

Menai Strait Fishery Order Management Association

Meeting, 1st November 2012, Porth Penrhyn

Minutes

Attendance

Tim Croucher	Welsh Assembly Government
Alan Winstone	Environment Agency Wales
Rowland Sharp	Countryside Council for Wales
James Wilson	Bangor Mussel Producers Ltd
Lewis le Vay	Bangor University
Keith Andrews	Licensed hand pickers
Sue Utting	Chair

Advisors

Jim Andrews	
Trevor Jones	Menai Strait (West) Fishery Order

1. Chairman's announcements

The Chair welcomed Trevor Jones to the meeting as a representative of the mussel fishermen at the western Menai Strait.

2. Apologies

No apologies had been received.

3. Minutes of last meeting

The minutes of the meeting that took place on 20th July 2012 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.

It was noted that an action arose from the previous meeting to inform the Minister about the re-election of the Chair, and that a record of this correspondence should be presented to the Association.

Action: JW

5. Membership of the Association

There were no new Members of the Association.

It was noted with regret that neither Gwynedd nor Ynys Môn County Council had appointed new members to the Association. The Chair had written to the Chief Executive of each Council to inform them of the meeting and invite attendance, and would continue to encourage representation from the Councils.

6. Financial Update

A financial report and projection was presented to the Association and accepted by the meeting.

It was agreed that it would be appropriate to review progress against the agreed Financial Plan for the Association at its next meeting. It may be appropriate to review this Plan to make provision for the Menai Strait (West) Order when it is comes into force.

Action: JW / JA

7. Revisions to Articles & Standing Orders

Revisions to the Articles and Standing Orders that would enable the Association to act as Grantee to the new Menai Strait (West) Fishery Order were discussed at the meeting.

All of the revisions were unanimously accepted, and the Directors of the Association signed a Written Resolution to formally approve them.

8. Fishery Activity

A copy of the official report of activity in the fishery during the 2011-12 financial year was submitted to the meeting.

It was noted that around 8,700t of mussels with a value of £5.5M were produced from the fishery for human consumption, most of which (8,600t) went to export markets. About 5,800t of seed mussels were relayed in the fishery for cultivation, most of which were from Morecambe Bay (4850t). The remaining 950t of seed were sourced from the Dee Estuary.

This report had been submitted to the Minister in compliance with the statutory provisions of the 1962 Fishery Order.

The report was accepted by the Association.

9. Mussel Fishing Licences 2012-13

a) Licences for hand gathering

A verbal report on the state of the mussel stock at Ballast Bank was presented to the meeting. It was agreed that the stock on the shore at Ballast Bank was not suitable for more than two licences for hand gathering to be issued in 2012-13.

b) Clarification of boundaries

It had been noted during the survey of Ballast Bank that there may be some uncertainty about the precise boundary between cultivation and hand gathering areas.

It was agreed that it would be appropriate to write to all lessees and licence holders to ensure that all parties know the official locations of boundaries to avoid any future confusion on this issue.

Action: SU

c) Future management

Two proposals were submitted to the meeting that would result in the cultivation of mussels in areas where hand gathering could currently take place. One of these areas lay to the south of the existing Area 2 and Area 5. The other lay to the north of the existing Area 1.

The proponents of these areas offered to withdraw from the meeting while the proposals were discussed. It was agreed that both could remain in the meeting to inform the discussion.

After some discussion the Association agreed that the cultivation of mussels in these areas might be appropriate, and that steps should be taken to progress these proposals.

It was recognised that the key issue to address in the development of these areas would probably be resolution of any nature conservation concerns. In view of this it was agreed that the two applicants should be asked to formalise their proposals, so that they could be considered by the Countryside Council for Wales before being formally determined by the Association.

Action: SU

10. Enforcement issues

No enforcement issues had arisen.

Both the Welsh Government and the Environment Agency representatives at the meeting indicated that their staff could be made available to assist with future enforcement / compliance issues in the Fishery Order areas in the Menai Strait.

