



Report of ExCom Meeting 28th & 29th June 2010, Boulogne sur Mer, France

Rapporteur: Tony Hawkins

1. Welcome, Apologies, Agenda & Report

- 1.1 The Chairman of the ExCom, Hugo Andersson, welcomed participants to the Boulogne meeting. This was our second time in Boulogne – our very first full ExCom had been held here. He thanked French members and the French Government for the meeting arrangements. A welcome was extended to new representatives, Derek Forrester representing EAFPA and Kathleen Laissy representing EBCD and a special welcome was extended to Colin Mackenzie and Martin Brebner of Aberdeenshire Council. Pim Visser was no longer representing EAFPA and was welcomed as the new representative of the Dutch fishing industry in his position as Chief Executive of VisNed. Apologies had been received from Nils Jensen, Nicki Holmyard and Arnold Locker. The agenda was approved.
- 1.2 The rapporteur, Tony Hawkins, reported on the previous ExCom meeting which had been held at the Thermae Palace Hotel Ostend in February. The new Marine Strategy Framework Directive had been discussed. Defining 'good environmental status' for fisheries had been an issue and members had been dissatisfied with the current Commission text and the procedures adopted to develop indicators. It had been pointed out by the Commission and Environmental NGOs that the RAC could have little influence on the process. Decisions were to be taken by the Commission in July. Nevertheless, members had requested a speaker on this topic from the Commission for the next Demersal Working Group. This had not happened. A speaker had subsequently been requested for this ExCom meeting, but in the event no speaker had been provided, although a short, general presentation had been sent.
- 1.3 There had been a request for a one day seminar on marketing. This had now been arranged for September 20th and 21st in Peterhead following the AGM of EAFPA.
- 1.4 A presentation had been given by ICES on the results of the Fishers' Survey and Henrik Sparholt and Ian Napier were being encouraged to publish this work. Funding had been allocated for the 2010 Fishers' Survey and the Secretariat would be contacting the Marine Centre in Shetland and the fishers' associations to arrange for the survey to take place.

- 1.5 The 'Good Practice in Fishing' booklet had now been commented upon and was ready to go on the website in its final version.
- 1.6 Concern had been expressed over the Deep Sea Access paper from the Commission. French and Scottish members had prepared a response and had circulated it to members but it had been too late to meet the Commission's deadline.
- 1.7 A long discussion had been held on wind-farm developments in the North Sea and concern had been expressed about the impact of these huge developments on fisheries. Proposals for SACs on the Dogger Bank had also been discussed together with UK proposals for marine protected areas in the North Sea. Meetings had been arranged with both wind-farm developers and UK Government conservation representatives (the JNCC) and would be reported on later.
- 1.8 A series of other meetings had taken place following the last ExCom and would be reported upon today. The Demersal Working group had met in London and a report on TACs and Quotas had been produced. Focus Groups had met to discuss the cod recovery plan and whiting discards and position papers prepared. The Spatial Planning Working Group had met wind-farm developers and with the JNCC and reports of both meetings were provided. A workshop on CFP reform had been organised by the Commission in La Coruña and concern over views by some Commission representatives had resulted in a request from members for the NASRAC's views on future governance to be set out clearly. That had now been done and would be discussed further. A North Sea Stakeholder Conference had taken place in Newcastle in March and an initiative to coordinate different activities in the North Sea was now being taken forward by the North Sea Commission. Finally, the *Nephrops* Development Group had met and a new version of the Long Term Management Plan for North Sea *Nephrops* had subsequently been discussed with fishers at a meeting in Whitley Bay on Tyneside.

2. Future support for the NSRAC

- 2.1 Colin Mackenzie, the Chief Executive of Aberdeenshire Council gave a presentation on Aberdeenshire Council's continuing commitment to supporting the NSRAC. Aberdeenshire is Scotland's principal fish landing area and Aberdeenshire Council had provided administrative support to the NSRAC since its inception in 2004. The Council was now proposing support from a new team, with greater strength in depth. He, Colin Mackenzie, would be the Corporate Sponsor. In addition the Council would provide:

A Team Leader
Chartered Accountant
Marine Spatial Planning specialist
Environmental Planning specialist
Support and Administration Officer
Web Master

Web Editor
Corporate Communications

2.2 The team would have:

EU funding expertise
EU policy expertise (e.g. maritime policy)
Wider finance skills in EU context
Administration – claims/audit/monitoring
Event organisation and delivery
IT skills
Language skills
& access to a wide pool of sectoral specialists

