

Menai Strait Fishery Order Management Association

Meeting, 10th March 2021 Zoom Video Conference Call

Minutes

Attendance

Members

Alan Winstone*
Ioan Thomas
James Wilson*
Lewis le Vay

Chair
Gwynedd County Council
Bangor Mussel Producers Ltd
Bangor University

Observers

Michelle Billing
Julian Bray
Kate Griffith
Iwan Huws
Trevor Jones
Kim Mould
Alex Scorey

Welsh Government
Welsh Government
Natural Resources Wales
Isle of Anglesey County Council
Menai Strait (West)
BMWAG
Natural Resources Wales

Advisors

Jim Andrews*

MSFOMA Secretariat

Notes

** These individuals are also Directors of the Association*

1. Chair's announcements

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting. The Chair proposed, and it was agreed, that items 11 & 12 on the agenda should be discussed when Welsh Government officials joined the meeting as it was understood that they had other pressing engagements that would prevent them from participating in the entire meeting.

2. Apologies

Gareth Bevington
Gareth Roberts
Howard Mattocks
Keith Andrews*

Welsh Government
Bangor City Council
Beaumaris Town Council
Licensed hand pickers

3. Declarations of Interest

Because this meeting was conducted as a video conference which prevented the register of interests being circulated, the Chair asked participants in the meeting to declare an interest in each agenda item before speaking.

4. Minutes of last meeting

The minutes of the meeting that took place on the 2nd December 2020 were accepted.

5. Matters Arising

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

Some items raised at the December meeting that were not formally addressed on the agenda were discussed:-

Sand in Penrhyn Dock

James Wilson reported that the Penrhyn Estate has a new land agent who seems to be taking this issue more seriously. No remedial action has yet been taken. James agreed to keep the Association informed of progress, and it was agreed that if a letter of support was needed for addressing this issue it could be provided.

Action: JW, Secretariat

Bangor pier

The Secretariat had spoken to the Pier Master. The Pier Master reported that repair work had been largely completed, and the pier tea rooms were due to open for a take-away service by the end of March 2021. The toilets were not due to be operational until they have been connected to the public sewage system.

6. Register of Interests

No changes were recorded.

7. Financial Update

The financial report was accepted. It was noted that the Association presently has more funds in Reserves than budgeted.

The Secretariat reported that following the proposal by Cllr Mattocks (Beaumaris), the town clerk in Beaumaris had been contacted and a donation had now been made to the Town Council to assist with the renovation of the Happy Valley playground.

It was agreed that with the start of a new Financial Year, both Beaumaris Town Council and Bangor City Council should be approached again and asked to propose projects suitable for support from the Community Fund.

Action: Secretariat

The Secretariat and the Association's accountants had been working to progress VAT registration. The most recent advice from the accountant is that because all of the Association's outputs are VAT exempt, it is not possible to progress this further. Discussions are ongoing to determine if there are other options, and a further update will be provided to the next meeting.

Action: Secretariat

A proposal was set out in the report to extend the payment terms on the invoices issued on 1st April 2021 from one month to six months. This proposal was a response to the post-Brexit export problems that the shellfish industry is presently experiencing. It was unanimously agreed that this proposal should be implemented.

Action: Secretariat

8. Public Profile of the Association

The Chair and Secretariat reported that regular meetings are now being held with Dr Andy Olivier to ensure that both the Association's website and Twitter account are being used to raise the profile of the Association more effectively. The Chair and Secretariat have worked with Andy to develop a communication strategy for the next few months, as agreed at the last Association meeting.

The number of tweets and profile of the Association continues to grow steadily. It now has over 1,200 followers and had over 21,400 tweet impressions in the 28 days prior to this meeting.

A key part of the communication strategy was to create an identity for the Association and the Menai Strait. All present were asked to provide a picture of themselves and a few paragraphs of text suitable for both Tweeting and posting on the MSFOMA website, to give MSFOMA a "face".

Action: All

All present were reminded of the value of the public profile of the Association and were asked to remember to send items of interest to Andy Olivier for him to Tweet.

Action: All

9. Welsh Government Activity

Welsh Government officials Michelle Billing and Julian Bray were welcomed to the meeting.

The Secretariat's report was noted and received.

a) Meetings

A meeting of the Welsh Marine Fisheries Advisory Group (WMFAG) had taken place in December.

Trevor Jones is a member of WMFAG. He had tabled a question for the Minister about the importance of making progress with making new Fishery Orders for the Menai Strait at the December meeting of WMFAG, and it was noted that the response had been minuted.

