

Menai Strait Fishery Order Management Association

Meeting, 16th September 2020 Zoom Video Conference Call

Minutes

Attendance

Members

Alan Winstone*
Ioan Thomas
Lewis le Vay

Chair
Gwynedd County Council
Bangor University

Observers

Gareth Bevington
James Wilson*
Julian Bray
Kate Griffith
Kim Mould
Michelle Billing
Trevor Jones

Welsh Government
Bangor Mussel Producers Ltd
Welsh Government
Natural Resources Wales
BMWAG
Welsh Government
Menai Strait (West)

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 immediately after the minutes of the previous meeting to allow full participation by Gareth Bevington (Welsh Government) who had a pressing appointment later in the day.

2. Apologies

Gareth Roberts
Howard Mattocks
Iwan Huws
Keith Andrews*

Bangor City Council / Gwynedd C.C.
Beaumaris Town Council
Isle of Anglesey County 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 17th June 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 June meeting were discussed:-

Sand in Penrhyn Dock

James Wilson has discussed this recently with the Estate's land agent. It was understood that the company that had been leasing the dock and unloading sand had relinquished its lease. The accumulation of sand was restricting the tidal window for accessing the dock. It was agreed that further efforts should be made to encourage removal of this sand.

Action: JW, Secretariat

Articles of Association

The Articles had been signed and returned to the Association's accountants for posting on the Companies House website. This copy of the Articles was also posted on the Association's website.

Hydrographic Office / Admiralty Charts

The Hydrographic Office have confirmed that the shellfish beds in the eastern Menai Strait are now included in the New Edition of GB Chart 1464 (Menai Strait).

Bangor pier

The Secretariat had contacted the Pier Master, who had sent his apologies for the meeting. The Secretariat would make contact to confirm the current plans for reinstating the tea rooms on Bangor Pier.

Action: Secretariat

6. Register of Interests

No changes were recorded.

7. Financial Update

The financial report was accepted. It was noted that both income and expenditure had been lower than expected for the first quarter of the year.

It was agreed that the Secretariat should send reminders to debtors for unpaid invoices.

Action: Secretariat

It was agreed that the Secretariat should contact Bangor City Council and Beaumaris Town Council and ask them to nominate possible good causes for receipt of a donation from the MSFOMA Community Fund, which would be discussed at the next meeting.

Action: Secretariat

VAT registration was discussed. It was agreed that the Association should register for VAT.

Action: Secretariat

It was agreed that in order to facilitate management of the Association's accounts, the Secretariat should apply for access to the Association's electronic banking.

Action: Secretariat

8. Public Profile of the Association

The number of tweets and profile of the Association continues to grow steadily. It now has over 1,000 followers and had over 45,000 tweet impressions in the 28 days prior to this meeting.

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

Any items can be sent directly to Andy Olivier (avdsolivier@gmail.com).

It was also agreed that appropriate 'headlines' from today's meeting would be produced and sent to Andy Olivier to use as tweets.

Action: Chair, Secretariat

9. Welsh Government Activity

The Secretariat's report was noted and received.

a) Meetings

A meeting of the Welsh Marine Fisheries Advisory Group (WMFAG) had taken place the evening before the Association meeting.

Julian Bray (WG) reported that WG staff have been working hard to maintain progress over the summer despite the challenges posed by Covid. The combined effects of Covid and Brexit were however obstacles to progress.

Trevor Jones is a member of WMFAG and expressed concern that many specific issues raised at WMFAG (notably by Mark Roberts from the scallop industry) had not been addressed.

No meetings of any other WG fisheries groups had taken place

b) Consultations

It was noted that there are no current WG consultations underway of relevance to MSFOMA.

c) Fisheries Bill

The Secretariat provided a brief summary of the concerns arising from the Fisheries Bill: the key issue being that the timescales proposed for various instruments under this new legislation (which would apply without distinction to both fisheries and aquaculture) could clash with Fishery Orders made under the Sea Fisheries (Shellfish) Act 1967.

Since the last meeting WG fisheries officials had clearly stated that it was not the intention that the Bill should interfere with Fishery Orders. Nonetheless, members of the Association noted that other WG communications (such as the Minister's responses to comments on the Brexit & Our Seas consultation) suggested that there may be a range of views within Government.

