

Key Points

Operations Report: An update on the work of the operations team from October – January 18 was provided.

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- 1) New 12m cabin RIB Catrin now undergoing sea trials in North Wales.
- 2) Investigations continue and there have been a number of recent prosecutions in court.
- 3) Team working on EMFF application to provide u10m vessels with iVMS.
- 4) Officers have provided information to members of the public about harbour porpoise strandings following misinformed media articles.

Summary of Key Workstreams:

3 Main areas include: Scallops, whelks and cockle management.

- 1) **Scallops** - Plans to launch 2nd consultation on the management of Scallop fishery in Cardigan has been delayed due to resource issues. Officers now considering powers available to the Cabinet Secretary to introduce a flexible permit.
- 2) **Whelks** – Officers looking at introducing new legislation in two phases – the first will include an increase in MCRS to 55mm across Wales and a possible closed season. There was mixed reaction to a closed season, members sought clarification about whether this could be considered on a regional basis.
Members put forward a number of options for consideration to manage the fishery including pot limitation, however, it was felt this would be impractical to manage and enforce.
It was also suggested a closed season could be implemented on a voluntary basis in some areas.
- 3) **Cockle Management** – Officers are now working on options for adaptive management measures for the fishery. Meetings will be held with cockle fishers to discuss the proposals in April.

Other areas discussed included:

EMFF –12% of total fund has been allocated to projects. Concerns were raised over the complexity of the application process. Bethan Jones offered to attend meetings with association members to provide help and support in completing documents and outlining exactly what is available to the fishing industry under EMFF.

Escape hatches – Item put forward by member from North Wales. BJ explained WG not able to apply for funding for such a project, however, associations would be able to do so. There was mixed reaction to the use of escape hatches. Chair suggested Sue Burton of the Pembs SAC should be invited to attend the next meeting and present her report to the group.

Queen Scallops – Cabinet Secretary has now agreed to licence conditions which would apply to Welsh vessels. Officials were in discussion with other devolved administrations seeking their agreement.

Seafood Expo Global Brussels – Only 2 companies had signed up to attend, if no further interest is expressed it is unlikely WG would be able to attend in the future.

Marine Plan – Consultation closes on 29 March.

CFP – Members advised of landing obligations which are currently not having an impact on Welsh vessels, however work is underway to consider species that may present a ‘choke’ as a result of the full implementation of the landing obligation on 1 January 2019. Bass will be of particular concern for Wales. All information regarding fisheries regulations is available on the fisheries webpage.

Bass – The result from December Council was better than expected for bass.

Authorisations for Bass fishing in 2018 would shortly be issued to those who qualified and received a permit in 2017. Increases for other quota species were given to Wales.

Emerging Fisheries – Included a discussion about a potential live Wrasse fishery although to date there had been very limited fishing activity.

Razor Clam Fishery – Work has been commissioned to understand the best methodology available to assess razor clam stocks in Wales. A report should be available by end of March following which recommendations would be put forward for consideration.

Potential Development Areas – Areas for potential development had previously been put forward by members; LW referred to policy decisions taken at WMFAG and by WG in regard to several fisheries which included bass, whelks, scallops, crustaceans, salmon and sewin. He explained decisions taken regarding these fisheries were having a detrimental effect on his and other fishers income, with some losing their businesses.

Whilst sympathetic to the concerns raised JB explained measures were needed to ensure fisheries remained sustainable for future years. After going through the list of proposals members agreed the following:

- High priority - Export Certificates and Under 10m catch reporting because of their connection to 'Day 1 readiness' after Brexit.
- Medium priority - Inshore VMS and restrictions on the taking of berried lobster to be considered under Part 2 of the Crustacean review.

It was agreed further information was required on recreational fishing/angling and The Dee estuary fishery will be considered.

EU transition – Members informed WG regularly meeting with UK Government and other devolved administrations to consider the key challenges being faced in regard to Welsh fisheries due to Brexit. Members will be provided with regular updates.

Options for Improving Stakeholder Engagement – Following the decision to continue with the suspension of regional Inshore Fisheries Groups, membership of the Wales Marine Fisheries Advisory Group had been extended to include representation from each of the Welsh fishing associations.

Overall members felt the new group was working well, however, officials asked for views on a number of further options in order to improve stakeholder engagement. The members agreed the following would be actioned:

- IFG members receiving meeting papers prior to WMFAG meeting.
- IFG members to receive draft Notes of WMFAG meeting within 2 weeks of the meeting.
- Consider options for informing those in the fishing industry who are not affiliated to any association.
- The Aquaculture Advisory Group would be reformed. Trevor Jones would act as link between WMFAG and the AAG.
- Marine & Fisheries webpage will improving/updating.
- Notes of meeting to be added to website

Items for information included:

1. Seafish Best Practice Guidance for Assessing the financial performance of fishing gear.
2. Holly Whitely informed members of the Seafish/Welsh Government initiative to provide members of the fishing industry with Personal Floatation Devices with location beacons for a charge of £15.
3. WEL Document – Priorities for Marine Environment & Fisheries Policy in Wales following the withdrawal from the European Union.
4. Pembrokeshire Sustainable Shellfish Initiative Summary Report – Sue Burton from Pembs SAC will be asked to present her report to members at the next meeting.

Date of next meeting – the next meeting of WMFAG will be held on 16 May 2018.