Mr Jones reported that there was concern among WMFAG participants that the fishing industry in general was currently being impacted by both Covid and Brexit, and that Welsh Government support for the industry (both wild capture and cultivated stocks) was inadequate.

b) Consultations

It was noted that the Chair and Secretariat had responded on behalf of MSFOMA to a WG questionnaire about the future of WMFAG during February. The response was discussed and accepted.

c) WG officials

It was noted that regular engagement with WG officials has continued and that this was proving to be beneficial.

10. NW IFCA Activity

The report on recent activities of the NW IFCA was received and accepted by the meeting.

Concerns were again raised about the loss of capacity and continuity among IFCA scientific staff. It was noted that the Association had made an offer to the Authority to assist wherever possible. It was agreed that it would be appropriate to follow up this offer of assistance.

Action: Secretariat

Trevor Jones reported that he was now due to stand down as an appointee to the Authority in June, having served for 10 years. Kim Mould has applied to the Marine Management Organisation to be appointed to the Authority. It was reported that Mr Phil Capper (formerly a Fishery Officer at North Western & North Wales Sea Fisheries Committee) had recently been appointed to the Authority by the MMO. Mr Capper is a Councillor for Conwy County Borough Council and has a long-standing relationship with the mussel fisheries along the North Wales coast.

It was noted that NWIFCA is presently conducting a review of its Policies, Procedures and Governance. It has appointed a firm of consultants to carry out this review, and an online questionnaire is available for stakeholders to record their responses to the review. The Secretariat was asked to circulate information about this review to MSFOMA participants.

Action: Secretariat

11. Menai Strait East Fishery Order

The Chair introduced this item. It was noted that the Association had applied for a new Fishery Order in the eastern Menai Strait in August 2018. The existing Order is due to expire on 31st March 2022. Welsh Government officials were present to provide an update on the process of making a new Order.

Julian Bray and Michelle Billing reported that good progress was being made and that WG should be able to provide a Draft Order suitable to issue for consultation by the end of March.

It was agreed that regular meetings between WG staff and MSFOMA were helpful and that these should be maintained.

Action: Secretariat

There was some discussion of the consultation process, and the Secretariat confirmed that the lead-in time for posting advertisements in the three newspapers (Western Mail, North Wales Chronicle and Fishing News) would be 10 days, so the public consultation was likely to start shortly after Easter.

It was agreed that preparations for this public consultation should continue, and it was also agreed that there should be an informal meeting of MSFOMA participants in late March / early April when the Draft Order was available, to ensure that everyone involved with MSFOMA was familiar with the content of the Draft Order before it was in the public domain.

Action: Secretariat

12. Menai Strait West

The report was received and discussed.

The Chair and Secretariat reported that in an effort to address the delay in progress with this Fishery Order application that has been caused by uncertainties around Pacific Oysters, they had organised a series of meetings with shellfish farmers from the western Menai Strait and marine scientists from the Marine Centre Wales. Following the most recent meeting a summary of the key research questions had been drafted by Professor Lewis Le Vay from the Marine Centre.

Lewis outlined the questions:-

- **Feral Pacific Oysters** - a survey had been carried out in 2019 but not yet written up, and this could provide a useful baseline;
- **Potential for spawning** - some work had already been done on this issue and could usefully be repeated using new seawater temperature data from Menai Bridge;
- **Dispersal of larvae** - a study had been carried out for WG in 2018 and could be repeated once new information on the location of feral oysters was available; and
- **Reversion of triploids** - a desk study to compare the effectiveness of different methods for producing triploids would help to determine the level of risk associated with cultivating triploid Pacific Oysters.

All agreed that investigating these issues would be helpful. Lewis indicated that there would be benefits in collaborating with other research underway in Milford Haven. He also mentioned that Cefas were working on the spread of Pacific oyster larvae from Northern Europe to the south of the UK.

After discussing some aspects of Pacific oyster colonisation of the shoreline of other areas, and also its congener *Crassostrea angulata* (the Portuguese oyster), it was agreed that it would be appropriate to progress these areas of research. It was also agreed that it would be sensible to liaise with WG Science staff before committing to this work to ensure that there was no duplication of effort, and that the issues being investigated would help to inform policy development.

Action: Lewis Le Vay, Secretariat

Lewis indicated that he would be happy to progress this and to explore options for the Shellfish Centre to carry out this work with funding from MSFOMA. He was aware that there was a risk of a personal Conflict of Interest for him, as a Member of MSFOMA, and would liaise with colleagues to address this.

Action: Lewis Le Vay

The Secretariat reported that the next meeting to discuss this issue was scheduled for the 19th March and would provide an opportunity for further discussion.

