

Menai Strait Fishery Order Management Association

Meeting, 8th September 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

Alex Scorey
Howard Mattocks
Kate Griffith
Kim Mould
Michelle Billing

Natural Resources Wales
Beaumaris Town Council
Natural Resources Wales
BMWAG
Welsh Government

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 (Menai Strait East and West respectively) should be discussed at the start of the meeting when Welsh Government officials were available, so that they could leave the meeting to attend to other pressing engagements that would prevent them from participating in the entire meeting.

2. Apologies

Gareth Bevington
Gareth Roberts
Iwan Huws
Julian Bray
Keith Andrews*
Trevor Jones

Welsh Government
Bangor City Council
Isle of Anglesey County Council
Welsh Government
Licensed hand pickers
Menai Strait (West)

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 9th June 2021 were accepted, subject to minor corrections.

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 March 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. It was understood that they were looking for a contractor to carry out dredging work in the dock. This issue would be kept under review.

Action: JW, Secretariat

Beumaris Pier User Group

The Secretariat confirmed that Iwan Huws had circulated the ABPmer powerpoint presentation following the last meeting and agreed to circulate it again.

Action: Secretariat

6. Register of Interests

The report was received. The Association noted that improvements had been made to the Association's website to make the role and interests of each participant in MSFOMA more transparent.

All agreed to check their Statement of Interests on the MSFOMA website (https://www.msfoma.org/?page_id=478) and confirm that it is accurate.

Action: All

7. Financial Update

The financial report was accepted. It was noted that income in the past quarter and the Association's Reserve fund were presently both lower than budgeted. This was a consequence of implementing the decision taken in March 2021 to extend payment terms for leases in the first half of the current FY. Payment on these leases would be due at the end of September.

It was agreed that both Beumaris Town Council and Bangor City Council should be approached again and asked to propose projects suitable for support from the Community Fund.

Action: Secretariat

8. Public Profile of the Association

The Chair and Secretariat reported that regular meetings continue to be 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 number of tweets and profile of the Association continues to grow steadily. It now has over 1,300 followers.

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

The Secretariat's report was noted and received. There had been no meetings of WG fisheries groups, nor any consultations or engagement with WG officials outside of the ongoing work on renewing the two Fishery Order in the Strait.

10. NW IFCA Activity

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

Kim Mould (MSFOMA representative on the NW IFCA Bivalve Mollusc Working Group) reported that there had been no meetings of that group. He had worked closely with NWIFCA staff to assist with mussel bed inspections in Morecambe Bay, and that a fishery for seed mussels had briefly opened. This had allowed operators to dredge several hundred tonnes of seed mussels for relaying in the Strait. The opportunity for further dredging had been lost owing to some delays opening the initial fishery and changes in the character of the mussel beds (particularly the loss of mussel mud) which had made the remaining mussels unsuitable for dredging.

It was noted that the main challenge for seed mussel dredging in Morecambe Bay was that NWIFCA and Natural England staff seemed to be operating in a policy vacuum which was causing delays in the process that resulted in lost fishing opportunities. It was felt that NWIFCA should be encouraged to resume work on implementing the mussel management plan for Morecambe Bay which had nearly been finalised several years ago but had not yet been adopted.

Action: Chair & Secretariat

It was further agreed that NWIFCA scientific staff should be formally thanked for the work that they had done during the Covid-19 lockdown and whilst short-staffed to progress the opening of the seed mussel fishery.

Action: Chair & Secretariat

11. Menai Strait East Fishery Order

The Chair introduced this item. The Association had conducted a public consultation on the proposed new Fishery Order between 8th April and 8th May 2021. A total of 24 responses to the consultation had been received by Welsh Government and MSFOMA. Of these, just 8 were objections (4 sent to both MSFOMA and Welsh Government, and 4 sent to Welsh Government alone).

It had been agreed at the last meeting of the Association that the Chair and Secretariat should liaise with the four parties that had objected to MSFOMA. An update on progress with these discussions was provided in the report to the Association. In summary, meetings had been held with the 3 objectors that had responded to the Association's invitation.

