

Menai Strait Fishery Order Management Association

Meeting, 20th September 2023
Zoom Video Conference Call

Minutes

Attendance

Members

Alan Winstone*	Chair
James Wilson*	Bangor Mussel Producers Ltd
Kim Mould*	Myti Mussels Ltd
Ioan Thomas	Cyngor Gwynedd
Lewis le Vay	Bangor University

Observers

David Salisbury	Ynys Môn County Council
Howard Mattocks	Beaumaris Town Council
Rowland Sharp	Natural Resources Wales
Trevor Jones	Menai Strait (West) Applicants

Advisors

Jim Andrews*	MSFOMA Secretariat
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Notes

* These individuals are also Directors of the Association

1. Chair's announcements

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

2. Apologies

Alex Scorey	Natural Resources Wales
Emily Payne	Dŵr Cymru /
Euryn Roberts	Natural Resources Wales
José Constantino†	Welsh Government
Julian Bray	Welsh Government
Michelle Billing	Welsh Government
Nia Jones	North Wales Wildlife Trust
Rob Floyd	Welsh Government
Ruth Iliffe	Royal Yachting Association Cymru

3. Declarations of Interest

The Chair asked participants in the meeting to declare any interest in each agenda item before speaking.

4. Minutes of last meeting

The minutes of the meeting that took place on the 27th of April 2023 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 there had been no further progress with removal of the sand that had accumulated in the dock and was restricting access.

It was agreed that this issue should be kept under review.

Action: JW, Secretariat

Bonamia

There had been no change to the Bonamia designated area, nor did this seem likely.

Water quality

This matter was due to be discussed under item 8 on the agenda.

Public profile of the Association

This item was due to be discussed under item 9 on the agenda.

At the last meeting of it had been suggested that the MSFOMA website would benefit from updates to better link to the work of participants. In the absence of any updates from participants no changes had been made - all were invited to send information that would be suitable to the Secretariat.

Action: All, Secretariat

Menai Strait West

The response of the Ministerial Advisory Group to the Chair's presentation about Pacific oyster cultivation is considered under item 10 on the agenda. It appeared that there was no reasonable prospect of progress in the short term.

Trevor Jones felt that the Fishery Order would be beneficial for mussel cultivation - the area that he had used for this had worked well, and the areas near Brynsiencyn were also viable.

An update had not been sent to the prospective tenants of the Order. It was agreed that all prospective tenants were aware of the situation and that this was not necessary. It would be appropriate to revisit the Association's strategy for this Order and consider whether a "mussels only" Order might be appropriate.

Action: Secretariat

Commented [JA1]: Alan - does this seem OK? It is a logical means to keep this alive and pressure on WG.

Species ID training / Invasive Alien Species

North Wales Wildlife Trust had reported their plans for running an species ID course with an emphasis on IAS identification at the last meeting. It was recognised that this was important. NWWT would be asked to provide an update on this.

Action: Secretariat

There was no news of any *Crepidula fornicata* sightings. Trevor Jones reported that he had been looking on the shore at both ends of the Strait and around the Anglesey coastline. Lewis LeVay and Rowland Sharp reported of a proposal to use environmental DNA to detect the presence of *Crepidula*, and also to look at the potential movement of larvae in the Strait.

Rowland Sharp (NRW) offered to confirm the formal process for reporting sightings of *Crepidula* and other IAS.

Action: Rowland Sharp¹

6. Register of Interests

The Chair reminded all participants to check their Statement of Interests on the MSFOMA website (https://www.msfoma.org/?page_id=478) to confirm whether it is accurate.

7. Financial Update

The meeting accepted the report that had been submitted about the Association's finances. Performance against the current financial plan was noted.

It was agreed that the Chair and Secretariat should work with the Association's accountants to prepare year-end accounts for 2022-23 for submission to the AGM in December.

Action: Secretariat & Chair

8. Water quality

The Chair introduced the report on shellfish hygiene classifications in the Menai Strait, which are critical to the financial viability of mussel farming here.

