

Wales Marine Fisheries Advisory Group (WMFAG)

Notes of meeting held on Thursday 19 September 2019, Trawscoed Room, WG office, Rhodfa Padarn – 10am to 4pm

PRESENT

Nick O’Sullivan, Chair, Welsh Marine Fisheries Advisory Group
Jim Evans, Welsh Fishermans Association
John O’Connor, Welsh Federation of Sea Anglers
Holly Whiteley, Seafish Wales
Rowland Sharp, Natural Resources Wales
Kevin Denman, South West Wales Fishing Communities
Dean Parry, Cardigan Bay Fishermans Association
Gill Bell, Wales Environment Link
Trevor Jones, MSFOMA
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
Michelle Billing, Fisheries Policy Manager, Welsh Government (Item 7)
Lisa Barnwell, Marine and Fisheries Digital Manager, Welsh Government (Catch recording application demonstration)
Gary Douch, Head of EMFF, Welsh Government (Item 6)
Hilary Evans, Business, Finance and Comms Manager, Welsh Government
Marged Jones, Secretariat, Welsh Marine Fisheries Advisory Group, Welsh Government

1 Welcome and Apologies:

Chair welcomed all to the meeting and introductions were made.
Chair introduced Marged Jones, the group’s new secretariat.
Apologies were received from:
Mark Roberts, North Wales Fishermen’s Cooperative, Brett Garner, Llyn Fisherman’s Association, Sion William, Llyn Pot Fisherman’s Association, Carwyn Thomas, Welsh Local Government Association, Len Waters, West Wales Shellfisherman’s Association

2 Introduction – progress since the last meeting:

	<p>Gareth briefly explained the new SMT structure, highlighting that we now have a dedicated team, led by Julian, which will focus specifically on developing domestic fisheries policy. The group welcomed this as a positive step.</p> <p>Gareth gave an update on the vacant Deputy Director Role which is currently being recruited.</p> <p>Gareth also informed the group that we are getting dedicated legal resource which should speed up delivery of work in future.</p> <p>Action 1 – Marged to send the group an electronic version of the organogram.</p> <p>Gareth briefly explained that the Fisheries Bill would be mentioned in the Queen’s Speech but with the current turbulent political situation it may fall and therefore we must make the most of our current legislation. A more in-depth conversation about this matter will take place in the next meeting.</p>
<p>3</p>	<p>I) Approval of notes of meeting held on 25 June Amendment: Page 1, Brett Garner and Mark Roberts missing from list of present attendees – to be added on</p> <p>APPROVED</p> <p>II) Progress on Actions from previous meeting</p> <p>Julian took members through the actions from the previous meeting, most of which had been completed.</p> <p>Action 5 – Julian explained that the Aquaculture Advisory Group had been suspended following poor attendance and dissatisfaction.</p> <p>Action 6 – Julian explained this will be considered after Brexit as part of the cockle management project. Kevin asked whether an intertidal fisheries advisory group would be restricted to cockles only, as there are other intertidal fishing activities taking place such as bait fishing in the South, and Periwinkle picking in the North. Initially the engagement will focus on cockles.</p> <p>Action 8 – Agreed that this should not have been a formal action. Jim advised that the WFA had not sent a formal response to the Climate Change, Environment and Rural Affairs Committee Report.</p> <p>Action 9 – Gareth confirmed that Welsh Government had responded to the report, and read out the response to members. This led to a further discussion amongst members were the following points were made:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Gill mentioned the beach cleans held by the MCS and how fishing gear are the largest source of marine litter. - There was some criticism that the committee’s report was simplistic. - It was agreed that WMFAG, via a Task and Finish group would work with the Clean Seas Partnership to ensure the fishing industry is engaged with the work to reduce marine litter. <p>Action 2 – Gareth to talk to Peter Davies from the Clean Seas Partnership to see if a subgroup could be set up with members of WMFAG.</p> <p>Action 3 – Gill to forward information about the sources of marine litter to the Secretariat who will circulate it.</p>
<p>4</p>	<p>Trial change to Fisheries Liaison Group Structures:</p>

Julian explained the history of the Inshore Fisheries Liaison Groups, and that the current model, i.e. disbanding the IFGs at the same time as broadening the membership of the WMFAG supported by task and finish groups, was still strictly speaking a trial which had not been finalised. This decision was reviewed in October 2017, and was meant to be reviewed again in October 2018 but this did not take place. He asked the group to consider whether the trial structure should be consolidated and confirmed as the 'operating model' or if another operating model should be considered. The group discussed the trial structure and the following points were made:

- Jim agreed that the current structure worked well and was happy for the trial to come to an end.
- Gill questioned whether WMFAG was the right place to discuss local issues and expressed concern that local people may feel like they are not being represented in the group.
- Trevor also questioned whether or not WMFAG truly represented the majority of the fishing community, pointing out that none of the North Wales representatives were present at the current meeting, meaning discussions would not be as complete as they could be.
- General feeling was that communication between WG and stakeholders was poor, and that there needed to be better and direct communication of outcomes from the group following each meeting.
- Julian suggested producing a one page summary that could be sent out to members after each meeting for them to forward to their contacts. Members agreed this would be beneficial.
- Gareth expressed a preference to stick with the current structure of the group, and supported the creation of a one pager to be sent out promptly following each meeting.
- It was agreed the current structure should be kept, but a review of this would be a standing item at each December meeting.