The Chair and Secretariat reported that the discussions with the objectors had been good natured and constructive. The objectors had all raised the same central concern, which was that the proposed new Fishery Order would present a risk to the yacht moorings situated along the Anglesey coastline in the Menai Strait (specifically in Beaumaris Bay and in the vicinity of The Gazelle). Each of these objectors indicated that their objection would be addressed by removing these areas from the proposed Fishery Order.

After careful consideration of the reassurances provided by the Chair and Secretariat that the new Order would have no impact on the moorings, each objector indicated that they would prefer to sustain their objection rather than withdraw it.

The Chair convened a discussion on 5th August with MSFOMA participants to consider the possibility of accepting this boundary change proposed by the objectors. After careful consideration of the issues raised by the objectors, the majority view of this meeting was that their objections did not warrant any change to the proposed boundary of the new Fishery Order. To expedite progress with the Order the Chair wrote to the Minister on 7th August to inform her of the outcome of these discussions and to ask her to make a determination on the Association's application for a new Fishery Order.

Michelle Billing (WG) provided an update on progress in the period since the Chair had written to the Minister. She and her colleagues were in the process of drafting Ministerial Advice, which would be submitted by the end of September.

If the remainder of the process could be completed without a Public Inquiry it was anticipated that the new Order would be in place by the end of March 2022. WG legal had advised that if the Fishery Order application required a Public Inquiry, this would have both cost and time implications. A financial cost of around £20k would be likely, and also a delay for a period of several months so that the new Order would not then be in place by the time the existing Order expired.

Michelle advised that WG had been in contact with the four objectors who had only responded to WG. No further correspondence had been received from 3 of these objectors, and the fourth had written to reiterate their original views.

It was agreed that the close working relationship between MSFOMA and WG should be maintained, with regular meetings between Michelle, the Chair and the Secretariat.

Action: Chair & Secretariat

It was further agreed that MSFOMA should work with WG and NRW officials to progress the Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) of the "Designated Area" under the new Fishery Order within which leased areas would be located; and also the HRA for the leases.

Action: Secretariat, NRW, WG

It was also agreed that it would be appropriate for the Association to check with lawyers that the existing leases to ensure that they remained up-to-date with respect to relevant legislation.

Action: Secretariat

The Association considered the process for issuing new leases under the existing and proposed new Fishery Order. Comments were invited on the proposed process.

Action: All

It was agreed that the Chair and Secretariat should produce a flowchart to check that the process for issuing new leases covered all foreseeable circumstances.

Action: Chair & Secretariat

12. Menai Strait West

It was reported that since the last Association meeting, further work had been carried out to develop the research proposal for Pacific Oysters, which was intended to inform the concerns about cultivation of this species in the western Strait.

Lewis Le Vay summarised the scope of the research proposals, which had been developed through a series of meetings hosted by MSFOMA. Partners for progressing the work had been identified, and formal agreements between the Shellfish Centre and industry partners would be drawn up and circulated.

Action: Lewis Le Vay

There was some discussion with NRW representatives present about the Welsh policy on Pacific Oyster cultivation within and around protected areas. NRW staff stressed that although Welsh Government would determine its own policy with regard to Pacific Oysters this would have to be informed by science and consistent with the policy position elsewhere in the UK.

Lewis also reported that the Shellfish Centre had been in discussions with Dŵr Cymru and Intertek about the proposed water quality in the eastern Menai Strait. The purpose of the work proposed by the Shellfish Centre was to look in more detail at water and shellfish samples in the area with a view to determining the sources of effluent that may be affecting shellfish hygiene classification. Dŵr Cymru were very keen to progress this work, and all present offered their support for this work.

It was further agreed that the sequence of regular meetings with NRW, the Shellfish Centre and WG staff should be continued to ensure that progress is maintained with this Fishery Order application.

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** - James Wilson reported that he had been in touch with Cefas about the size of the current designated area, which extends from Conwy to Malltraeth and Llandwrog beyond the western end of the Menai Strait. Cefas had indicated that any change to this boundary would take time. JW is will continue to pursue this issue and will update the Association.

