

Menai Strait Fishery Order Management Association

Meeting, 30th April 2025 Microsoft Teams Video Conference

Minutes

Attendance

Members

Alan Winstone*
Ioan Thomas†
James Wilson*
Lewis le Vay

Chair
Cyngor Gwynedd
Bangor Mussel Producers Ltd
Bangor University

Observers

Emily Payne
Rowland Sharp
Trevor Jones
Robert Floyd

Dŵr Cymru / Welsh Water
Natural Resources Wales
Menai Strait (West) Applicants
Welsh Government – Fisheries Division

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. He reflected on the fact that MSFOMA is at a crossroads and that this meeting provided an opportunity to consider its future direction.

2. Apologies

Alex Scorey
Howard Mattocks
Kim Mould*
Nia Jones
Oisín Lowe-Sellers

Natural Resources Wales
Beaumaris Town Council
Myti Mussels Ltd
North Wales Wildlife Trust
Menai Strait Partnership Forum

It was noted that representation was still being sought from the Royal Yachting Association, and the Secretariat would continue to pursue this.

Action: Secretariat

3. Declarations of Interest

The Chair asked participants in the meeting to declare if they have any interest in an agenda item before speaking.

4. Minutes of last meeting

The minutes of the meeting that took place on the 3rd of December 2024 were accepted.

The Secretariat confirmed that all of the actions arising from the previous meeting had been addressed with the exception of responding to the WG consultation on Marine Licence exemptions. It was agreed that it would be appropriate to review the responses to that consultation and to consider whether any action was required.

Action: Secretariat

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

Pacific Oysters

There was a discussion of the Welsh Government policy on approval of Pacific Oyster cultivation.

Rowland Sharp had reported at the last meeting that he had commissioned work within NRW to collate all available information so that the organisation would be able to provide advice that reflected current knowledge. This work was still ongoing.

Rob Floyd confirmed that applications were being dealt with on a case-by-case basis. The First Minister had indicated that there would be no policy determined for Pacific Oysters during the current term, and that a future policy may be determined after May 2026.

It was agreed that this item should be kept on the agenda for future meetings.

Action: Secretariat

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. It was noted that the Association's financial position was presently better than predicted because of the successful partnership with North Wales Rivers Trust to create and fund participation in the Menai Strait Partnership Forum.

The Secretariat noted that the Association agreed its financial plan in 2022 to cover the period to the end of February 2028. It would be appropriate formulate a new financial plan for discussion and adoption in good time, and to develop a draft proposal during 2025.

Action: Secretariat & Chair

8. Shellfish hygiene

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

The meeting was informed that the new Sanitary Survey was published in March along with new shellfish hygiene classifications for the revised classification zones. All of the new classification zones had achieved a “Class B” status.

It was noted that 12 months ago progress with revising and publishing the new Sanitary Survey had stalled. It was only after MSFOMA had raised the prospect of a legal challenge with FSA Wales that progress had been made; however it was noted that once FSA Wales had committed to finishing this review, progress had been made very swiftly. The local authority Environmental Health Officers at Cyngor Gwynedd and Ynys Môn County Council had also made a vital contribution to progress.

The meeting agreed that letters of thanks should be sent to FSA Wales, the Chair of FSA (Professor Susan Jebb), and to local authority EHOs to thank them for their support.

Action: Chair, Secretariat

Lewis Le Vay noted that now that these areas had been designated as “Class B” it would take 3 years of sustained better results to attain a “Class A” designation. He noted that the Seafish Shellfish Strategy Working Group (SSWG) had been informed about progress with the introduction of the “pour plate” analytical method, which was likely to give more consistent results. Adoption of this method is optional. It was considered appropriate for MSFOMA to encourage local EHOs to adopt this new method.

Action: Chair, Secretariat

9. Public Profile of the Association

The Chair confirmed that this was currently a lower priority than other issues. The Association’s X/Twitter account was dormant. The Secretariat agreed to check that the MSFOMA website was up to date.

Action: Secretariat

10. Welsh Government Activity

The Secretariat’s report was noted and received. Two aspects of the report were discussed.

a) Consultations

It was noted that no comments had been submitted to the consultation on exemptions from Marine Licensing requirements was considered. It was agreed that the Secretariat should review the comments that had been made and consider whether any follow-up comments were required.

