

Menai Strait Fishery Order Management Association

Meeting, 14th December 2023
Marine Centre Wales

Minutes

Attendance

Members

Alan Winstone*
James Wilson*
Kim Mould*
Lewis le Vay

Chair
Bangor Mussel Producers Ltd
Myti Mussels Ltd
Bangor University

Observers

David Salisbury
Howard Mattocks
Rowland Sharp
Trevor Jones
Emily Payne

Ynys Môn County Council
Beaumaris Town Council
Natural Resources Wales
Menai Strait (West) Applicants
Dŵr Cymru / Welsh Water

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.

2. Apologies

Alex Scorey
Euryrn Roberts
Ioan Thomas
José Constantino†
Julian Bray
Michelle Billing
Nia Jones
Rob Floyd
Ruth Iliffe

Natural Resources Wales
Natural Resources Wales
Cyngor Gwynedd
Welsh Government
Welsh Government
Welsh Government
North Wales Wildlife Trust
Welsh Government
Royal Yachting Association Cymru

It was noted that Cllr Gareth Roberts from Bangor City Council had neither attended a meeting or submitted apologies for some time. It was agreed that Bangor City Council should be asked to confirm their representation.

Action: Secretariat

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 20th of September 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 September 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

Public Profile of the Association

The Chair reported that following agreement at the last meeting that this was no longer necessary, the rolling contract with Dr Andy Olivier to raise the public profile of the Association had been terminated.

Species ID training / Invasive Alien Species

Rowland Sharp gave a brief update on the species ID workshop that had been run by North Wales Wildlife Trust. Training had been provided to existing shore searchers, with a focus on Pacific oyster and slipper limpets (*Crepidula fornicata*). Searches were being conducted twice per month and sightings would be reported to NRW¹.

There was no news of any *Crepidula fornicata* sightings.

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

¹ 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.

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

Shellfish farmers confirmed that economic conditions were very difficult and that MSFOMA's efforts to keep costs down were very welcome.

8. Shellfish hygiene

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

The recent decision by the FSA to downgrade the results of the classification zone for the Cegin Channel RMP from a "Seasonal A/B" to a "Long Term B" was discussed. The shellfish farmers had written to the FSA to request a different, shorter, seasonal classification.

It was agreed that it would be appropriate for MSFOMA to support this request to re-establish a seasonal "A" classification for one or more classification zones in the Strait.

Action: Chair, Secretariat

The revised "Sanitary Survey" was discussed. Following a request from the Chair, the Local Action Group was due to be meeting to consider responses to the Sanitary Survey on the 16th January 2024.

It was agreed that the Chair and Secretariat should work with mussel farmers to prepare a response to the FSA consultation by the deadline of the 19th January 2024.

Action: Chair, Secretariat

9. Dŵr Cymru / Welsh Water Update

The Chair welcomed Emily Payne, the River Quality Liaison Manager from Dŵr Cymru to the meeting.

Emily gave a presentation to the meeting about the work that Dŵr Cymru are carrying out to improve the waste water treatment facilities around the Menai Strait. Key points in this presentation were:-

- The Menai Shellfish Scheme, funded under the current AMP7 programme, has identified the two assets that have the greatest impact on water quality: Bangor Beach Road, and Treborth.
- Work on upgrading Bangor Beach Road is due to start in early 2024. It is anticipated that this will reduce overflow discharges from the current average of 84 per year to less than 10.
- Treborth is due to be upgraded in 2025 under AMP8. The objective is again to reduce discharges to 10 or fewer per year.
- Dŵr Cymru are working to implement the Stormwater Overflow Assessment Framework (SOAF) across all assets. The Dŵr Cymru focus is on actual outcomes and not just reductions of the number of spill per year.

- Dŵr Cymru were due to be launching a storm overflow map to provide up-to-date information on where overflows were happening, and the recent history for each overflow. There are over 2,300 outfalls in Wales. This map was due to be launching for 415 outfalls (those affecting shellfish waters, bathing waters, and high amenity value swimming areas) in early 2024 .

The progress that Dŵr Cymru has made and the proposed investment was welcomed. The interactive map in particular was welcomed. Emily agreed to circulate the URL once this was published in January.

Action Emily Payne²

There was some discussion about the presentation. Key points raised included:

- Is it possible to present information about volume of effluent discharged as well as the frequency of overflows? Emily noted that this could result in comparison of non-equivalent effluents: the input of UV treated waste water could not be compared to effluent that had not been UV treated.
- How the asset assessment approach under SOAF was affected by nature conservation designations in different locations, and whether these designations could be obstacles to improving water quality.
- That separating clean surface water runoff from sewage effluent would reduce overall effluent volume and reduce the number of overflow events.