Action: JW

- c) **Spat collectors / MOSSS** - work was ongoing, but had been impacted by Covid. EMFF funding was due to end in October but an extension was being

sought as a response to the delays.

- d) **Water quality** - an update had been provided under item 12 above.

Lewis Le Vay and the Chair agreed to hold discussions outside the meeting about the value of this research to the local Rivers Trust.

Action: Lewis Le Vay, Chair

- e) **Offshore water quality** - this was a new area of research, prompted by discussions between Deepdock and Dŵr Cymru about the potential effect of effluent discharge on water quality in some offshore shellfish cultivation sites being considered by Deepdock.

A workshop was due to be held in the autumn for this work, Lewis Le Vay agreed to invite all present to it.

Action: Lewis Le Vay

14. Fishery Management Issues

a) **Coastal / marine developments**

i. **Bangor Pier**

No additional update.

ii. **Sand in the dock**

As reported earlier, the Penrhyn Estate were understood to be looking into this issue.

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 further records had been found and that NRW had produced a video to aid identification of this species. This would be made available to MSFOMA for distribution.

Action: Kate Griffith

All were reminded to keep an eye out for slipper limpets in the area.

Action: All

James Wilson confirmed that the Code of Conduct for invasive species had been implemented for the recent seed mussel movements into the Strait from Morecambe Bay.

Didemnum vexillum - this species was still present in Holyhead but in lower abundance owing to the storm damage to the marina several years ago. NRW were

keeping this under review. Trials of the use of ultrasound to remove this species had been scheduled.

- v. **Norovirus**
No further update.

15. Any Other Business

a) Correspondence

No additional correspondence had been received.

16. Dates for next meetings

- a. Q4 2021 - 8th December [AGM]

Proposed meeting dates for 2022:-

- a. Q1 2022 - 31st March
(Revised proposal - to mark the end of the old Order and the start of the new one)
- b. Q2 2022 - 8th June
- c. Q3 2022 - 7th September
- d. Q4 2020 - 148th December [AGM]

Summary of Actions

Item	Action	Responsibility
1.	Sand in Dock - keep under review.	James Wilson & Secretariat
2.	Beaumaris Pier User Group - (re)circulate presentation about review of current uses.	Secretariat
3.	Register of Interests - review current Statement of interests on MSFOMA website (https://www.msfoma.org/?page_id=478) and confirm it is accurate.	All
4.	Community Fund - seek proposals for new projects from Bangor City and Beaumaris Town Councils.	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 - encourage adoption of Morecambe Bay Mussel Management Plan.	Chair & Secretariat
8.	NWIFCA - thank scientific staff for their work to survey seed mussel beds in Morecambe Bay.	Chair & Secretariat
9.	Menai East - maintain regular discussions with WG officials to ensure progress is maintained.	Chair & Secretariat
10.	Menai East - work with WG officials to progress HRAs of "Designated Area" and new leases.	Chair, Secretariat, NRW & WG
11.	Menai East - check that lease wording remains appropriate with lawyers.	Secretariat
12.	Menai East - produce flow chart to check procedure for renewing existing leases & issuing new leases.	Chair & Secretariat
13.	Menai West - draw up formal agreements between Shellfish Centre and partner organisations.	Lewis Le Vay
14.	Menai West - maintain regular discussions with partners to ensure progress is maintained.	Secretariat
15.	<i>Bonamia</i> - James Wilson to liaise with Cefas about boundary of designated area and prospects for change.	JW
16.	Water quality - Shellfish Centre to work with Dŵr Cymru and Bangor Mussel Producers to progress microbial source tracking project.	Lewis Le Vay, James Wilson, Kim Mould, Trevor Jones
17.	Water quality - consider possible partnership with Rivers Trust	Chair, Lewis Le Vay
18.	Water quality - Lewis Le Vay to invite all to upcoming workshop about offshore water quality.	Lewis Le Vay
19.	<i>Crepidula fornicata</i> - look out for slipper limpets and report sightings of any shells / individuals.	All
20.	<i>C. fornicata</i> - provide video on identification for publication on internet.	Kate Griffith
21.	Date for next meeting - 8 th December 2021	Secretariat