

Menai Strait Fishery Order Management Association

Meeting, 17th December 2015
FV Mare Gratia, Porth Penrhyn

Minutes

Attendance

Sue Utting	Chair
Keith Andrews	Licensed hand pickers
Rowland Sharp	Natural Resources Wales
Ioan Thomas	Gwynedd County Council
James Wilson	Bangor Mussel Producers Ltd
Tim Croucher	Welsh Assembly Government
Lewis le Vay	Bangor University
Trevor Jones	Menai Strait (West)

Advisors

Jim Andrews

1. Chair's announcements

The Chair proposed a change to the sequence of agenda items so that item 9 (Developing Shellfish Aquaculture in North Wales) could be considered before some Members had to leave the meeting. This proposal was accepted.

2. Apologies

Bill Somerfield	Welsh Government
Mike Barton	Ynys Môn County Council

3. Minutes of last meeting

The minutes of the meeting that took place on 15th September 2015 were accepted.

4. Matters Arising

It was considered that most of the matters arising from the last meeting were addressed on the agenda for the current meeting. Additional matters arising were:-

- a) **Ynys Môn County Council** - James Wilson indicated that he had discussed the possibility of Officer rather than Member representation.
- b) **Annual Report from the Fishery Order** - Tim Croucher reported that he has been in touch with his colleagues in Aberystwyth to confirm the submission arrangements for annual returns and will provide an update on this.
- c) **Handpicking licences** - Keith Andrews requested that the option to issue handpicking licences for the fishery should be retained.

5. Membership of the Association

There were no new Members of the Association.

6. Financial Update

James Wilson reported that end of year accounts has been submitted

7. Welsh Government Activity

a) Meetings and Correspondence

The only correspondence of note in the past quarter had all been connected with the Menai Strait West Fishery Order, considered under agenda item 9.

b) Environment Bill

This Bill was due to enter its 3rd stage in early 2016. The timetable for the Bill was for it to be enacted in May 2016.

It was understood that representations had been made to WG by environmental NGOs to change the provisions of the Bill relating to Site Protection Notices" for European Marine Sites. It was felt that the Association should make its own representation to Welsh Government to indicate that the proposed new arrangements were satisfactory and would both provide business security and a precautionary arrangement for marine wildlife protection.

Action: Chair

c) Vessel licensing & monitoring issues

There had been ongoing discussions about the requirements for VMS monitoring of vessels licensed for aquaculture activities. A definitive view of this issue had not yet been determined.

8. NW IFCA Activity

a) IFCA Meetings & Correspondence

There had been no correspondence with the IFCA during the past quarter.

It was noted that Dr Jim Andrews (advisor to MSFOMA) had been appointed as a Member of the NW IFCA by the MMO, and had attended the meeting on 11th December 2015, along with Mr Trevor Jones. No issues of direct relevance to MSFOMA or the Menai Strait mussel fishery had been discussed at that meeting.

b) Bivalve Mollusc Working Group

Trevor Jones reported that the most recent meeting of this Group had considered the seed mussel fishery at Heysham flat. No issues of direct relevance to the Menai Strait mussel fishery had been discussed.

9. Development opportunities

The report was accepted by the meeting and discussed.

a) Menai Strait West

i. Consultation & responses

The consultation on the re-establishment of the Menai Strait West Fishery Order had taken place in October - November 2015. A total of 75 responses had been received to the consultation, including 57 objections, 2 requests for minor alterations to the Order, and 15 letters of support. All consultation responses had been acknowledged.

Many of the objections had been raised by members of the Port Dinorwic Sailing Club and residents from Port Dinorwic. In response to these objections, a meeting had been organised at the sailing club on the 15th December 2015. This meeting had been very positive, and following the meeting one of the objectors wrote to withdraw their objection.

Arrangements were being made to organise site visit to the oyster farm at Brynsiencyn and to one of the mussel dredges at Porth Penrhyn during January 2016. It was hoped that following these visits and further liaison it would be possible to address the objections that had been raised.

The Association felt that an ongoing commitment to liaison with stakeholders would be important if the Fishery Order was re-established. Arrangements for progressing this, including the option of making regular liaison a condition of leases in this Order, were discussed.

The Association expressed disappointment that Welsh Government officials had felt unable to attend the meeting at the sailing club. It was understood that WG lawyers had advised against this.

The Association was grateful for the efforts that had been made by local councillor Sian Gwenllian and the Commodore of the Port Dinorwic Sailing Club, Jo Powell. It was agreed that a formal letter of thanks should be sent to thank them for their contribution to the process.

Action: Chair

It was also agreed that Rhun Ap Iorwerth AM should be informed of progress with the Fishery Order and the recent meeting with local stakeholders.

Action: Chair

ii. Costs

It was noted that costs of approximately £8,000 had been accrued on this application to date. The agreement for cost recovery was reviewed at the meeting. It was agreed that further work should be carried out to progress the application.

It was further agreed that the applicants for the Order should be informed of the current level of expenditure and the Association's intent to continue to progress the application.

Action: Secretariat

iii. Options for progress

It was agreed that ongoing liaison should be promoted, with the intent of finding ways in which the objections could be mitigated through the management of cultivation activities.

It was also agreed that it was important to write to Welsh Government to clarify whether any deadlines would be imposed on the application process while mitigation options were being explored.

Action: Chair

b) Conwy Fishery

Sue Utting had recently spoken to Thomas Jones from the Conwy mussel fishermen. He was hoping that there would be a consultation on a new Conwy Estuary Fishery Order during 2016.

c) Menai Strait East: lease renewal

The leases for 6 of the 8 leased areas in the Menai Strait Oyster and Mussel Fishery Order area were due to expire at the end of March 2016. It was agreed that these 6 leases should be renewed for the duration of the Fishery Order (a period of 6 years, ending no later than 2nd April 2022).

James Wilson reported that he has initiated consultation procedures with Natural Resources Wales to ensure that the Habitats Regulations Assessment required prior to lease renewal was carried out. Once this had been completed, the Association should write to the Minister to seek approval for the renewal of the leases.

Action: JW, RS, Secretariat

d) Offshore areas

James Wilson had contacted the Welsh Government to enquire about the procedure for establishing offshore cultivation areas. He would keep the Association informed of any feedback on this.

10. Fishery Management Issues

a) Bangor Pier

There was no news of any activity with the painting of the pier.

b) *Bonamia*

There had been no change with respect to *Bonamia* in the western Menai Strait.

c) Invasive Alien Species (IAS)

Code of Conduct

The Bangor Mussel Producers' code of conduct was currently under review with NRW to ensure that it met current best practice and knowledge of the non-native species concerned.

Didemnum vexillum

This species was still present in Holyhead marina. Care was being taken to contain its distribution.

d) *Norovirus*

James Wilson reported that an EU-wide baseline survey of Norovirus was underway. There were some concerns about the sampling methodology, and in particular whether viral “particles” detected were active or dormant / moribund.

e) Enforcement

There had been reports of mussels being brought ashore by hand gatherers working from Traeth Lafan. Welsh Government fishery officers were monitoring this situation. It was possible that the mussels may have been taken from the eastern edge of the Fishery Order area, in which case a criminal action could be taken. This situation would be kept under review.

e) Proposed new SACs and SPAs

There was no news with these sites; progress had been delayed to ensure that all UK administrations were in step with one another.

11. Any Other Business

a) Correspondence

No correspondence other than that referred to in reports had been received.

b) Newborough National Nature Reserve Newsletter

Rowland Sharp reported that the Winter 2015 edition of “Newborough News” had just been published.

12. Date for next meeting

The next meeting is set for 10th March 2016 at 10am.