2.3 The finance package would include drafting the NSRAC budget to meet the needs of the work-plan; monthly reconciliation of bank statements; preparation of quarterly management accounts; preparation of draft annual accounts for audit; submission of draft accounts to auditors/Directors of NSRAC within an agreed timescale; and negotiating with the EC on interpretation of financial package guidance notes. The Team Leader would draft the annual work-plan and budget to support NSRAC activities; submit the work-plan/budget for approval and negotiate the grant agreement with the EC; sign approved contracts/agreements on behalf of NSRAC; and review and monitor commercial arrangements to ensure best value. The Team Leader would also promote the voice of NSRAC via bodies such as CPMR/NSC and would liaise with bodies including the European Commission, Member States, European Parliament, members of the NSRAC and the other RACs. In addition the Team leader would oversee delivery of the work-plan; arrange and attend meetings of NSRAC and parallel bodies; liaise and coordinate with NSRAC work groups; monitor budget compliance and record maintenance; ensure the Directors and NSRAC members were informed of changes in regulations/provisions affecting the NSRAC; record and report proceedings of meetings including the General Assembly, Excom, and Board of Directors; and ensure that the website was kept up to date. The Team Leader would be Martin Brebner, who was present today.

2.4 In terms of operational support, the Council NSRAC Team would record and reimburse authorised expenditure; provide webmaster and web editing services for the NSRAC website; prepare and circulate relevant documentation prior to meetings; organise meetings and associated travel/accommodation as required; provide Marine Spatial Planning expertise; and provide accommodation for the NSRAC.

2.5 The new NSRAC Team would take over at the General Assembly in October, with Ann Bell, the current Executive Secretary, available to provide advice and support until the 31st of December 2010. The Council was delighted to make this offer to continue to host the NSRAC.

2.6 Pim Visser acknowledged the extremely important support provided by Aberdeenshire Council over the last six years. Hugo Andersson confirmed that the new Team Leader would report directly to the NSRAC Board of Directors and

- to the ExCom. The Commission was prepared to provide induction facilities to the new Team.
- 2.7 Isabelle Viallon, for the Commission, emphasised that several key principles were very important for the Commission in relation to the RACs. The Commission had been very strict with the other RACs. Because the RACs were developing, and might play an enhanced role in the future, it was important that the secretariat should work one hundred percent for the NSRAC, and be paid for from the NSRAC budget. New people recruited to the secretariat had to go through an open selection process, managed by the NSRAC itself, and the job description setting out the competencies required should be published on the website. These conditions were part of the whole process for establishing effective RACs. It is important for the Commission to know who is employed by the NSRAC and paid for from the NSRAC budget.
- 2.8 Hugo Andersson said that we had asked the Commission about the selection process and had been told that it was the responsibility of the NSRAC. A move to open recruitment now would be quite strange and was not included in the offer from Aberdeenshire Council. Aberdeenshire was offering a 'team' concept, with a part-time Team Leader. Time sheets would be completed by Team members to confirm their participation in the work of the NSRAC. The Team Leader would be the contact for the NSRAC and when employed by the NSRAC would be responsible to the NSRAC not the Council. The present Directors, the current Executive Secretary and the new Team Leader would now liaise with the Commission to ensure that its requirements were fulfilled.
- 2.9 Niels Wichmann proposed that the ExCom should accept this offer, subject to approval by the Commission. Barrie Deas agreed. The offer from Aberdeenshire was comprehensive; it delivered continuity; it had wide coverage and it would help us to cope with CFP reform, where the role of the RACs might be enhanced. It would also have the flexibility to enable the NSRAC to deal with future change. Pim Visser said that he and his Dutch colleagues supported this proposal. It was a great offer; although it would have to fit in with the Commission's procedures.
- 2.10 Caroline Gamblin asked whether the marine spatial planning project role could be shared with other RACs but Ann Bell explained that the support being offered in marine spatial planning was more general and was not related to the specific marine spatial planning project which was going to be discussed later in the meeting
- 2.11 Ate Oostra asked whether any other proposals had been received. Hugo Andersson confirmed that there had not been any other proposals. If we tried to do this on our own it would be difficult and expensive. Michael Andersen thought this was an excellent offer. Euan Dunn agreed that it was a solid proposal which would enable the work of the NSRAC to be scaled up to meet an enhanced future role. He would like to see the percentage of time which would be allocated to various tasks by the team participants and agreed with Caroline that the relationship between these spatial planning services and the new mapping project would need to be clarified. Ann Bell proposed that a breakdown of the job descriptions should be prepared once the offer had been accepted.

