

SW Regional Inshore Fisheries Forum

Tuesday 06.04.2021

Microsoft Teams

9.30 hrs to 13.00 hrs

Meeting notes and Action points

1. Welcome & Apologies

The chair welcomed RIFF members. It was confirmed that James Roche East Cork fishing representative was stepping down and would need to be replaced. This would be dealt with under item 8 of the Agenda.

Brenda O’Riordan confirmed she would join the meeting after other prior commitments.

2. Declarations of interests

There were no declarations of interest for items on the agenda.

3. Action Points of 8.02.2021

Action points were reviewed. Action point in point in relation to increase in allocation and daily landing limit for line caught mackerel will be dealt with under item 5 as will the action point on white pollock.

The action points in relation to the Crayfish PIN were clarified and to be brought to MI’s attention. The action point on disseminating the Report on expanding Ireland’s MPA Network were dealt with then. Hard copies of the report were secured for those who required them and were posted out so members could familiarise themselves with the lay out of the document. Work has commenced on identifying key concepts and chapters that require specific attention. This work is ongoing and will continue until a submission has been agreed.

3. QMAC

a. Update from last QMAC meeting. The representative at QMAC gave a brief overview of his work there.

b. He updated on the progress of the NIFF proposal for line caught mackerel which had met with more questions and clarifications at QMAC. It was felt that the case had been put across comprehensively and now it was up to the Minister to make a decision. It was acknowledged that reduction in the national quota due to Brexit would put pressure on the proposal however all agreed that the proposal was worthwhile in terms of seeing a distribution of the resource that would support small scale coastal fishers in their communities.

c. Update White Pollock allocation at Quota management. An increase to 5t was secured for March but a 2t allocation was given to both vessels under and over 55' for April. A number of factors influenced the April advice and it was felt that the impact of Brexit were already being felt in this important fishery as well as ICES Stock advice. The efforts of the NIFF rep at QMAC were acknowledged.

d. Hake Proposal - Increase the minimum mesh size for gillnets targeting Hake in the Biologically Sensitive Area (BSA) to 120mm. The proposal put forward by the National Inshore Fishermen's Association (NIFA) to increase the minimum mesh size from 100mm to 120mm for gillnetters targeting hake was discussed. It was felt that a proposal which used more selective gear, sought to increase the value from the fishery deserved unanimous support and should be forwarded to NIFF. It was acknowledged that because the fishery was targeted inside and also outside the 6nm that this would be a longer process that would require the support of DAFM to carry it through. **Action point:** Proposal supported to be proposed at NIFF for consideration at the other RIFFs

4. Seafood Taskforce and Brexit Adjustment Reserve information

An overview was given of the challenges ahead with the reduction in quota available to Ireland due to BREXIT and the role of the Seafood Task Force to make recommendations to the Minister on measures that can help reduce the impact of the reductions in quotas arising from the EU UK Trade and Cooperation Agreement, on the Irish fleet and the coastal communities that are dependent on fishing. Quota reductions started on the first of April and while 1 billion euro has been allocated to Ireland from the €5.67 Brexit Adjustment Reserve fund the amount of funding available to the seafood sector is not known yet and will likely be considered in the context of competing demands at a national level. In the absence of a figure and given the scale of impact in a sector that is not as resilient as some of the wealthier sectors it was discussed that a proportion of whatever figure becomes available should be used to mitigate the effect of the quota reduction and lack of future access for the inshore sector and its coastal community. While there was much debate over what constituted a realistic proportion it was suggested that 33% was a good starting place as it acknowledges that other sectors have expressed a greater immediate need but none the less reflects the size and dependence of the Small Scale Coastal Fishers and their communities. Action Point It is proposed that given the scale of the small scale coastal fishing fleet and the dependence of their communities on the income from fishing that 33% of the ultimate allocation by the Minister be directed towards the inshore sector.

Action Point: Clarify what the BAR fund can be spent on - is it just tie up and decommissioning or can it be used to fund other mechanisms that increase the fleet's resilience?

