

Menai Strait Fishery Order Management Association

Meeting, 31st October 2011, Porth Penrhyn

Minutes

Attendance

Alan Winstone	Environment Agency Wales
Tim Croucher	Welsh Assembly Government
Hugh P Hughes	Gwynedd County Council
James Wilson	Bangor Mussel Producers Ltd
Lewis le Vay	School of Ocean Sciences, UCNW
Rowland Sharp	Countryside Council for Wales
Sue Utting	Chair

Advisors

Jim Andrews

1. Chairman's announcements

The Chair welcomed Tim Croucher of WAG to the meeting.

2. Apologies

Mike Barton	Ynys Môn County Council
Keith Andrews	Licensed hand pickers

3. Minutes of last meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 9th May 2011 were accepted.

4. Matters Arising

Most of the matters arising from the last meeting were addressed on the agenda for the current meeting.

- **Shellfish Waters Regulations** - following the last meeting, Alan Winstone had circulated information to clarify the status of the revisions that had been made to these Regulations in England.

5. Membership of the Association

Further to the update at the previous meeting, the representation by Ynys Môn County Council was still under review. An officer, Mr Mike Barton, had been invited to attend this meeting but had been unavailable.

6. Financial Update

James Wilson reported that final accounts were being prepared by the accountants, and were due for submission on 19th November.

All of the lay holders had been invoiced for their lays at the start of October, and the Association's account was in credit.

7. Fishery Activity

a) Annual Report

The annual report submitted to the Minister was discussed. It was noted that in the year ended 1st April 2011 over 12,000t of mussels were harvested from the fishery, and nearly 6,000t of seed mussels were relaid.

Concerns about water quality and non-native species were raised in the Annual report. The Association was informed that the Bangor Mussel Producers were working with the School of Ocean Sciences to research these aspects of the fishery.

It was agreed that water quality issues affected many maritime sectors, including tourism, and that better integration between sectors would be very beneficial.

b) Recent Activity

James Wilson reported that seed mussel harvesting had been carried out since the last meeting. In summary:-

- **Dee Estuary** - around 1,000t of seed mussels had been dredged from the Dee in response to a request from the Environment Agency to remove mussels that were smothering a cockle bed.
- **Morecambe Bay** - around 7,000t of seed had been harvested from Morecambe Bay. The total seed mussel resource in Morecambe Bay had been around 25,000t in 2011.
- **Caernarfon Bar** - there has been no seed mussel settlement here during 2011, and hence no fishing.

8. Handpicking licences

It was agreed that CCW should be formally consulted for approval to extent the period of the hand picking licences from 9 months of the year (1st September - 30th April) to all 12 months of the year.

Action: James Wilson

9. Enforcement issues

No enforcement issues had arisen. It was agreed that it would be appropriate to formalise the Memorandum of Understanding for enforcement with WAG to ensure that an adequate response could be made if any issues arise. A copy of the MoU should be sent to Tim Croucher so that he could progress this.

Action: James Wilson

10. Beaumaris Pier Extension

James Wilson reported that the extension to the pier had been completed. There had been some issues associated with the mooring of a barge in the wrong location and on a mussel bed during the construction work.

11. Bangor Mussel Producers' Research Plan

The Research Plan was presented to the Association for comment.

The plan stimulated a discussion about water quality issues throughout the Strait. There was interest in the relationship between Harmful Algal Blooms and bacteria in the Strait, and also a view that research into water quality should be integrated across sectors (particularly fisheries and leisure). There were also concerns about the potential consequences of the replacement of the Shellfish Waters Directive with the rather different provisions of the Water Framework Directive.

There was some discussion about how water quality issues are best progressed – either through the North Wales Shellfish Liaison Group or possibly through the Wales Coastal and Maritime Partnership.

Alan Winstone offered to look into how proposals to integrate management of water quality might be progressed using existing management bodies.

Action: Alan Winstone

The priorities and scope of the Research Plan were discussed and endorsed by the Group. It was suggested that the MSFOMA website could be used to help to disseminate reports of research, and the Association endorsed this suggestion.