- 2.12 Isabelle Viallon acknowledged the advantages in having a pool of competence, but re-emphasised that it was very important to have a Team Leader with the right skills working fully for the NSRAC. The Commission would not be able to fund a post unless selection was conducted openly. Eamon Mangan, from the French Government, said that it was not yet clear what would emerge in terms of reform of the CFP. He also wanted to see 100% commitment to the RAC. Caroline Gamblin wished to see a single person representing the NSRAC and wanted to know what proportion of the Team Leader's time would be committed to NSRAC duties.
- 2.13 Ann Bell replied that 40% of the Team Leader's time would be committed to the NSRAC. When the Team Leader was working for the NSRAC the Board of Directors would be in charge and would supervise the work of the Team Leader.
- 2.14 Pim Visser reiterated that the arrangements would have to be satisfactory to the Commission. What would be the outlook for the current rapporteur? Hugo Andersson thought that the current rapporteur should continue. Michael Park suggested that there might be benefits in looking at how the other RACs arranged things. With reform of the CFP there might be changes in the future.
- 2.15 Hugo Andersson concluded that everyone was in favour of accepting the offer from Aberdeenshire Council to host the NSRAC but the detailed arrangements would need to be decided in discussion with the Commission. A meeting would be arranged with the Commission to take this forward. He thanked Aberdeenshire for their offer.
- 2.16 Hugo Andersson informed the meeting that at the next ExCom there would be a selection process for the future Chair. This would be achieved through a preliminary tendering procedure. A tender document had been provided on the website for those who wished to apply. Jan Willem Wijnstroom would moderate the consideration of tenders. The tender process would follow the procedures laid down by the Commission for circumstances where a Chair received payment. Ann Bell asked Isabelle Viallon if she would look at the tender document on behalf of the Commission. A new version had been prepared following the last General Assembly and we needed to ensure that the procedure was correct. It was pointed out that the tenders will be received by a committee of the Board of Directors, and each one would be scored. Those applications above an acceptable threshold would then be put forward and the new Chair would be selected by the ExCom at its next meeting in October.
- 2.17 Nominations are now invited for Vice-Chair of the NSRAC ExCom (which is not subject to the same tendering procedure). Nicki Holmyard had recently resigned as the person representing the North Sea Women's Network on the ExCom and would be replaced. If we wished to continue with the Socio-Economic Working group then we would also need nominations for a new Chair to replace Nicki. There had been a request from the Welsh Federation of Fishermen's Associations to join the NSRAC. The WFFA application would come up for ratification at the General Assembly.

3. Draft Budget

- 3.1 The draft budget was circulated at the meeting. Concern was expressed by Pim Visser over whether this was a real budget or a phoney budget. There were hidden subsidies from Aberdeenshire Council in hosting the secretariat. Why couldn't we make it a real budget? There did not seem to be sufficient resources for the NSRAC especially if it was asked to adopt an enhanced role. Ann Bell remarked that all the RACs had asked for greater flexibility in preparing their budget but had not been given any scope for doing so by the Commission. Isabelle Viallon, for the Commission, said that if the RACs were given an enhanced role they would be granted extra funding. Hugo Andersson agreed that the rules for preparing the budget would need to be discussed further with the Commission. Any comments from members should be sent in before the 1st August so that a complete budget was available at the General Assembly. Niels Wichmann thought that if we were actually short of money we could consider raising the fees to members, as had been done by the Pelagic RAC. Ann Bell pointed out that two member organisations had not yet paid their fees for 2010. If these fees were not paid soon then the organisations would have to be removed as members.