James Wilson and the Secretariat had corresponded with the Shellfish Association of Great Britain about this. SAGB had raised this issue with Defra officials, who had apparently been disinterested and had suggested that if SAGB wanted any changes to the Bill they should speak to politicians.

After some discussion of this matter it was agreed that SAGB should be asked to raise this issue with Defra officials again, and if necessary politicians should be asked to seek assurances from Ministers and / or to propose amendments to the Bill.

Action: Secretariat & James Wilson

d) WG officials

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

Kim Mould reported that WG officials had processed a request for seed mussel dredging at Caernarfon Bar very swiftly. Industry operators were very grateful for this.

10.NW IFCA Activity

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

There was great disappointment that the optimistic report received in June about abundant seed mussel resources in Morecambe Bay had not led to fishing opportunities. It was noted that this was not due to IFCA staff, but a result of objections that were made to the IFCA by shellfish gatherers from Morecambe Bay who had asserted that the seed mussel settlement in the Bay was likely to persist. Within 2 weeks of this assertion, the seed mussels had been swept away.

Trevor Jones reported that he was hoping to be able to take the IFCA's Senior Scientist out to visit the remaining mussel beds before its next meeting (on 18th September), in the hope that this could result in approval for some seed mussel dredging at these locations.

It was considered that it would be appropriate to await the outcome of the next IFCA meeting prior to responding to the IFCA on this issue. All felt that the key concern was that in the absence of a clear policy framework and set of decision rules for managing this resource, the IFCA and its staff were vulnerable to vocal local populist pressure determining the outcome of management decisions, rather than informed scientific evidence.

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. Progress with the new Order had fallen behind schedule during 2020. At a recent meeting with WG Officials, the Chair and Secretariat had been informed that further delays were likely to occur. Both the Chair and Secretariat were concerned that these delays could create a risk that a new Order might not be ready before the existing Order lapses.

Gareth Bevington stated to the meeting that Welsh Government are committed to delivering a new Order for the eastern Menai Strait on time. Past delays were regrettable, but the past could not be changed. Fishery Orders remain a priority for Welsh Government.

There was a discussion of the issues associated with the renewal of the Order and the grave implications of it not being renewed on time. Ioan Thomas expressed his dismay from a local authority perspective about the delays in the process of creating a new Order.

a) Leasing and licensing procedures

The Association recognised the need to revise and update the procedures in place for issuing leases and licences under the existing Order. The draft procedures that were presented to the meeting were endorsed. The Secretariat was asked to publish these procedures on the MSFOMA website, along with the application forms (both the PDF and electronic application form).

Action: Secretariat

b) Engagement with stakeholders

It was agreed that engagement with stakeholders was important, but there was still some uncertainty about the timetable for progress, which made it difficult to make firm plans to progress this. It was agreed that the Chair and Secretariat should work together to identify and progress opportunities for this.

Action: Chair & Secretariat

12. Menai Strait West

The report was received and discussed.

WG officials reported that WG Science & Policy staff are still investigating the issues arising from the cultivation of Pacific oysters in the Menai Strait. WG Science staff have been working on this. The policy implications of their findings are still being evaluated, particularly with regard to coordinate the policy response with other UK administrations. The regular meetings between MSFOMA and WG officials had been suspended whilst this issue was being resolved.

There was a discussion about the status of Pacific oysters in the Menai Strait. It was noted that there have been small numbers of feral Pacific oysters in the area for some time. It was understood that the Defra process for determining a policy had been held up.

Kate Griffith (NRW) offered to make enquiries among her colleagues about the NRW response to any queries on this issue.

Action: Kate Griffith

All agreed that it was important to maintain progress with this application and that regular meetings between WG officials and the Association should resume at the earliest opportunity.

Action: Secretariat

13. Funding proposals

Lewis LeVay provided a brief update on the projects being progressed by the University that are relevant to MSFOMA. Fieldwork carried out by the University had resumed in late July after lockdown measures were lifted and safe working procedures had been developed. All staff are working from home when their attendance in the workplace is not necessary.