There was some discussion about other aspects of catchment management and effluent inputs. Rowland Sharp (NRW) asked if the location of fields where biosolids from WwTW were spread was known. Emily agreed to provide this information.

Action: Emily Payne

James Wilson asked if Dŵr Cymru had received any Environmental Information Requests from Carcinus Ltd in relation to the Sanitary Survey review on behalf of the FSA. Emily agreed to ask the EIR team in Dŵr Cymru about this.

Action: Emily Payne

10. Public Profile of the Association

The Chair confirmed that the action agreed at the last meeting to terminate the contract with Dr Andy Olivier to raise the profile of the Association using X, formerly known as Twitter, had been actioned.

It was confirmed that the Association's account with X would remain active, so that any news items could still be circulated by that medium if necessary.

11. Welsh Government Activity

The Secretariat's report was noted and received.

The Chair reported that he had been encouraging WG to clarify its policy on Pacific Oysters through his participation in the Ministerial Advisory Group for Welsh Fisheries (MAGWF).

² The URL is: <https://corporate.dwrcymru.com/en/community/environment/storm-overflow-map>

He had presented a paper to the meeting about the challenges facing Pacific oyster cultivation in Wales in April. WG officials had made a commitment “*consider a policy on Pacific Oysters*” at that meeting. There had been no progress by the November meeting. In response to this, and to concerns raised at the last MSFOMA meeting, the Chair had prompted MAGWF to write to the Minister to query whether this group was adequately resourced to deliver progress on this and other issues.

It was noted that Impact Assessments for Pacific Oyster cultivation are being considered on a case-by-case basis. This seemed to be resulting in an inconsistent and overly cautious approach. NRW are trying to ensure consistency in their responses by reviewing all available information so that appropriate assessments are well informed.

The Chair also confirmed that no further progress appeared to have been made with the draft Ministerial Statement on a strategic approach to fisheries and aquaculture that he had been consulted about prior to the last meeting. The Chair will circulate it to all when it is published for consultation.

Action: Chair

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

Action: Chair

It was reported that the cross-party Working Group on shellfish aquaculture are due to visit the Menai Strait during 2024.

12. 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 NWIFCA concluded that dredging might adversely impact seabed habitats, specifically cobbles.

Concerns were raised that the NWIFCA perception of dredge impacts was based on scallop dredging impacts, rather than mussel dredges. It was agreed that the evidence used in the HRA should be sought, and any misconceptions corrected.

Action: Secretariat

The new CEO of NWIFCA had been invited to Port Penrhyn to meet the mussel farmers and see operations at first hand. This meeting was due to take place in early 2024 and a verbal update will be provided to the next meeting.

13. 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

14. 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.

15. Menai Strait West

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

16. 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, more funding had been secured and a Project Officer had been recruited. Work on projects designed to improve water quality and awareness of key issues was underway, and more funding was being sought to support future work.

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

Action: Chair, Secretariat

17. 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.

18. Any Other Business

a) Correspondence

No additional correspondence had been received.

19. Dates for next meetings

Meeting dates were agreed for 2024:-

- a. 14th March 2024 (Teams / Zoom)
- b. 19th September 2024 (Teams / Zoom)
- c. 12th December 2024 [also AGM] (in person, not virtual)

DRAFT

Summary of Actions

Item	Action	Responsibility
1.	Contact Bangor City Council to confirm representation at MSFOMA meetings.	Secretariat
2.	Sand in Dock - keep under review.	James Wilson & Secretariat
3.	Update MSFOMA website to include more information about the work of participants.	All, Secretariat
4.	Shellfish hygiene - join with mussel farmers to encourage FSA to re-establish seasonal "A" classification in one or more areas in the Strait.	Chair, Secretariat
5.	Sanitary Survey - submit response on behalf of the Association by the 19 th January 2024.	Chair, Secretariat
6.	Provide URL for interactive waste water discharge map once website is launched in January 2024.	Emily Payne ³
7.	Provide information about the location of fields where biosolids are spread to NRW.	Emily Payne
8.	Circulate information about consultation on new Ministerial Statement on fisheries and aquaculture when it is released.	Chair
9.	Provide an update on progress at MAGWF at the next MSFOMA meeting.	Chair
10.	NWIFCA - encourage a more informed evaluation of mussel dredge impacts on benthic habitats.	Secretariat
11.	APPG - provide update on progress to next meeting.	JW, Secretariat
12.	Work with NWRT to progress the Menai Strait Partnership Forum and report back.	Chair & Secretariat
13.	<i>Crepidula fornicata</i> - look out for slipper limpets and report sightings of any shells / individuals.	All
14.	Date for next meeting - 14th March 2024 (subsequently postponed to 18th April 2024)	All

³ The URL is: <https://corporate.dwrwymru.com/en/community/environment/storm-overflow-map>