4. Marine Strategy Framework Directive

- 4.1 Members of the NSRAC were concerned that we had still not had the terms of the new Marine Strategy Framework Directive presented to us by the Commission for discussion and comment. Leo de Vrees had been asked to attend the Demersal Working Group, and then the ExCom, but had failed to oblige. He had apologised and agreed to meet the NSRAC at a future date to be arranged. Pim Visser was worried; the directive is moving ahead like a train while we were still standing on the station platform. The features for good environmental status had been agreed by the Commission and Member States but the RACs had played no part in this process. Fishing interests were getting nowhere in engaging with the Commission on this Directive. Peter Breckling supported Pim. If you look at the GES descriptors and indicators you could see that they had been devised by Environmental NGOs and scientists. Fishers had not had any input. Tony Hawkins remarked that scientists were not entirely happy with the process either. Scientific recommendations had been changed along the way and some no longer made sense. The whole process was deeply flawed. Euan Dunn reflected that at the last ExCom he had supported Christien in advising that this was a very big initiative, perhaps too wide for the RACs to engage with. He now thought we had missed the boat – the process was too far advanced. It would not be enough for one of our Working Groups to address this problem. It was so important that it should be considered by the whole of the ExCom, but it was perhaps too late to engage with the Commission now. Ate Oostra thought that the fisheries sector should have been involved in the process as the Directive would have far reaching effects upon fisheries..
- 4.2 Barrie Deas thought that we might feel better if we wrote a letter of complaint to the Commission, but this would not resolve the problem of unsatisfactory GES indicators. Could we persuade the Commission to meet a small group from the NSRAC? We could then discuss the issues which affected fishers directly. Hugo Andersson asked for volunteers and Barrie Deas, Pim Visser, Ate Oostra,

Peter Breckling, Henrik Lund, Giles Bartlett, Caroline Gamblin and Emiel Brouckaert agreed to take part in a meeting to be arranged by the Secretariat.

5. Implementation of the new Control Regulation

5.1 Hermann Pott from the Commission gave a detailed presentation on the Draft Implementation Regulation for Council Regulation 1224/2009 of 20 November 2009, which establishes a Community control system for ensuring compliance with the rules of the common fisheries policy. The full and very prescriptive presentation has been placed on the NSRAC website. The regulation itself is 250 pages long and discussion on its provisions would start in early July.

5.2 The Commission has tried to combine the existing regulations on control and compliance. The Implementation Regulation tries to consolidate all the rules and contents of existing regulations, even if there has been no change of substance. Its structure follows the Control Regulation itself but avoids repeating the text. The topics it covers include:

- Fishing licences and fishing authorisations
- Marking and identification of fishing gear
- Vessel Monitoring System
- Control of fisheries
- Control of marketing
- Surveillance
- Control observers
- Inspection
- Union inspectors
- Point system for serious infringements
- Measures to ensure compliance by Member States
- Deduction of fishing opportunities
- Analysis and audit of data
- Websites of Member States
- Mutual assistance

5.2 Hugo Andersson thanked Hermann Pott for his presentation and opened the subject for discussion. Niels Wichmann asked about the traceability system, where all fisheries products were to be put into 'lots'; with information on fisheries products affixed to the lot. What exactly is a 'lot'? And could the information be carried electronically? Hermann Pott replied that a 'lot' is carefully defined in the regulation. Certainly information could be carried in the form of an electronic chip rather than a piece of paper. Guus Pastoor was sceptical of the workability of these proposals. Boxes could be tracked, but at a heavy cost. Many factories took in boxes from a variety of sources and could not follow every single one without incurring high costs. Moreover, how would traceability rules be coordinated across different Member States, where fish went under different names, with different packaging?

5.3 Peter Breckling was concerned that the frequency of VMS position upgrades would be doubled. This would increase the costs for fishers but would it actually detect more offences? He also asked whether there was an agreed methodology

for measuring engine power. Hermann Pott confirmed that the new rule would involve updating the position of each vessel every hour rather than every 2 hours. The purpose was simply to show the presence of a vessel in a given area. He was not sure how engine power would be measured in a consistent way, as he was not an expert on this subject.

- 5.4 Jan Willem Wijnstroom asked about article 55 of the Control Regulation, which required Member States to monitor, on the basis of a sampling plan, the catches of stocks subject to recovery plans caught in recreational fisheries. The Data Control Regulation requires monitoring the recreational catch data for several stocks, i.e. cod, eels and sharks. Are the initiatives that are already undertaken by Member States to fulfil the obligations according to the Data Collection Regulation sufficient to satisfy article 55? Duplication of effort would not be desirable. Hermann Pott was sure that while the same data are involved, the current programmes to fulfil the requirements of the Data Collection Regulation can be used to fulfil the requirements of the new Control Regulation. The details are in the Implementation Regulation that will be discussed with Member States next week.
- 5.5 Michael Park asked whether any of the topics dealt with in the Regulation were subject to co-decision taking under Lisbon. Hermann replied that these were only implementing rules and they were not therefore subject to co-decision taking with the Parliament. Hermann was thanked for coming along to the NSRAC to present this information.

