.

JE – Question of robustness of the 15-year data, will it give us more than we have already?

NH – Yes. There will always be some criticism of the way environmental assessments are done. Can only peer review and publish.

JE – Question of the reliability of the data exchanges and EU interest in Welsh scallop stocks.

NH – ICES put out a data call to member states and MS are obliged to return the

data; ToR remit to look at Celtic and Irish seas; no data call for bycatch at the moment; if it's landed by any gear there will be data, if discarded we will not know.

CCh – 12nm is NRW limit, beyond that is JNCC. Current scallop Order stops at 12nm. GES is about habitat. No GES problems from scallop fishing, more a concern for the muddy deeps and nephrops.

BC – Do scallops aggregate for spawning?

NH – We don't know. Broadcast spawning would suggest they would want to be near other spawning individuals but cannot be sure. They can move, but by storms/tides or by choice not clear. Anecdotally, juveniles have been caught and returned but adults then not found in the same area.

5. AOB and next steps

CCh – What is the resourcing need, are we relying on internal/external resources?

JB – We will put together a note from today on the way forward and will need ministerial sign-off at some point. Cost will be an issue, this is an expensive area to get data, need to focus on priority needs, i.e. annual survey, red bag scheme. May need to be in phases and may need 5-10 years of data to assess some attributes of the fishery so we need to start gathering it now.

CCh – Interest for fishers is getting access to grounds they don't have at the moment.

JB – We will need greater control of the fishery before considering opening up any areas which are currently closed and we will need to be confident that opening any closed areas will not have a detrimental effect on overall

recruitment.

MR – Industry could support gathering data.

NH – It would be helpful to get industry data from red bag scheme/catch sampling (size/age frequencies) and discards.

JB

- We need to set out what industry support is needed in the evidence summary note to encourage participation.
- Reminder for members to send accept/decline responses to meeting requests to avoid unnecessary cancellation of meetings.
- Date of next meeting to be confirmed.
- No other AOB.

Actions

1. Heading in Item 2 – amend ‘bass’ to ‘scallop’(AM) - 16 May
2. Evidence briefing: Scallop FMP. Circulate slides and briefing note (AM) - 16 May
3. Scallop research to support FMP. Circulate slides (AM) - outstanding.

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