

## **Meeting of the North Western Waters Regional Advisory Council**

### **On Scallop Management**

**London 10<sup>th</sup> of October 2006**

#### **Welcome from Chairman**

The Chairman, Paul Trebilcock, welcomed members, experts and observers to the meeting. He informed the participants that this meeting was put in place to allow full discussions on the issue of scallop management which had been raised in the working groups of the NWWRAC. The proposals or recommendation made at this meeting would be presented to the relevant working groups of the NWWRAC in Paris on the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> of November and then if deemed appropriate progressed to the Executive Committee for ratification.

The Chairman also requested that members keep their points concise and clear and to avoid repeating any points that had been made earlier in the meeting.

Members were asked to introduce themselves around the table and the meeting was opened

#### **Presentations from Scientific Experts**

The chairman suggested that point one and two on the agenda be dealt with together and asked the experts present to come forward to give their presentations.

The following gave presentations on the status of the scallop stocks, fleets exploiting the stocks and details of the scallop management measures in place

Dr Olivier Tully from Ireland,  
Dr Dave Palmer from the UK,  
Dr Andy Brandt from the Isle of Mann  
Dr Eric Foucher from France

The presentations are attached in Annex 1 of this report.

Speakers were thanked and the floor was opened for questions or comments. Discussion largely centred around the following topics.

#### **Ring sizes:**

Dave Palmer was asked if there was a regulation on the size of rings on UK dredges. He responded that there was no regulation setting out a minimum ring size, but the number of rings allowed across a dredge was regulated and a ring size of 75mm was typically used by the UK fleet however larger ring sizes were often used too.

Dr Foucher was also asked to give further details on ring size trials that had been carried out by IFREMER. The presentation given can be found in Annex 2 of this report. The meeting were informed that the French are now operating using a minimum ring size of 92mm, this means that there are less small scallops taken in the dredge and less sorting to do onboard. Larger ring size means increased water circulation and scallops caught were of better quality than those in traditional dredgers.

Increased ring sizes and wear and tear were discussed it was agreed that there is an issue for wear and tear on the 92mm particularly on harder sea beds. However some in the meeting felt that an increase in ring size could be achieved in certain Member States if it was done in co-operation with the industry.

#### **Permits and licenses**

The French were asked to explain how permits are issued. Eric Foucher and other French representatives informed the meeting that permits are controlled on the bases of historic fishing rights and they are issued in such a way to reduce fishing effort. The permits are granted each year and cannot be sold, they are not attached to the gear nor the vessel and it is a collective license which is renewable each year. Approximately 1/3 of the permits which were granted are to young people so fishermen

have priority but young people can also enter the industry even if they don't have historic fishing rights. The license reverts to the collective when anyone is finished using it.

The Irish informed the meeting that if a vessel has a license to fish for scallop it could not fish target any other stocks. The French and UK members said that this was true in some parts of France and the UK.

### **Effort Deployment**

Participants were asked to give further details on the deployment of effort within zones. It was noted that the deployment of Irish, Welsh and English effort was clearly shown in the presentations and other members should give further details. Representatives from France informed the meeting that many of the scallop vessels are smaller than 20m and do not fish outside of the 12 mile limit. The eastern channel was given as an example where 80% of vessels are about 15/16m and do not go beyond the 12m limit. Participants from south England described much the same situation.

### **Closures**

Participants were informed that in Devon fishing for scallops was prohibited between 7am and 7pm. In addition fishing is stopped for 4 months of the summer. Furthermore there is a closure of 15sq miles in the area.

The French and English were asked what happens during closed periods- do fishermen divert into other fisheries. Both responded that in some cases fishermen did move into other fisheries for the summer or moved to other areas to fish scallops. Others took the opportunity for a holiday!

The meeting was also informed that the Scallop Association in the UK is developing a proposal with Seafish to consider the implementation of 'enhancement areas' to promote the development of scallop beds.

### **Total Allowable Catches**

The French participants were asked to clarify how TACs are implemented for their fisheries. Representatives explained that the TAC is calculated as a result of an assessment but takes into account the quantity of that need to be available to the industry. Quantities are discussed locally, and decisions are made together with the authorities and the fishermen.

### **Status of stocks**

Following the two presentations by Eric Foucher the meeting were informed by the French participants that the status of the scallop stocks in the areas presented was due to good management.