6. Data Collection Initiative

- 6.1 A letter had been sent from the North West Waters RAC to the Commission expressing concern that ICES was unable to provide analytical assessments for 57% of the stocks under its purview and that this percentage has gradually increased over the last decade. The NWWRAC had suggested the establishment of a Regional Task Force for North West waters involving the members, Member States and ICES scientists. The NSRAC had supported this initiative and had shared the NWWRAC's concern over the large numbers of stocks lacking analytical assessments. Director General Fotiadis had replied saying this was an important initiative. He had listed the steps taken by the Commission and STECF to improve the position. However, his letter made it clear that the Commission would not be taking the lead in resolving the issue. Disappointment was expressed at this negative attitude. It was disingenuous of the Commission to suggest that the RACs should take this forward and the Commission would then follow on. We could drop the matter if we were convinced that the Commission's own initiatives with STECF would resolve the problem but considered this most unlikely. We could raise this issue with ICES directly. Michael Andersen doubted whether ICES had the strength to tackle this problem, but thought it was extremely important that it be tackled. Guus Pastoor agreed and said that in the absence of assessments it was often assumed that stocks were in a poor state, which was not the case. Moreover, absence of assessments made gaining MSC accreditation difficult. Pim Visser also agreed and reported that Dutch fishers had already raised this problem of inadequate assessments with their Minister.

- 6.2 Isabelle Viallon commented that this issue was often raised, and many initiatives to improve the assessments were already under way. She suggested that the ICES Benchmark meetings could be used to resolve these problems. Luc Corbisier said that at the scoping meeting with STECF scientists had been reluctant to tell us which data were missing from the assessments. If they would let us know then the RACs could address the problem.
- 6.3 It was concluded that the ICES Dialogue Meeting in Galway in August would be the right place to discuss this issue further. An invitation had been sent to the NSRAC by ICES but at the moment too many members wished to attend. The secretariat would resolve this with members.
- 6.4 Pierre George Dachicourt apologised for just arriving at the meeting. He had been attending discussions with the French Minister. He welcomed participants to Boulogne sur Mer. He emphasised that too little attention was being paid to the social and economic impact of fisheries management. We were all aware that stocks presented many issues but quotas for cod were not sufficient for fisheries for other species to be profitable. Our discussions were important for resolving these difficulties. The prospects for professional fishers were being destroyed. We needed to share our know-how within the RACs.

7. Reports from the Working Groups

Socio-Economic WG

- 7.1 It was considered time to review the Working Groups. Euan Dunn thought that we should dispense with the Socio-Economic Working Group. Consideration of social and economic factors underpinned all our work and we had a protocol which required us to consider these important factors in whatever we decided. It was not sensible to have an inactive working group. Ann Bell agreed. We could always create a focus group to consider specific social or economic issues. Barrie Deas agreed and proposed that we should confirm our decision on this at the next ExCom.

Skagerrak and Kattegat Working Group

- 7.2 The Skagerrak and Kattegat Working Group had last met in Copenhagen, and a report on that meeting had previously been circulated.

Nephrops Development Group

- 7.3 A further meeting of the *Nephrops* Development Group had taken place in London in April and was reported on by Michael Park. A shorter version of the Long Term Management Plan (LTMP) for *Nephrops* had been prepared. We had taken this plan to a meeting of fishermen in Whitley Bay. Fishers main concern had been the influx of fleets into vulnerable functional units resulting in local over-fishing of *Nephrops*. In considering ways of limiting fishing on the more

vulnerable functional units there was a preference for '*of which no more than x tonnes shall be taken from...*' provisions especially if protection for local fishers could be provided through quota allocations. Fishers also sought a gradual decrease in the overall fishing level. Currently the fishery was a high landings low value exercise and measures were required to return it to a low volume high value fishery. Some fishers saw a need for drastic measures and there had been particular criticism of the impact of large multi-rig vessels. Discards of *Nephrops* were not seen as a problem but there were seen to be advantages in landing all the *Nephrops* caught by removing the Minimum Landing Size. Whiting discards were a problem along the north east coast of England, and there was interest in setting catch-quotas as a way of resolving this. There was a lack of interest in promoting marine protected areas on the *Nephrops* grounds. It was noted that in the current high volume low value fishery processors were suffering as well as fishers. Decommissioning and restrictive licensing were favoured as ways of resolving over-capacity. A report on the meeting had been prepared by the rapporteur.