Action 4 – Julian/Marged to create an example of a one page summary of the meeting to send out to members for feedback.

Action 5 – Julian will write to IFG members to confirm the trial operating model will be consolidated as the permanent engagement structure and reviewed each year.

Revisions to Terms of Reference for the WMFAG

Following an action from the last meeting, Gareth made amendments to point 7 of the ToR, which the group accepted.

The following amendments were also made to the ToR and agreed by members:

- Page 3, 2.4, 'Aquaculture Advisory Group' was removed from the title of the group as that sub-group was disbanded.
- Page 3, 3.1, Seafish was added on to the list of associations who can have one representative in the group.

	<p>The members present signed an updated copy of the ToR, however, Marged will send a hard copy to members who were not present for them to sign and return.</p> <p>Action 6 – Marged to send copies of the revised ToR to absent members for them to sign and return in a pre-paid envelope.</p>
<p>5</p>	<p>Control and Enforcement</p> <p>Gareth explained that approval had been given to secure an additional 14 members of enforcement staff but that recruitment of these staff would take some time. He confirmed that these new staff would receive training to become fully warranted officers.</p> <p>A discussion took place around MEOs enforcing conservation measures, as well as illegal fishing.</p> <p>A number of members highlighted concerns about the current lack of MEO's on the ground, and welcomed the prospect of this additional resource, emphasising how important it was for MEO's to foster relationships with fishers.</p> <p>Julian explained that enforcement has been particularly stretched in North Wales. In addition, MEOs have been working through a back log of case files that needed to be processed. The majority of these cases have now gone through the courts and have resulted in prosecutions.</p> <p>Jim queried the frequency of patrols, referring to the statistics given in the paper. Julian explained the figures should be viewed as minimum numbers and may have missed out some Rib patrols. It was agreed it was important to ensure the statistics provided are more accurate in future.</p>
	<p>Demonstration of the new Electronic Catch Recording system</p> <p>Lisa Barnwell gave a presentation on the new electronic catch recording system, including a video demonstration of how the application worked.</p> <p>The following points were made by members of the group:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Concerns were raised in regard to those fishers that do not own or have access to smartphones or computers. Questions were asked on how they would be able to comply with the new regulations. Lisa assured members that there would be training and support provided. - Jim asked whether or not an impact assessment was carried out beforehand. Lisa said she would find out if one was carried out. - The point was made that there needed to be clear definitions and rules in the regulations accompanying the new system, mainly due to health and safety risks which could arise from having to input catches to the system before unloading from a vessel where a slipway is used for example. - A discussion was had on additional functions that could be added on to the application in order to collect further data. Lisa clarified that it is possible to potentially add additional features in future. - The need to collect good quality data was emphasised in order to achieve complete fisheries management.

	<p>Action 7 – Lisa to send Marged the presentation to circulate to members electronically.</p> <p>Action 8 – Lisa to find out whether a Regulatory Impact assessment was carried out beforehand.</p>
<p>6</p>	<p>Update for new EMFF Successor Scheme</p> <p>Gary Douch gave a presentation on the EMFF successor scheme and possible future schemes. The following feedback was given:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Kevin made the point that infrastructure in Wales needs expanding. Explained that fishing activity is restricted in the south because of access to resources. Suggested that auctions needed to be developed to expand markets. - The group discussed lockable skips which used to be provided in harbours for fishers to dispose of their rubbish including debris found at sea although there was no agreement on who should pick up the costs for these (Link to Action 2). - It was commented that the scheme was too slow and needed to be streamlined in future and that future schemes needed to be at a devolved level in order to make the chain shorter and speed up the process. - Gill asked whether the scheme could be extended to conservation by recording more data for sustainable fisheries.
<p>7</p>	<p>Domestic Fisheries Policy and Management</p> <p>Julian presented the paper.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Julian informed the group that 554 recreational potting permits had been issued in the last year. - Jim asked if the permit scheme could be revised to include a condition that all permit holders would have to use the new electronic catch recording system, as they don't currently have to record their catch. - Gareth acknowledged that things have not progressed as we had planned, but with Julian's new team focusing solely on domestic policy, things should now progress quickly. - Michelle Billing gave an update on the Whelk legislation work. SI to increase MCRS came into force in July, a further SI is currently being drafted as a priority. - Colin Charman reported good progress had been made on the Assessing Welsh Fisheries work. He thanked fishers for their co-operation in helping to ground truth some of the features and informed the group that the Prince Madog research vessel was currently surveying some of the areas of interest.
<p>8</p>	<p>International Fisheries Policy/ 2020 Quota Negotiations</p> <p>Gareth briefly outlined the three possible Brexit scenarios.</p> <p>Gareth asked the group how we could best engage with members regarding Brexit discussions in advance of December council. Explained that there are</p>

	<p>still questions on whether we would be represented there or not. Suggested setting up a Brexit Sounding Board with members to discuss this further.</p> <p>Action 9 – Elin Gwynedd will set up a Brexit Sounding Board with some members of WMFAG.</p>
9	<p>AOB</p> <p>Julian informed the group that we received 57 responses for the Brexit and Our Seas Consultation and that a summary of responses would be published soon.</p>
	<p>The Chair then drew the meeting to a close.</p>