### **Survival rates of discards**

There was a difference of opinion on survival rates of discard scallops. Some felt that there was considerable waste due to discarding and mortality rates were very low. The Eco-dredge report was cited and it was recommended that this group examine the results of it.

### **French proposals**

The chairman informed the meeting that the Comité National de Pêche had forwarded a number of management proposals to be considered at this meeting. The proposals can be found in Annex 3 of this report. The proposals were presented by the president of the CNPMEP. The chairman then suggested that each proposal be taken individually and discussed.

### **Ring Size:**

The French proposal to harmonise ring size to 92mm was dealt with at length and issues such as wear and tear on the gear, differences between regions and studies already conducted on this topic were discussed. In the end it was agreed that this group should recommend that the NWWRAC commission trials to be carried out by the various Member State institutions on ring size.

### **Restriction on fishing gears that fish for scallops:**

The French proposal is to limit fishing for scallops to vessels with an English or French dredge. Trawlers should not be permitted to fish for scallop.

A discussion followed on the bycatch of scallops in other vessels and the bycatch of dredgers. It was felt that more work was needed on bycatch in this fishery. At present dredgers can maintain a bycatch of 5%. However this often means quite a lot of non-quota species such as cuttlefish have to be discarded. It was felt that the current bycatch of 5% for quota species should be maintained, however no limit should be set for the bycatch of non quota species. It was also suggested that operations which use divers to catch scallop should be derogated from this recommendation if it is to go ahead.

Ring-fencing of the scallop fleet was considered in brief but it was felt that until information regarding bycatch levels of scallops in vessels other than dredgers were known, this issue could not be adequately considered.

Effort management was also discussed and it was suggested that to ensure adequate effort management there is potentially a need to look at breaking areas such as VII down into smaller management units. However effort management is not the sole method of management that should be considered and it was noted that the French fishery is successful because it uses a number of management measures. Again further information would be needed before this area could be looked at in any significant detail.

It was agreed that this group would recommend that the NWWRAC commission a study encompassing the French, UK, Irish and Belgian fleet on the bycatch of scallops by vessels using gear other than dredgers. It was agreed that the bycatch in dredgers should also be examined. Once these studies have been completed, issues such as ring fencing of the fleet and allocation of units for effort management could begin to be considered.

### **Summer Closure**

The proposed summer closure for area VIId was considered by the meeting. A number from the floor noted that the proposed closure could pose a problem for fishermen in the Channel Islands. In addition the Irish Fishermen would have difficulty with this closure.

It was proposed by the French that rather than rejecting this proposal outright an adequate assessment should be made of the proposed closure, who it will affect and why. It was agreed that this group would recommend that the NWWRAC further consider the proposed closed area, the effort being deployed and the possible impacts on both the fisheries and the fish.

### **Soaking of Scallops**

The issue of processors soaking scallops was also raised in the French recommendations. The French industry would like the NWWRAC to support prohibition of this practise. This issue caused some concern at the meeting and it was argued that it was not in the remit of the NWWRAC to discuss this issue. The Chair reminded members that the NWWRAC had representatives from marketing organisation, processors and consumers and could discuss any issue they wished and it was at the discretion of the Executive Committee members to prioritise areas of discussion for the NWWRAC. However as certain expertise was not available in the room it was agreed that the issue should be raised with the Executive Committee to decide whether they wished to pursue it or not.

### **Management of toxic phytoplankton blooms which cause shellfish poisoning (ASP,DSP,NSP,PSP)**

The final issue proposed by the French was to encourage the exchange of information on shellfish toxins which cause disease such as ASP and DSP. This received broad support from the members at the meeting and an invitation was issued to all members to meet with the scallop association in the UK to discuss preventive management of these issues.

### **AOB**

A question was raised from an industry member regarding one of the expert's comments on a recent television programme. He was asked to clarify why he had been so negative towards the fishing industry. It was agreed that as this issue was not specific to this scallop meeting it should be discussed in the margins of the meeting. It was later discovered that this was case of mistaken identity and an apology was made by the industry member who made the initial claim.

### **Close of meeting**

The Chairman thanked all participants and informed them that the report of the meeting would be made available to the next working group meeting for consideration.