- 7.4 Barrie Deas commented that this was the first time we had sought the views of fishers on our proposals. The numbers attending had been disappointing despite a headline article being published in Fishing News. The quality of the discussions had been high. As a first step the meeting had been very useful. Michael Park said that we expected higher numbers in the ports of Eyemouth, Pittenweem and Fraserburgh. It would be useful to place another article in Fishing News. He agreed with Ann Bell that he would produce a draft press release and pass it to her.
- 7.5 Pim Visser had attended a meeting with STECF on the evaluation of LTMPs and had presented a short paper from the rapporteur summarising the thoughts of the NSRAC on the scope of LTMPs. The Commission was now referring to the plans as Multi-Annual Plans. We should follow the Commission and STECF models for these plans but perhaps they could also learn from us.

Spatial Planning WG

- 7.6 Euan Dunn presented a report on the work of the Spatial Planning Working Group. There had been two key Action Points: a meeting with wind-farm developers; and a meeting with the UK's conservation agency (the JNCC) to discuss UK plans for SACs and other MPAs in the North Sea. There had also been discussions on how to develop a coordinated approach to mapping fishing activity in the North Sea.
- 7.7 At the meeting with the Forewind consortium on the Dogger Bank wind-farm the NSRAC had given a presentation on marine spatial planning. The developers had been unable to answer a number of key questions on the clustering of the arrays and their effects upon mobile fishing gears. A clear indication was given of the consultation process, and the NSRAC established its position as a key constituency. However, we would need to remain pro-active. Fisheries mapping will be critical for defending fishing space.

- 7.8 At a stakeholder workshop at the end of April the developers went into more detail on what they intend to do. They are planning 4 tranches for the Dogger Bank development. The array of turbines within each tranche is not yet decided but the individual turbines will be large and the spacing wide, so that fishing with mobile gears over large areas will be affected. Fishing would, however, be possible between the arrays. It had been pointed out to the developers that they would need to coordinate with other Round 3 wind-farm developments and look at their cumulative impacts. Wind-farms were planned on the Dogger Bank, off Hornsea and off Norfolk. All the developers were consulting separately at the moment.
- 7.9 On MPA developments in the North Sea, all member States have to produce a coherent network of Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) by 2012. It is not the best planned process. In England, as well as the Natura 2000 areas (the SACs) there were additional plans for Marine Conservation Zones. Our meeting with the JNCC had been well attended and there had been lively discussion. The JNCC has not taken action as quickly as expected. Proposals are supposed to be submitted by October 2010 but this is an impossible timetable for stakeholders to work to. Engagement with France (CNP MEM) over MCZs in the Channel area has still to be taken forward. The Dogger Bank SAC proposal from the UK has still not gone out to consultation. There has been some revision of the plans, harbour porpoise has been dropped as a qualifying feature, and the boundaries have contracted, mainly in the slope area, resulting an overall area reduction of 18%.
- 7.10 A workshop on fisheries management within Dutch Natura 2000 sites (FIMPAS) is taking place over the next few days close to Boulogne to assess fisheries impacts on the conservation objectives of the designated sites, and some NSRAC members were participating. This is the second of three workshops in all, with the ultimate aim of generating management actions to meet the defined conservation objectives. IMARES, the Dutch research institute, has already mapped fishing activities in the areas concerned.
- 7.11 Peter Breckling was concerned that the UK government had plans for a series of additional conservation zones (MCZs) in addition to the SACs. The Natura 2000 regulations and the Common Fisheries Policy should dictate the need for sites. It did not make sense for Member States to take their own decisions on additional sites. If the UK government believes that the Natura 2000 arrangements are inadequate then let us revise it. This issue had been raised with the Commission.
- 7.12 Concern was expressed over the displacement of fishing activities which would result from both new protected areas and also from wind-farm developments. We had been optimistic at the beginning and had thought that we would be consulted on both types of development. However, it now appears that there is only token concern over the impact on other users of the sea. Consultation is just a box ticking exercise. True dialogue is not taking place. Moreover, in the UK waters the Crown Estate, which leases the seabed, no longer has control over the process. On MPAs the timetable for consultation is not do-able. The issue of impacts upon international fishing fleets has not been addressed adequately.