Kate Griffith and Alex Scorey from NRW both asked if they could join the meeting on 19th March, and it was agreed that they should be invited.

Action: Secretariat

13. Funding proposals & Research Update

Professor Lewis Le Vay provided a brief update on progress with funding and research. In summary:-

- a) **Pacific Oysters** - some areas for research have been identified and are to be progressed (see Item 12 above).
- b) **Bonamia** - a survey has just been carried out in conjunction with the work on the native oyster restoration project in Conwy (the concern being the risk of spreading Bonamia as a result of this work). The results of this work are expected in the spring / early summer.
- c) **Water quality** - attention is turning to this issue given the increased importance of category "A" shellfish water classification with regard to exports to the EU. Key points were:-
 - i. Sources of effluent inputs and discharge monitoring are to be discussed with Dŵr Cymru this week.
 - ii. A virologist at the Shellfish Centre was due to start looking at sources of effluent inputs to the Menai Strait (these can be identified from the types of virus to distinguish agricultural runoff from sewage inputs).
 - iii. Nitrate Vulnerable Zone - the decision to make all of Wales a NVZ seemed likely to have a beneficial effect on coastal water quality.
 - iv. Weather events - the relationship between shellfish hygiene and weather is an area requiring further research.

14. Fishery Management Issues

a) Coastal / marine developments

i. Bangor Pier

No additional update.

ii. Sand in the dock

Further to the earlier discussion it was agreed that action should be taken to address this issue as appropriate.

Action: JW, Secretariat

b) Environmental / health issues

i. Bangor to Treborth rising main

James Wilson reported that Dŵr Cymru had been in touch to propose a meeting to discuss their strategy with respect to this outfall which has had problems recently. An update would be provided to the next meeting.

ii. Shellfish hygiene classification

No further update.

iii. Bonamia

No further update.

iv. Invasive Alien Species (IAS) / Invasive Non-Native Species (INNS)

Crepidula fornicata - Kate Griffith reported that an NRW marine scientist had found a total of 5 slipper limpets at Abermenai Point at the end of February. NRW are

currently requesting funding to carry out survey work in the Menai Strait in the new Financial Year.

Kate requested that any observations of slipper limpets are sent to her, and also that if anyone should survey an area and find no slipper limpets that this information could also be shared to help with survey planning.

Action: All

It was agreed that information about slipper limpets should be put on the MSFOMA website to help raise awareness.

Action: Secretariat

v. *Norovirus*

No further update.

15. Any Other Business

a) Correspondence

No additional correspondence had been received.

16. Dates for next meetings

The schedule of meetings for 2021 was confirmed:-

- a. Q2 2021 - 9th June
- b. Q3 2021 - 8th September
- c. Q4 2020 - 8th December [AGM]

Summary of Actions

Item	Action	Responsibility
1.	Sand in Dock - keep under review, MSFOMA to write to Penrhyn Estate if necessary..	JW / Secretariat
2.	Community Fund - seek proposals for new projects from Bangor City and Beaumaris Town Councils.	Secretariat
3.	VAT - liaise with accountants to determine if / how VAT registration can be progressed.	Secretariat
4.	Payment terms - extend payment terms to 6 months for the invoices issued on 1 st April 2021.	Secretariat
5.	Website / Twitter - provide photograph and brief resume suitable for website and Twitter	All
6.	Social media - Secretariat to send a summary of headlines from today's meeting, and all to send any items suitable for the MSFOMA Twitter feed to Andy Olivier (avdsolivier@gmail.com).	All
7.	NWIFCA - offer help with survey work if / when appropriate.	Secretariat
8.	Menai East - maintain monthly discussions with WG officials to ensure progress is maintained.	Secretariat
9.	Menai East - organise MSFOMA discussion for the end of March / early April before draft Order issued for consultation.	Secretariat
10.	Menai East - initiate formal consultation as soon as possible after receipt of draft Order.	Secretariat
11.	Menai West - liaise with Welsh Government Science about <i>C. gigas</i> research proposals.	Lewis Le Vay, Secretariat
12.	Menai West - maintain regular discussions with WG officials to ensure progress is maintained.	Secretariat
13.	Menai West - invite WG officers to next discussion on 19 th March.	Secretariat
14.	<i>Crepidula fornicata</i> - look out for slipper limpets and report sightings of any shells / individuals.	All
15.	<i>C. fornicata</i> - post information about this species on MSFOMA website.	Secretariat
16.	Date for next meeting - 9 th June 2021	Secretariat