It was agreed that the Chair should write to Bangor Mussel Producers to endorse this research plan.

Action: Sue Utting

12. North West IFCA: New Management Measures

The Association discussed the report of action by the NWIFCA with respect to the proposed new Morecambe Bay Fishery Order, and the restriction of vessel size in their District.

It was agreed that the Chair should write to the NWIFCA to highlight concerns about the detailed wording of the vessel size byelaw, and also to request that the Association is notified about and consulted over all future changes to byelaws that could impinge upon mussel dredging activity in the NWIFCA District.

Action: Sue Utting

13. Menai Strait (West) Fisher Order

The proposed new Fishery Order for the Western Menai Strait was currently going through the “appropriate assessment” required under the Habitats Directive. Some minor changes to the code of practice for non-native species may be required for this area, and were under discussion by CCW and the shellfish industry.

The Association had previously resolved to act as Grantee for this Order. It was felt appropriate at this point to write to the proposers of this Order to clarify the precise terms for acting in this capacity.

Action: Sue Utting

14. Fishery Management Issues

a) *Bonamia*

James Wilson reported that Cefas had recently found evidence of the shellfish parasite *Bonamia* in oysters in the western Menai Strait. This had resulted in a

ban on all shellfish exports from the entire Strait until further analysis had confirmed that it was an infection of *B. ostreae* rather than the non-native *B. exitiosa*. The movement restrictions now apply only to native oysters.

The infection was found in some native oysters that had been introduced from Loch Ryan. These oysters have been removed from the area, and the industry has also removed all native oysters from the shore in the western Strait. There should now be no hosts for the parasite. However it is a 4 year process to regain disease free status for the area.

b) Non-native species

Crepidula fornicata

The most recent survey of the Strait showed that the area has been free of this species for 5 years. Regular sampling of exports by the Netherlands Government have confirmed this finding.

Didemnum vexillum

It was reported that progress was being made with the construction of the “quarantine dock” in Holyhead marina. Laboratory experiments are being conducted to identify methods of killing *Didemnum* on vessels held within the quarantine dock.

There have been no reports of further spread of this species outside the area. CCW have tendered for contractors to eradicate *Didemnum* in Holyhead over the winter, when low temperatures should prevent cleared areas from being immediately recolonised. CCW staff and volunteers may also participate in this work. There are, however, no guarantees that the eradication work will be successful.

It was agreed that MSFOMA should offer support, both in principle if necessary financial, for the eradication of *Didemnum* from Holyhead.

Action: Sue Utting

Chinese Mitten Crabs (*Eriocheir sinensis*)

The Bangor Mussel Producers have commissioned survey work in part of the Dee Estuary to ensure that this species is not introduced into the Strait. North Wales Wildlife Trust have put in a bid for funding to survey the Dee, Conwy, Clwyd and Mawddach rivers systems to check whether the environmental conditions are suitable for this species. Cumbria Wildlife Trust are also examining the Duddon Estuary.

It was noted that information about the biology and distribution of this species is available on the Marlin website ([here](#)).

c) Norovirus

There have recently been concerns about the occurrence of Norovirus in the Menai Strait. James Wilson reported that BMP have applied for funding for a PhD to examine this issue. Research is also being carried out in partnership with Cefas.

15.Any Other Business

a) Conwy Fishery Order

It was noted that the Conwy Fishery Order had lapsed in 2008. At that time, plans had been in preparation to apply for a new Order that would protect the wild fishery and enable some cultivation of mussels in Conwy Bay. It was felt that there could be benefit to the shellfish industry in North Wales if this proposal was resurrected. MSFOMA might be able to facilitate this, in collaboration with the Conwy mussel fishermen.

It was agreed that this item should be put on the agenda for the next MSFOMA meeting.

Action: Jim Andrews

b) SAGB Membership

It was proposed and agreed that MSFOMA should join the Shellfish Association of Great Britain as a corporate Member.

Action: James Wilson.

16.Date for next meeting

The next meeting is set for 7th February 2012 at 10am.