- 7.13 Euan Dunn could understand why Member States might wish to establish their own networks of MPAs which protect sites that meet nationally important criteria so are not captured by the international criteria addressed by Natura 2000. The Marine Strategy Framework Directive supports such proposals. It is the process of consultation which is flawed, and which is now putting fishers and other stakeholders under unacceptable pressure. We must now challenge the JNCC to say how they plan to take forward the action points agreed at the meeting with them on the 11th March. This is not just an issue for the UK but for other Member States. Others concurred and it was agreed that Euan Dunn would draft a letter from the NSRAC thanking the JNCC for their meeting and asking what progress had been made in taking forward the agreed action points.

Demersal WG

- 7.14 Following the Ostend meeting of the demersal Working group two Focus Group meetings had been held in Brussels. The Cod Recovery Focus Group had considered positive ways forward on cod recovery, while the Whiting Discards Focus Group had looked at ways of reducing discards. A further meeting of the full Demersal WG had then taken place in May and had resulted in a response being drafted on the Commission's paper on fishing opportunities (TACs & Quotas) for 2011. On technical conservation measures some members had attended a recent Commission seminar. Further consideration of these measures was now tied in to the CFP reform process but currently the position is very confused. It is evident that there are ways of improving selectivity and for avoiding the capture of particular species but there has been a failure of governance. Not much has happened with the control regulation, or on the management plan for flatfish and it was clear that the plaice box was not working as had been intended. There had been one significant development. John Casey the chair of STECF had attended the last Demersal WG meeting and there had been a productive dialogue. On CFP reform some progress had been made in discussing future governance at the Edinburgh conference, where there had been a solid consensus on the benefits of regional governance. We have now produced a paper summarising the developments we would like to see. There had been concern following the La Coruña conference that stakeholder views were being ignored by elements within the Commission and a letter had been drafted for the ExCom chair to send to the Commissioner.
- 7.15 The rapporteur set out the terms of the draft letter and the accompanying paper on governance. Both the letter and the attachment were agreed. It was also emphasised that the NSRAC needed to be especially pro-active in addressing the crucial issue of future governance. Christien Absil thought we might need to prepare a future paper on catch-quotas, and all that they had to offer. We should consider having a small workshop to discuss this issue with scientists. Other participants did not oppose this suggestion, and remarked that we had already discussed the subject in the context of cod recovery and reducing whiting discards. However, they thought that we should await the results of the various pilot projects which were underway. We should have more information early in the New Year on the results of Danish and Scottish trials. The timing of the workshop would be important. Others pointed out that there are negative

- features to catch quotas and we needed to discuss the subject thoroughly at the next Demersal WG (on September 15th).
- 7.16 The rapporteur presented the main elements of the cod recovery paper, which had already been sent to the Commission. We might need to reconsider our position on cod recovery following receipt of the ICES advice for the North Sea.
- 7.17 The main features of the paper commenting on TACs and Quotas were summarised. This paper had also been submitted to the Commission.
- 7.18 The remaining paper was the one prepared on whiting discards. We had discussed this issue at length. Some participants thought that quota swaps were the solution to this problem and that these issues were old ones. The allocation key is not at fault and we should not be criticising the principle of relative stability. The current paper focussed too strongly on allocation issues. It would also be necessary to remove the reference to megrim – which were not discarded in the same way as whiting. The paper mentioned the French CAB programme which was less relevant than the SELECMER programme.
- 7.19 Others did not agree that the problem could be resolved within existing quota allocation arrangements. There is still heavy discarding of whiting which is causing great and continuing concern to fishers. Existing solutions had not resolved this major example of discarding. Willem de Boer emphasised strongly that the only current solution was to discard whiting. Where could he buy or lease whiting quota – nowhere! The problem has gone on for years. Scientists did not have a clear idea of the state of whiting stocks. The best solution was to allow fishers to land the fish – we can no longer carrying on by discarding fish over the side. Michael Park thought that the draft paper simply stated the facts. The distribution of quota **is** a problem. Giles Bartlett wished to see a table showing the historical take-up of whiting quota. Michael Andersen said this was giving the current quota distribution too much emphasis and that the problem originated with the science, which was too negative in relation to reality. The TAC was too low. Christien Absil said that with climate change this was likely to be an increasing problem in the future. Fish stocks would redistribute themselves. We should address this problem and should not be afraid of mentioning problems with relative stability.
- 7.20 Peter Hopkins suggested another approach – to split or change the TAC areas. This might be feasible. We could aim for different allocation keys in different TAC areas. We should look into this. Luc Corbisier agreed that this would be a good solution. It was a problem for plaice too, where there were now more in the northern part of the North Sea. We might have to seek allocation keys for different areas. Pim Visser was concerned that some people were dismissing this problem. We should be seeking solutions, and these would take courage as not everyone would agree with them. Some solutions were outlined in the paper and now we had been presented with a new one by Peter.
- 7.21 It was agreed that a revised draft of the paper would be prepared and agreed by written procedure. It would emphasise the abundance of whiting in the north and west of the North Sea but not mention deficiencies in relative stability and inequalities in quota distribution. It should include a cautious plea for catch-

quotas. Peter Hopkins pointed out that the whiting stock is shared with Norway and that there is a joint EU/Norway request to ICES on a LTMP for whiting. There should be new information available on this topic in the autumn.