It was noted that this issue had been discussed at the last Association meeting, when a high *E. coli* sample from one Representative Monitoring Point (RMP) had triggered an "Action State" response in December 2022.

The meeting noted that high *E. coli* results had been recorded again, this time for all six of the RMPs in the eastern Strait on August 14th 2023. These samples had been preceded by a period of exceptional rainfall. An "Investigation State" had been triggered by the Local Action Group of local authority environmental health officers in response to this. The Chair had prepared a detailed report which showed that there had been exceptional rainfall over the 48 hours prior to the 14th August and correspondingly high river flows. This report was presented to the meeting, and had been submitted to the LAG by the Chair. All present thanked the Chair for his swift and detailed response.

It was agreed that these results warranted consideration at a meeting of the LAG. The Chair and Secretariat had already proposed this, and it was understood that this was likely to take place in early November.

¹ Rowland advised that these can be submitted to iRecord here: <https://irecord.org.uk/enter-casual-record>. Information (pictures and information of the area searched) can also be sent to the NRW participants in MSFOMA, rowland.sharp@cyfoethnaturiolcymru.gov.uk and alexander.scorey@cyfoethnaturiolcymru.gov.uk.

There was some discussion of the practical nature of the sampling programme. Key points raised were to question the wisdom of proceeding to take samples after such a period of high rainfall, particularly at a time of year when no shellfish harvesting is taking place. Cefas records show that for one location (West of Bangor Pier) the *E. coli* count fell from 7,900 *E. coli* / 100g on the 14th August to 20 *E. coli* / 100g on the 24th August. No follow-up samples had been taken at other locations, apparently because the contractor used by Gwynedd and Ynys Môn County Council was unavailable.

The effect of these results on ongoing shellfish classification was discussed. It was noted that some of the results were “statistically anomalous” and that they should be discounted from use in determining classification results. It was noted, however, that such results appear to remain on the Cefas record, and that if they are used in subsequent calculations these results could mask future statistical anomalies. It was agreed that it was important to get clarification from the FSA about how these anomalous records would be used in future determinations.

Action: Chair, Secretariat

Alan Winstone clarified that the available evidence shows that the *E. coli* are from Waste water Treatment Works (WwTW) and Combined Sewage Outflows (CSOs) which can discharge untreated sewage when surface water runoff is excessive. Lewis LeVay mentioned that modelling can help to focus the future investment made by Dŵr Cymru on the WwTW in the Menai Strait catchment. It was felt to be appropriate to ask the LAG and Dŵr Cymru about any progress with modelling and confirm their findings.

Action: Chair, Secretariat

It was noted that Dŵr Cymru are installing a larger holding tank at the Beach Road CSO to reduce the frequency of discharges of untreated effluent.

The Chair reported that Emily Payne of Dŵr Cymru had given her apologies for this meeting several months ago, and that there would be an opportunity to discuss the plans for upgrading WwTW and CSOs at the December Association meeting.

James Wilson noted that the review of the Sanitary Survey for the Menai Strait was several years overdue. This document specifies the sampling methodology and the location of RMPs. The Food Standards Agency (FSA) had promised at the LAG meeting in March 2023 that a draft would be available for comment within 2-3 months. This draft had not yet been produced.

Operators noted that the location of RMPs at present does not align with the location of mussel harvesting areas, and that the sampling methods used (gathering mussels by hand at low water) had been demonstrated to give higher results than obtained from mussels dredged at high water, which is how mussels are gathered commercially.

All agreed that the FSA should be asked to provide an update on progress with the sanitary survey, and that the LAG should also be asked to put this on the agenda for their next meeting.

Action: Chair, Secretariat

Ioan Thomas remarked that this issue related to work carried out by officers of his authority, Cyngor Gwynedd. He asked for sight of correspondence between MSFOMA and these officers to ensure he was fully briefed in all discussion.

Action: Secretariat

9. Public Profile of the Association

The Chair and Secretariat reported that Dr Andy Olivier had been continuing to use Twitter to raise the profile of the Association. Andy had recently been in touch to ask if this service was still required.

