



West Regional Inshore Fisheries Forum Meeting

26th March 2024

External Action Points

- 1. Escape Hatch Proposal:** The draft proposal was discussed in length. Main points from the discussion were. **A.** Was a trial required to determine that escape hatches work? There has been many trials done to date in both the UK and US that gave positive results that escape hatches are beneficial to the shellfish stocks. It was agreed that a trial would delay the introduction of escape hatches in pots. **Action.** MI & BIM to compile studies from other countries. **B.** What size/type of escape should be used? There are by-catches in the pot fishery, for example, Velvet crab, this make it more complicated as the lobster escape hatch will not work in this case. Therefore a second escape hatch would have to be installed and the lobster escape hatch blocked. The velvet escape hatch is small (45mm) and it would only let very small lobsters and crab escape. It was discussed that the escape hatch for velvet crab (45mm) was too small and could be increased and still retain the legal size velvet crab. This might then work for both lobster and velvet crab. **Action:** BIM & MI to investigate different type of hatches
- 2. Shrimp Fishery:** Comments were that 2024 was the best season in volume in the fishery. In some areas buyers had to introduce a quota for the first time. This in turn, increased the grade of shrimp accepted by buyers, The shrimp season opens in August and closes in March. This gives a chance for the shrimp to increase in size and allow for spawning in March. It was discussed could the season start later in the year, for example Setemper/October? Could there be a minimum landing size, piece per/Kg. The view was that it differs in each region where the shrimp season starts early and closes early, e.g. (Aug-Dec) where other areas it might be (Oct-Mar). For this reason it was difficult to come up with one solution. The increase in shrimp pot numbers was discussed and members asked could there be a pot limit in the fishery? **Action:** WRIFF Chair & Vice to bring to next NIFF meeting for discussion for ideas to try and control the fishery and make it sustainable
- 3. Public Consultation on Trawling Activity Inside the Six Nautical Mile:** The WRIFF agreed to support option 3, Ban on over 18 m vessels fishing inside 6 and baselines. **Action:** submit WRIFF proposal before the 12th April.

