

Menai Strait Fishery Order Management Association

Meeting, 9th June 2015
FV Mare Gratia, Porth Penrhyn

Minutes

Attendance

Sue Utting
Rowland Sharp
James Wilson
Lewis le Vay
Trevor Jones

Chair
Natural Resources Wales
Bangor Mussel Producers Ltd
Bangor University
Menai Strait (West)

Advisors

Jim Andrews

1. Chair's announcements

2. Apologies

Bill Somerfield
Ioan Thomas
Keith Andrews
Mike Barton
Tim Croucher

Welsh Government
Gwynedd County Council
Licensed hand pickers
Ynys Môn County Council
Welsh Assembly Government

3. Minutes of last meeting

The minutes of the meeting that took place on 27th March 2015 were accepted, subject to a correction concerning attendance at a site visit by WG Officials on April 16th.

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.

5. Membership of the Association

There were no new Members of the Association.

6. Financial Update

The balance of the MSFOMA account was reported to the meeting, and it was noted that a reserve is accruing as intended by the agreed financial plan for the Association.

It was reported that invoices had been issued for the new and established leased areas on 1st April.

There was a discussion about using internet banking to streamline financial management.

Action: Secretariat

7. Welsh Government Activity

The report submitted to the meeting was accepted.

a) Meetings and Correspondence

The Chair and all present welcomed the news that the Welsh Government had decided to progress the making of this new Fishery Order. She had written to the Minister to thank him for progressing this proposal on the 1st June.

Trevor Jones and James Wilson felt that the close links that have been built with officials have been a great help with this, as well as the assistance of Rhun Ap Iorwerth.

It was reported that the Minister was due to visit the Menai Strait on Thursday 11th June.

b) Menai Strait West Fishery Order

It was understood that this Order was now being drafted by WG legal officials, and that a Draft Order would be sent to MSFOMA for consideration before consultation.

The meeting considered the practical steps that would need to be taken to progress the making of this Order. It was agreed that the procedures set out in legislation and administrative guidance should be scrutinised and guidance should be sought from WG officials.

Action: Secretariat

c) Environment Bill

Progress with this Bill was welcomed. It was agreed that a response should be made by MSFOMA to support this Bill and to seek clarification on certain matters, notably the proposed provisions to protect the marine environment and the procedures associated with "site protection notices" under the Bill.

Action: Secretariat

8. NW IFCA Activity

The report was accepted by the meeting and discussed.

a) Technical, Scientific & Byelaws Sub Committee (TSB)

Members welcomed the report that IFCA officers had intercepted a consignment of slipper limpets at Liverpool Fish Market.

There was concern that the CEO of the IFCA had made some unsubstantiated comments about dredging for mussels being unsustainable, whilst other IFCA staff members felt otherwise. These comments had not been adequately reflected in the minutes of the meeting.

Some members of the TSB had attended the site visit to the Menai Strait organised by the Bangor Mussel Producers Association. All who had attended this had found it very useful. There was disappointment that IFCA officers had not participated in this visit.

It was noted that scientific representation was lacking in the IFCA and at its meetings (such as the Bivalve Mollusc Working Group considered below). The IFCA currently had vacancies for members. It was agreed that scientific representation on the IFCA should be encouraged, and it was agreed that Jon King could be encouraged to put himself forward for selection.

Action: Lewis Le Vay

It was noted that the IFCA has been considering changes to its constitution, and that there were some concerns about these proposals.

b) Bivalve Mollusc Working Group

Trevor Jones reported that the Bivalve Mollusc Working Group (BMWG) seemed to be going well, and that discussions at the group (nicknamed "BUMWAG") had been generally positive. He had been pleased to see that information from the BMWG meeting had been considered during discussions at the subsequent IFCA TSB meeting.

It was agreed that a letter should be sent to the IFCA to welcome the creation of BMWG, the action taken in respect of slipper limpets, and to raise some concerns about the proposed constitutional changes.

Action: Secretariat

9. Development opportunities

The report was accepted by the meeting and discussed.

All agreed that the development of shellfish cultivation was possible in North Wales and that this would make a contribution to EU, UK and Welsh development strategies for this sector. The potential opportunities outlined in the report were discussed in turn.

a) Conwy estuary

Rowland Sharpe reported that the Conwy mussel operators were intending to renew the old Fishery Order area. There was no clear indication of timescales for this.

b) Menai Strait East

It was noted that steps should soon be taken to renew the Fishery Order.

c) Menai Strait West

The meeting noted that this area had been considered under another agenda item. The progress that had recently been made by WG officials was welcomed again.

d) Offshore areas

James Wilson explained that there was interest in developing offshore areas, principally to establish an alternative and more stable seed mussel supply for cultivation in the Menai Strait. Trials had been conducted at an offshore rig, with settlement ropes suspended 4m below the water surface. Settlement and subsequent growth had been good, with mussels reaching a shell length of 50mm within a few months.

The Netherlands mussel industry has made the transition to this approach, and presently collects around 18,000t of seed mussels from spat collectors.

An area has been identified with potential for locating spat collectors on a commercial basis.

It was agreed that pursuing cultivation in an offshore area could be challenging, but that it would be appropriate for MSFOMA to work with the industry to encourage this. It was agreed that a letter should be sent to the Crown Estate Commissioners to register interest in the offshore area that had been identified.

Action: JW / Secretariat

e) Shellfish centre

Funding opportunities for this proposal were discussed. It was understood that WEFO may be able to provide funding and also that WG fishery officials were keen on the idea. Lewis LeVay reported that the University and WEFO were currently in discussions about funding priorities. A decision was not likely until 2016.

10. Fishery Management Issues

a) Bangor Pier

It was reported that painting was due to take place this summer.

b) *Bonamia*

The die-off of *T. chilensis* was reported to the last meeting. It was agreed that it would be important to keep looking for this host species in the area in case there were any remaining.

c) Invasive Alien Species (IAS)

Didemnum vexillum

Rowland Sharpe reported that the MMO and NRW are liaising more closely about the control of this and other IAS.

Japanese shore crab *Hemigrapsus sanguineas*

There was no further news about this species.

d) *Norovirus*

Bangor University have produced a critical review and economic analysis of the impact of regulating Norovirus. The economic analysis is underway. There was some discussion about how MSFOMA might assist with the completion of this project by assisting with dissemination of the research findings.

e) Enforcement

No issues were reported.

f) Proposed new SACs and SPAs

NRW are due to be consulting over the extension of some existing SPAs and SACs, and also creating some new sites. Consultation is due to take place between July and August 2015.

11. Any Other Business

a) Correspondence

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

b) Annual Report

This is in preparation.

c) Menai Seafood Festival

A request had been received to provide support to the Menai Seafood Festival in August.

d) Renewal of leases

It was noted that leases in the Menai Strait are due for renewal in March 2016. It was agreed that a submission for their renewal should be made in December 2015 to ensure that there were no delays.

It was agreed that a schedule for progressing this should be considered at the next meeting, and that WG should be alerted to the need to renew the leases next year.

Action: Secretariat

12. Date for next meeting

The next meeting is set for 15th September 2015 at 10am.