The Menai Offshore Subsurface Shellfish System (MOSSS) trials have continued. Spat collection lines have been deployed and recovered, and work to determine the optimal location and depth for spat collection continues. The University is grateful for the practical assistance that the shellfish operators have provided for this work.

The University has recently been approached by a consortium led by Exeter University about integrating mariculture and MPAs. It would seem that the Menai Strait could provide a good case study for this project. Lewis agreed to keep MSFOMA informed about progress.

Action: Lewis Le Vay

14. Fishery Management Issues

a) Coastal / marine developments

i. Bangor Pier

The pier master had given his apologies to the meeting. It was agreed that an update should be sought from the pier master.

Action: Secretariat

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

A new leak in this sewer had been reported by NRW. Work to repair the sewer was due to start on the day of the MSFOMA meeting. James Wilson has raised concerns with NRW about the impact that a sewage leak could have on shellfish hygiene classification.

ii. Shellfish hygiene classification

The industry have been working closely with environmental health officers to try to maintain the shellfish hygiene classification of the area. During the period of the Covid-19 lockdown these officials had been unable to collect and analyse shellfish samples from the Strait.

An accelerated programme of sampling is now being carried out to try to retain the classification, but there is a real risk that because this is being carried out in the autumn (with higher rainfall and thus a greater risk of CSO discharges), the classification may suffer. This, in turn, could impact the ability to export mussels from the Menai Strait to Europe after Brexit (because the indications are that live shellfish will only be eligible for export to the EU if they have an "A" classification.

iii. Bonamia

No further update.

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

Kate Griffith reported that a subtidal survey for *Crepidula fornicata* had been planned for April, but had been prevented by the Covid-19 lockdown. NRW staff have looked for specimens in intertidal areas, but had not found shells or living individuals.

In lieu of a subtidal survey, NRW have asked SeaSearch for any records of *C. fornicata* in the area.

The Secretariat reported that he had circulated information about reporting occurrences of *Crepidula fornicata*. All were asked to look out for shells and individuals around the Strait.

Action: All

It was agreed that it would be useful to share information about the identification of *C. formicata* on the Association's Twitter feed.

Action: KG / Secretariat

v. *Norovirus*

Lewis Le Vay reported that the University's Shellfish Centre is collaborating with SAGB to host an online conference about the proposed regulation of Norovirus in shellfish. The conference is due to take place on the 14th October 2020. Details about the conference, including registration details are available at the Shellfish Centre website ([here](#)).

vi. *Shellfish hygiene*

No updates

15. Any Other Business

a) Correspondence

No additional correspondence had been received.

16. Dates for next meetings

The dates for the remaining meetings in 2020 were confirmed as:-

- a. Q4- 2nd December 2020 [AGM]

Summary of Actions

Item	Action	Responsibility
1.	Sand in Dock -contact Penrhyn Estate to raise further concerns about this issue & propose site visit.	JW / Secretariat
2.	Bangor pier - ask pier master for update about tea room proposal.	Secretariat
3.	Finances - send reminders to debtors.	Secretariat
4.	Community Fund - invite local authorities to apply for funding up to a total of £2,000 this FY.	Secretariat
5.	VAT - progress registration of Association	Secretariat
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.	Fisheries Bill - continue discussion about potential impact of the Bill with SAGB.	Secretariat
8.	Menai East - publish new procedures and application forms for leases & licences on MSFOMA website.	Secretariat
9.	Menai East - maintain monthly discussions with WG officials to ensure progress is maintained.	Secretariat
10.	Menai East - progress stakeholder engagement as far as possible.	Secretariat
11.	Menai West - enquire about NRW input to <i>C. gigas</i> discussions.	Kate Griffith
12.	Menai West - maintain regular discussions with WG officials to ensure progress is maintained.	Secretariat
13.	MPA & Aquaculture project - keep MSFOMA informed about progress.	Lewis Le Vay
14.	Look out for <i>Crepidula fornicata</i> and report sightings of any shells / individuals.	All
15.	Share information about <i>C. fornicata</i> ID for circulation on the MSFOMA Twitter feed.	Kate Griffiths & Secretariat.
16.	Date for next meeting - 2 nd December 2020	Secretariat