Action: Secretariat

b) Ministerial Advisory Group for Welsh Fisheries (MAGWF)

The Chair confirmed that there had been no meetings of the Ministerial Advisory Group for Welsh Fisheries (MAGWF) since November.

c) Funding / Grants

It was reported that the Marine & Fisheries Funding Group had held a couple of meetings to review and determine grant applications.

A new Coastal Capacity Building Fund of £500k was due to be announced shortly.

It was agreed that it would be appropriate for MSFOMA to continue to work with NWRT to look for opportunities for grand funding of projects related to improving water quality.

d) Personnel Changes

Rob Floyd reported that an interim leadership team would be in place following Gareth Bevington's departure. Julian Bray would be the temporary Head of Policy and Shelley Vince would be temporary Head of Fisheries Control & Enforcement.

11.NW IFCA Activity

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

Trevor Jones reported that he had looked at seed mussels in Morecambe Bay earlier in the week. There had been no sign of mussel spat on South America skear, but a lot further south. Elsewhere he had seen evidence of a lot of predation and scouring of mussel beds. He had been liaising with Anna Plumeridge (NWIFCA Senior Science Officer) and understood that they were due to be carrying out surveys of these and other mussel beds on upcoming low tides. Her perception of stock status was similar to Trevor's.

Trevor did not expect a large fishery in Morecambe Bay this year, but felt that there should be some opportunities for dredging. He anticipated that there would be a need for dialogue to resolve the differing needs and views of the hand gathering and dredge fishery operators.

12.All Party Parliamentary Group: Shellfish Aquaculture

It was reported that this Group had been re-constituted and had met on the 26th of February. Seven MPs had attended this meeting.

The Group Chair is Caroline Voaden MP (South Devon), and the Vice-Chair is James Wild MP (NW Norfolk). Other APPG Members are Jane Kirkham MP (Truro & Falmouth); Torcuil Crichton (Na h-Eileanan an Iar (Western Isles)); Séamus Logan MP (Aberdeenshire North & Moray); Angus MacDonald (Inverness, Skye & West Ross-shire), Steve Darling MP (Torbay), Sir Bernard Jenkin MP (Harwich & North Essex), Neil Duncan-Jordan MP (Poole).

The Shellfish Association of Great Britain were supporting this group by providing administrative support to organise meetings and circulate minutes.

13.Menai Strait East Fishery Order

Trevor Jones reported on the efforts that the shellfish industry in the Menai Strait were taking to address the challenges arising from the difficulty post-Brexit of exporting mussels to the main markets in the EU. Myti Mussels are presently investing in purification facilities to enable a quantity of depurated mussels to be produced locally for export.

There is now a single dredger working from Porth Penrhyn with 3 crew. It is fishing daily for local markets and sales in London. Volumes of mussels being harvested were low. The

other two dredgers that had been operating in the Strait prior to 1st January 2021 were now working elsewhere.

Trevor indicated that he needed to carry out some dredging activity as part of husbandry operations on his leased area (Area 3). The dredger currently operating in the Strait was unable to carry out this work. He proposed to hire in one or possibly two dredgers from Wexford for this.

The Secretariat advised the meeting that this proposal would not contravene the terms of the lease for the area nor the terms of the Fishery Order. It was agreed that the Association should support this proposal and should write to Welsh Government accordingly.

Action: Secretariat

14. Menai Strait West

The Chair and Secretariat indicated that they had spoken to Welsh Government in March and earlier in April about the prospects for progressing this Fishery Order proposal. It seemed very likely that a repeat of the consultation that was carried out in 2015 would be needed if progress was to be resumed.

The meeting noted that the main interest in this part of the Strait was associated with Pacific Oysters, and that in the absence of a WG policy for Pacific oyster cultivation it was not possible to predict the outcome of a consultation.

It was agreed that the Chair and Secretariat should hold further meetings with WG and NRW to determine an appropriate course of action.

Action: Chair, Secretariat

15. Menai Strait Partnership Forum

The Chair 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. The MSPF had organised several meetings and initiated several projects to raise awareness of water quality issues, and was perceived to be successful.