It was agreed that the driver for improving the public profile of the Association had been to raise awareness of, and support for, the renewal of the Menai East Fishery Order. Now that a new Order was in place, this need had gone. The Association was also engaging in more "traditional" activities such as building the Menai Strait Partnership Forum.

It was agreed that it would be appropriate to contact Andy to thank him for the support he has given MSFOMA over several years, and to terminate the contract with him for this work.

Action: Chair, Secretariat

It was confirmed that the Associations account with X, formerly known as Twitter, would remain active, so that any news items could still be circulated by that medium if necessary.

10. Welsh Government Activity

The Secretariat's report was noted and received.

The Chair referred to the minutes of the meeting of the Ministerial Advisory Group for Welsh Fisheries (MAGWF) that he had attended in April. He had presented a paper to the meeting about the challenges facing Pacific oyster cultivation in Wales to that meeting. He had highlighted in particular how progress with shellfish cultivation in the western Menai Strait has stalled despite lots of work by MSFOMA and the shellfish industry over many years.

The Chair's recollection had been that Gareth Bevington, Deputy Director for Marine & Fisheries, had agreed to propose a way forward to the next meeting. However the minutes showed that WG had taken an action to "*consider a policy on Pacific Oysters*" which did not match his recollection. He would be pressing for a firmer commitment on this important matter at the next MAGWF meeting in October.

Action: Chair

Commented [JA2]: Alan - is this both firm enough and diplomatic enough? My notes say "AW not happy with WG minute"!

The Chair also reported that he had been asked to comment on a draft Ministerial Statement on a strategic approach to fisheries and aquaculture. His main input had been to try to raise the profile of aquaculture. This document was not yet available for public comment, the Chair will circulate it to all when it is published for consultation.

Action: Chair

James Wilson commented that MAGWF had been set up following a Senedd resolution. He noted that concerns had been raised at MAGWF about the lack of resources available to make progress. It was clear that either the resources or commitment to build a better informed and more inclusive management regime were lacking. JW was concerned that MAGWF may not be able to meet the requirements of the Senedd resolution, and that this issue should be raised with the Minister. The Chair agreed with these concerns and felt that the time to raise them would be after the next MAGWF meeting in October, which would show whether this group and WG in general were capable of making a difference.

Action: Chair

The Chair agreed to provide an update on progress at MAGWF for the next MSFOMA meeting.

Action: Chair

11. NW IFCA Activity

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

It was noted that there had been a good seed mussel settlement in the NWIFCA District this year. The IFCA had opened some areas of seed mussels for dredging in the mouth of the Wyre estuary. They had not opened the larger and more easily dredge seed mussel beds known as "South America skear" and the "Falklands" in the northern part of Morecambe Bay. This was because of concerns that dredging might adversely impact seabed habitats, specifically cobbles.

Trevor Jones indicated that he had visited South America skear during August and September. There had been abundant seed mussels in August that were mostly gone in September. He had also visited the skears in the Wyre where dredging had been confined to specific areas. He could not understand how it had not been possible to find a similar way to permit at least some dredging at South America.

The difficulty gaining reliable access to seed mussels when they are available in the NWIFCA District remains a major concern for the mussel farmers in the Strait.

It was agreed that MSFOMA should continue to encourage NWIFCA to resume work on the Morecambe Bay Mussel Management Plan. It was further agreed that it would be useful for the Chair and Secretariat to meet with the new CEO of NWIFCA to raise his awareness of the importance of this sector to UK aquaculture and to try to build a constructive relationship.

Action: Secretariat

Trevor Jones noted that there may be some seed mussels at Caernarfon Bar this year. He, James Wilson and Kim Mould would be working with Welsh Government and NRW to see if a seed mussel fishery could be permitted here. The Chair and Secretariat offered to provide whatever support was necessary to progress this.

Action: Chair, Secretariat

12. All Party Parliamentary Group: Shellfish Aquaculture

James Wilson reported that there had been no recent meetings of this group. He understood that its Chair had changed, and that there would be further meetings.

Updates will be provided at future MSFOMA meetings.