Concerns were raised that any tie up scheme or decommissioning scheme would displace effort into non-quota shellfish species causing extra pressure on existing operators at a time when business costs are rising both through rising diesel costs and transport/import costs. It was also noted that any decommissioning scheme should not stop at 15m as it did previously but should enable a fleet restructuring that optimises the future resilience of the fleet commensurate with resources. The view was also expressed that having experienced previous decommissioning schemes they did not work. Emphasis was put on the need to prevent decommissioning being used as a proxy for fleet renewal by cash rich operators.

A general discussion ensued around the increased cost of doing business due to Brexit and; increased regulation; the complexity of dealing with UK suppliers and of accessing the land bridge. In general there seems to be a degree of waiting to see if things stabilise or changing suppliers to keep costs down.

6. “Expanding Ireland’s Marine Protected Area Network”. Identifying the key areas to review and consultation questions. A long and involved discussion took place about the report. There was general disappointment with the highly academic nature of the report and it was suggested that a shorter version in plain English would have been very beneficial as it is a mammoth task to engage with the report as is. The fact that no fishers or environmental NGOs were part of the team that wrote was of specific concern. The point was made that there was both a written submission and that the SW RIFF and RIFFs nationally participated in online consultation meetings where the input and views of fishers (and other stakeholders) were taken into account and that this current consultation was a further opportunity to be involved in the process.

A resounding theme emerged that fishers need to be involved in the process and need to be heard in the process. Workable MPAs are needed that can involve people the example from Liria was cited as something that worked. It was stressed No take zones were not a prerequisite for a good well-functioning MPA referring to the definition on page 178. It was commented that increasing dialogue and awareness with environmental NGOs is really important. From an environmental perspective the following questions were asked -where does the process go from here, over what time frame and how is it envisaged that stakeholders become involved in a real and meaningful way?

Action Point: Ask if a greater involvement from fishers and other stakeholders through a stakeholder forum that would interact with the national MPA Co-ordinating body to ensure that processes worked for both the stakeholders and the agencies. Draft a letter to the Minister of the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.

Action Point: Confirm how many CLAMS groups are operational around the country.

Action Point: circulate short list of key areas and issues with key consultation questions

7. RIFF Renewal for 2021 The secretariat outlined the renewal process that gets underway every two year for each RIFF. The last renewal took place in 2019 with new or re-elected members taking the position in November 2019. This year a third of the fishing reps of which there are currently 7 will be replaced. They are positions that have been filled since the inception in 2014 and 2 are required to step aside. Time served prior to 2019 and development of a renewal process counts as 1 term. The positions for renewal were Seamus O Grady, Brandon to Tarbert, Kieran Healy, West Cork Harbour to Old head and Richard Murphy Castletownbere to Sheeps Head. They can put themselves forward for one further term. All members are subject to maximum of three consecutive 2 year terms i.e. 6 years. It was out lined that they could either be decided by drawing lots or volunteer to step down. Seamus O'Grady and Kieran Healy said they would step down and when asked they said they would go for re-election in addition to any other fisher who may want to seek the mandate for the seats. Further clarifications and explanations of the process were explained. The non fishing sector is not due renewal as such as neither member has yet completed more than one term. The outstanding seats will also be filled. **Action Point:** Renewal Process to be initiated in 2021 for North Kerry tarbert to Brandon and Cork West of Cork Harbour to Old Head. Replacement of seats East of Cork Harbour to Youghal and Castlecove to Dursey. New seat to be filled Toe Head to Sheeps Head. The SW RIFF Profile has also been revised to reflect the fisheries more comprehensively. **Action point:** circulate the revised profile to the RIFF for review

- Glenbeight to Cuas Brandon West Kerry
- Glenbeigh to Caherdaniel Kerry
- E Cork harbour to Youghal
- Sheeps Head to Castletownbere
- Kenmare Bay Loughane -Dursey Kerry Cork
- Toe Hd to Sheeps head Cork
- Old Head to Toe Head, Cork
- West side cork harbour to old Head
- Sheeps Head to Castletownbere
- Brandon to Tarbert

Nomination for SFPA Consultative Committee-Kieran Healy is nominated for the SFPA consultative committee with full support of the SW RIFF.



A brief discussion of the update on the bivalve protocol took place and that a distinct effective timeframe for opening fisheries had been operational and that this needed to be re established as soon as possible taking into account the need for Fishery Natura Plan and resources of the MI to carry out screening exercises and where appropriate full assessments. .