Funding for MSPF from Welsh Government had ended in March. Some additional funding had been provided by the Esmee Fairbairn Trust to enable work to continue, and more support from other sources of funding was being sought.

16. Future Direction for MSFOMA

The Chair and Secretariat set the scene for this report: MSFOMA had successfully driven the process for renewing the Fishery Order in the eastern Menai Strait in 2022, and had also encouraged the publication of a new Sanitary Survey in 2025. It has in the past sought to pursue the wider development of shellfish farming in the Strait (through the Menai Strait (West) Fishery Order); and has been engaged in promoting better awareness of water quality issues in the Strait (through the Menai Strait Partnership Forum).

It was appropriate to consider what MSFOMA should do next. It could either simply administer the Fishery Order in the eastern Strait or it could seek to promote shellfish farming and seek opportunities for expansion. The paper presented to the meeting considered some options.

Lewis Le Vay highlighted the importance of ensuring that any future actions were consistent with MSFOMA's duties and Grantees of the Fishery Order, and also its Articles of Association. For instance, with regard to oyster cultivation in the eastern Strait it may be appropriate for MSFOMA to act on the basis of commercial interest, but perhaps not on its own initiative.

It was agreed that the Secretariat should check for constraints or direction on what might be appropriate future directions arising from the Fishery Order and Articles of Association.

Action: Secretariat

James Wilson indicated that this was an area that needed attention. Mussel output was likely to remain at around 150-200t p.a. unless something significant changed with regard to market access and conditions. Oysters could be a good alternative but the problems with uncertainty over Pacific oyster cultivation were a major obstacle. Food sector initiatives to promote mussel consumption would seem a good course of action. He had looked at Protected Geographical Indication (PGI) for Menai Strait Oysters a few years ago but had considered that the application process was too onerous.

Emily Payne mentioned that the AMP 9 funding includes allowance for natural solutions to improved water quality as well as conventional "concrete" solutions. For instance at Tremeirchion in Denbighshire wetland treatment of effluent will be used to improve effluent quality. An aerated reed bed is due to be used at Treborth. Dŵr Cymru were keen to get involved in co-delivery of projects like this, either with MSFOMA or with its participant organisations.

The meeting considered other options such as cultivating other species and looking at other locations. No obvious alternatives presented themselves.

It was agreed that this issue should be kept under review and discussed at future meetings.

17. Fishery Management Issues

a) Coastal / marine developments

i. Bangor Pier

No updates on work at Bangor Pier have been received since the last meeting.

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 8).

ii. *Bonamia*

No update.

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

No update. There is a standing item to keep looking out for slipper limpets.

Action: All

iv. *Norovirus*

No further update.

18.Any Other Business

a) Correspondenc

No correspondence of any significance had been received that was not covered by discussions of agenda items.

19.Dates for next meetings

Meeting dates were agreed for 2025:-

- a. 17th September 2025 (virtual)
- b. 10th December 2025 [also AGM] (in person, not virtual)

Summary of Actions

Item	Action	Responsibility
1.	Contact RYA Cymru to confirm representation to replace Ruth Iliffe.	Secretariat
2.	Sand in Dock - keep under review.	James Wilson & Secretariat
3.	Pacific oysters - keep on the agenda.	Secretariat
4.	Financial plan - develop a new plan to succeed the 2022-28 financial plan.	Secretariat & Chair
5.	Shellfish hygiene - letters of thanks to FSA Wales, FSA Chair, Local EHOs	Chair, Secretariat
6.	Shellfish hygiene - encourage local EHOs to adopt "pour plate" analytical method.	Chair, Secretariat
7.	MSFOMA Website - check it is up to date.	Secretariat
8.	WG Consultation on Marine Licence exemptions - review consultation responses and follow up if necessary.	Chair, Secretariat
9.	APPG - provide update on progress to next meeting.	James Wilson & Secretariat
10.	Menai East liaise with WG about Irish vessels carrying out husbandry work.	Chair, Secretariat.
11.	Menai West - liaise with WG to determine the steps necessary to progress this application.	Chair & Secretariat
12.	Future Direction - check for any constraints / opportunities in the MSFOMA constitution.	Secretariat
13.	<i>Crepidula fornicata</i> - look out for slipper limpets and report sightings of any shells / individuals.	All
14.	Date for next meeting - 17th September 2025	All