11. Moorings in the Menai Strait

The Association considered the letter that had been sent by Lt. Col. Burkham (Retd.) seeking views on the possible construction of a marina to the north of Gallows Point near to Beaumaris. It was agreed that it would be inappropriate for the Association to make any definitive response to hypothetical proposals, and that a response to this effect should be sent to the correspondent.

Action: SU

12. NW IFCA Activity

a) Morecambe Bay Fishery Order

It was understood that the proposed new Morecambe Bay Fishery Order was being progressed by Defra officials. There will be a statutory period of consultation on the Order that would provide the Association with an opportunity to make comments on the proposals, if necessary.

b) Vessel size restrictions

There had been no news of any further progress with this byelaw.

c) Byelaw 3 - shellfish gathering

It was understood that an extraordinary meeting of the NW-IFCA Technical, Scientific & Byelaws Sub-Committee would take place on 30th November to discuss this byelaw. It was agreed that the Chair should make a written submission to the NW-IFCA, requesting that the ambiguities in the Byelaw are addressed at that meeting.

Action: SU

13. Developing the Association

a) Menai Strait (West) Fishery Order

It was reported that the application for this Order has been submitted and that inter-departmental consultations are being carried out by the Welsh Government. Feedback on these consultations would be provided to the Association in November.

Trevor Jones expressed the gratitude of the western Menai Strait shellfish farmers for the support that the Association has shown to their proposals.

b) Conwy Fishery Order

It was understood that discussions about the future long-term management of the Conwy mussel fishery had not yet reached any firm conclusions.

14. Fishery Management Issues

a) *Bonamia*

Following testing of the shellfish in the western Menai Strait it now seemed that *Bonamia* had been eradicated in that area. It would be pronounced to be free of the disease after further testing over the remaining 2 years of the 4 year quarantine period.

b) Non-native species

Didemnum vexillum

CCW reported that further eradication work had just been completed in Holyhead. Most of the *D. vexillum* in the area had been eradicated. A small colony had been found on a mooring buoy and further treatment was being carried out. CCW had directed significant resources into addressing this issue.

It was reported at a recent SAGB meeting that this species has recently colonised shellfish farming areas along the North Kent coast and is causing major concern in that area. All of the nature conservation agencies are concerned about this species.

It was understood that an application for funding under the EU LIFE "Pathways" programme is being prepared to fund work on the prevention and control of the spread of this species.

Chinese Mitten Crabs (*Eriocheir sinensis*)

No reports had been received by CCW of any occurrence of Chinese Mitten Crabs in the seed mussels from Morecambe Bay. It was noted that this species continued to spread in other areas of the UK. The Chair agreed to remind operators of the need to remain vigilant about this threat.

Action: SU

c) Norovirus

No problems have arisen with Norovirus recently in the Menai Strait. Research is being conducted into the survival of Norovirus in mussels post-harvest. This research is due to take place over the next 3 years.

It was noted that a recent ECJ ruling on the operation and effects of CSO storm outfalls might have significance for mussel cultivation in the UK.

d) Marine Conservation Zones

A response on MCZs had been submitted to Welsh Government on behalf of MSFOMA.

15. Any Other Business

a) "Single Body"

CCW and EA staff confirmed that good progress was being made with the establishment of the "single body" that was due to replace CCW, EAW and the Forestry Commission in Wales. This body was due to be in place by 1st April 2013.

It was agreed that it would be important to keep this issue under review.

b) Correspondence

It was agreed that the membership of SAGB should be renewed.

c) Biotoxin sampling

James Wilson alerted the Association to some concerns about the sampling programme for biotoxins in the Strait. These concerns had been raised by shellfish buyers in Europe. After discussion it was agreed that the Association should write to the Welsh Government about this issue.

Action: SU

16. Date for next meeting

The next meeting is set for 14th March 2013 at 2pm.