

DARD/AFBI Inshore Fisheries Strategy Project Steering Group

Dundonald House 12th January 2012

Present: - **Paddy Campbell** DARD (Chair)
Dr Carrie McMinn AFBI
Dr Lynn Gilmore Seafish
Dick James NIFPO
Marguerite Tarzia Marine Task Force
Myrtle Ferguson DARD

Apologies:- Matt Service and Peter Archdale

Welcome

In Matt Service's absence Paddy Campbell chaired the meeting and welcomed everyone.

The Minutes of the previous meeting were agreed.

Matters Arising

- Sea Angling – The questionnaire was still in the hands of the AFBI economists;
- Cockle Report – This is now available. Carrie will e-mail the report to the group.

Project Progress

Carrie McMinn gave a progress report.

- The project had lost an observer but as the weather has not been good this has not yet been a problem. There are other staff available, including Carrie McMinn, to go out onboard fishing boats;
- Isle of Man Scallop Workshop – Carrie had attended this and thought it very worthwhile. It was good to hear different views and ideas;
- Lobster tagging – This had now been approved by DARD. A grant of £50 per boat charter will be paid;
- Website was now "live";
- meetings were continued to be held with fishermen.

Comments arising.

- Dick James and Lynn Gilmore both suggested the "Seafish Science" project was worth pursuing. There was access to funds which may encourage fishermen to self sample

Draft Strategy

Carrie McMinn presented this paper. The following points need to be noted in conjunction with the PowerPoint presentation which has already been circulated to the group.

- **Inshore Management**

Comments arising:-

Paddy Campbell — Reference needs to be made to position in the south of Ireland. In particular if the final document gives examples of management in the UK it should also give examples in the south. In particular the role of the Loughs Agency needs to be covered;

- **Pressures on Inshore Sector**

Comments arising

Renewable Energy – Everybody is affected by this so therefore a heavy pressure so perhaps needs “Marine Spatial Planning” as overarching heading for MPA’s, renewables, oil and gas and leisure activities etc.;

Sustainable stocks - also needs to be viewed as a pressure as there seems to be a lack of focus on the “fish less, get more from it” aspect.

- **Strategy**

Comments arising: -

The points listed under Strategy are more like actions. It needs to have more broader and high level headings to identify challenges that we need to address with the relevant actions listed under these. This section would have overarching challenges – probably equivalent to the “Pressures” identified in the draft along with the actions common to all sectors. For example a challenge might be “protection of the marine environment” under this you might list all the things you need to do to ensure that inshore fisheries do not cause damage. This could include identification of where the fisheries occur, where the nursery areas are, where vulnerable habitats are etc. For example the strategy should be directing us having in place a system where fishing occurs in a sustainable way and does not just spring up willy nilly and possibly cause damage.

The high level challenges should then be carried on into the sectoral sections with the detailed actions listed under the appropriate challenge headings.

VMS – This could be sensitive. Need to put in other features not just position. It needs to help with fishing etc.

DARD needs to find resources to have dedicated legislation team. There may also be a need for a dedicated Inshore Fisheries Officer who will deal solely with the Inshore sector. .

- **Pot Fishing**

Comments arising:-

This comment applies to all the individual sector strategies. We should carry the broad high level challenge headings into each sector strategy . Under these the sub

headings such as effort control and technical measures might fit ie. Effort and technical could fall under a high level “Sustainable fishery development” heading. If we get consistency across the sectors we will find gaps in some that we can consider adding to.

Dick James queried that the largest vessel was over 23m. He thought that this vessel did not work inshore.

- **Brown Crab Strategy**

Comments arising:-

Vessel Limits – Queries on how the size of vessels would be determined. Carrie McMinn explained that this had not been decided. Fishing usually took place about 2 miles off shore on the North Coast but approx. 8 miles out on the Co Down coast. This and other factors will be taken into consideration.

Gear measures –Escape gaps need to be “velvet crab” size. Carrie McMinn agreed and said that fishers were concerned about the cost of biodegradable clips but these would be mainly for ghost fishing. Those fishers prosecuting a mixed fishery were also unhappy with the proposed gear measures The proposed ban on parlour pots is also unpopular among the industry.

There is support for v-notching. The genetics project needs only a few more years to complete therefore if this is not continuing there would have to be a ban on landing berried lobster.

- **Pot Fishing**

Comments Arising:-

Pot limits are apparently not feasible but Carrie McMinn explained that they work in England with different coloured tags being used to denote hobby fishing and commercial. As some measures had already been agreed the fishermen were looking for these to be implemented.

Again needs headings showing the broad headings to include the challenges with actions to address them, perhaps a one page diagram tying everything up.

There are no data requirements for shell fish except shellfish returns and Buyers and Sellers legislation. It may be perhaps better to have one logsheet for all instead of Nephrops and shellfish. This could be in the form of an e-log. It may be necessary to look at the type of information supplied and form of supply.

The *Palaeman* fishery may also need to be included.

- **Scallop Dredging**

Comments arising:-

Queen scallop fishermen concerned about sustainability and have requested some regulation. As, at present, there is no data on the fishery technical measures need to be included.

- **Scallop Strategy**

Comments arising:-

The need for a closed season on the North Coast was queried as there is seasonality there already. Carrie McMinn said that the science was looking at the North Coast already to establish the spawning period.

A ban on the use of dredges in the Queen fishery would make them more seasonal (When the water temperature falls queen scallops don't "fly" therefore dredges can decimate them.)

There is not enough content on addressing the environmental issues on dredging also the nursery areas are not defined.

Daily catch limits may not be popular, evidence shows that scallops are spreading possibly from South to North.

It will be difficult to police catch limits for diving. There are quite a few commercial divers. It may be necessary to licence them.

- **Cockle Dredging**

Comments arising:-

There does not seem to be any understanding among the industry that recruitment can be poor.

It would be hard to permit hand rakers.

- **Sea Angling**

Comments arising:-

Again there is a need to structure the headings to include challenges and actions to address them.

Councils also need to get on board to promote sea angling.

Possibly give out stickers showing minimum landing sizes (mls) which could be attached to vessels for ease of reference.

- **Intertidal Harvest**

Comments arising:-

Oysters in Strangford Lough need to come under this banner, also hand raking of cockles and mussels.

A winkle fishery could be quite lucrative.

Need a multi agency Task Force to get rid of gangs exploiting the intertidal zone.

- **Overall**

Emphasis needs to be put on Governance as the strategy is of no use if not governed properly.

Carrie McMinn will circulate the draft by e-mail to the members and more detailed comments should be returned to her by 1st February 2012

Date of next meeting

To be advised.