Action: JW, Secretariat

13. Menai Strait East Fishery Order

It was noted that the only outstanding area of work for this Order was to review the "Managed Areas" around reef features. It was considered that in view of the low level of cultivation activity and the desire to minimise expenditure, this was not presently a priority and should be held in abeyance.

14. Menai Strait West

This matter had been discussed under Matters Arising. There was no further discussion.

15. Menai Strait Partnership Forum

The Chair and Secretariat provided an update on the “Menai Strait Partnership Forum” (MSPF) that had been set up in collaboration with the North Wales Rivers Trust, and using funding from the Welsh Government’s Coastal Capacity Fund.

Since the last MSFOMA meeting, the “Advisory Panel” had met, and had confirmed support for progressing this initiative. In response the Chair and Secretariat have worked with officers from NWRT to prepare a bid to fund a project officer to carry forward this initiative for a period of 18 months. The bid has been submitted to the Ynys Môn Local Nature Partnership. A decision on funding was due to be taken during October.

The Chair and Secretariat agreed to work with NWRT to progress this initiative and report back to future MSFOMA meetings.

Action: Chair, Secretariat

16. Fishery Management Issues

a) Coastal / marine developments

i. Bangor Pier
No additional update.

ii. Sand in the dock
This was discussed at the start of the meeting (see Matters Arising).

b) Environmental / health issues

i. Shellfish hygiene classification
This was discussed earlier in the meeting (see item 9).

ii. Bonamia
This was discussed at the start of the meeting (see Matters Arising).

iii. Invasive Alien Species (IAS) / Invasive Non-Native Species (INNS)
This was discussed at the start of the meeting (see Matters Arising).

iv. Norovirus
No further update.

17. Any Other Business

a) Correspondence

No additional correspondence had been received.

18. Dates for next meetings

Meeting dates were agreed for 2023:-

a. 14th December 2023 [also AGM] (in person, not virtual)

Summary of Actions

Item	Action	Responsibility
1.	Sand in Dock - keep under review.	James Wilson & Secretariat
2.	Update MSFOMA website to include more information about the work of participants.	All, Secretariat
3.	Menai West - revisit proposals, consider if "mussels only" might work.	Chair & Secretariat
4.	Ask NWWT for update on species ID workshop	Secretariat
5.	Confirm process for reporting sightings of Invasive Alien Species	Rowland Sharp ²
6.	Prepare statement of accounts for AGM approval	Chair, Secretariat
7.	Ask FSA how "statistically anomalous" results are discounted from future calculations of statistical anomalies.	Chair, Secretariat
8.	Ask LAG and Dŵr Cymru about the use of modelling to identify sources of E.coli to inform investment in WwTW / CSO upgrades	Chair, Secretariat
9.	Ask FSA about progress with the review of the Sanitary Survey.	Chair, Secretariat
10.	Provide Ioan Thomas with update on correspondence between MSFOMA and Cyngor Gwynedd	Secretariat
11.	Group of MSFOMA participants to work together to determine best strategy for MSFOMA to influence local / national agenda on water quality and shellfish hygiene.	Chair, Lewis Le Vay, James Wilson, Secretariat.
12.	Press WG for a firmer commitment to develop a policy on Pacific Oyster cultivation	Chair
13.	Circulate information about consultation on new Ministerial Statement on fisheries and aquaculture when it is released.	Chair
14.	If necessary, raise concerns with Minister about resourcing / support for MAGWF in context of Senedd resolution.	Chair
15.	NWIFCA - encourage adoption of Morecambe Bay Mussel Management Plan.	Chair & Secretariat
16.	NWIFCA - arrange to meet with new CEO.	Chair & Secretariat
17.	Caernarfon Bar - provide support as necessary to support WG & NRW authorisation of dredging.	Chair & Secretariat
18.	APPG - provide update on progress to next meeting.	JW, Secretariat
19.	Work with NWRT to progress the Menai Strait Partnership Forum and report back.	Chair & Secretariat
20.	<i>Crepidula fornicata</i> - look out for slipper limpets and report sightings of any shells / individuals.	All
21.	Date for next meeting - 14th December 2023 (in person meeting, preceded by AGM)	All

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