8. Update on the latest ICES advice

8.1 A presentation of ICES *draft* advice was given by Manuela Azevedo, the ACOM Vice-chair. The sequence of events is that the initial assessment of the status of the fish stocks is done by scientists within an Expert Group (EG). A Review Group (RG) then examines the work carried out by the EG; offering quality assurance & peer review by scientists independent of the EG. An Advisory Drafting Group (ADG) consisting of scientists & reviewers then drafts the advice, based on the peer reviewed assessments. The Advisory Committee (ACOM) finally approves the draft advice and provides consistency and assurance.

8.2 This year the advice is based on the F_{MSY} framework with a biomass safeguard against low spawning stock biomass. F_{MSY} is the fishing mortality that in the long-term will maximize yield. The MSY $B_{trigger}$ is a biomass reference point that triggers a cautious response: to maintain a stock within a desirable stock size range. The ICES MSY Transition involves moving from the current Fishing Mortality (F) to MSY in 2015 in 5 steps. The Advice summary table now presents the advice for three Management Objective (s):

- Transition to an MSY approach with caution at low stock size
- The adoption of a Precautionary Approach (the approach in previous years).
- Avoid impaired recruitment and achieving the other objective(s) of a management plan

8.3 For fish stocks without projections a new framework has been applied:

	No Overfishing	Overfishing or Unknown Exploitation Status
Decreasing stock trend	Reduce catch from recent level at rate of stock decrease	Reduce catch from recent level at rate greater than the rate of stock decrease
Stable stock trend	Maintain catch at recent level	Reduce catch from recent level
Increasing stock trend	Increase catch from recent level at rate of stock increase	Maintain catch at recent level

8.4 The advice for different stocks is as follows:

North Sea cod

SSB has increased since its historical low in 2006, but remains below B_{lim}

Fishing mortality declined after 2000, and although its most recent trajectory is considered uncertain, it is estimated to be well above the long-term objectives of maximum yield, and likely above F_{pa}
Recruitment since 2000 is poor

The estimated catch 2009: 91.4 kilotonnes; 30.8 kt recorded landings; 14.6 kt recorded discards

The assessment is an update (benchmarked in 2009). It is considered more uncertain than last year and is informative of general stock status. An alternative assessment method gives same perception.

MSY approach:

$F = ((0.85 * 0.8) + (0.19 * 0.2))$ reduced by the ratio $SSB_{2011} / MSYB_{trigger}$
Increase in SSB of 90% in 2012
%TAC change: reduce by 86%

Precautionary approach:

$F_{pa} = 0.4$: even a zero catch in 2011 is not expected to result in SSB reaching B_{pa} in 2012

Management Plan:

$F_{08} * 0.55$ with TAC constraint (20%)

Kattegat cod

SSB has been at a historically lowest level since 2000

Recruitment in recent years has been the lowest in the time series

Fishing mortality: current level is unknown and is likely somewhere in between the estimates from two runs (with and without estimating unallocated removals) .

Overall perception of the stock is unchanged compared to last year

MSY approach:

Not relevant - the state of the stock is unknown and low recruitment and spawning biomass is at historically lowest level in recent years.

Precautionary approach:

Due to the historical low recruitment and stock biomass the catches should be set to zero for 2011

There is no management plan.

North Sea haddock

SSB has been above MSY $B_{trigger}$ since 2001

Fishing mortality declined in the early 90's and has been below F_{pa} since 2001.

Recruitment: the last large Year Class was the strong 1999 YC. Apart from the 2005 and 2009 YC which are about average, recent recruitment has been poor

The assessment is an update (benchmark planned for early 2011). Perception of the stock remains relatively unchanged.

MSY approach:

Increase F_{sq} to F_{MSY} (0.30). Increase in SSB of 3% in 2012.
%TAC change: reduce by 5%

Precautionary approach:

F no more than F_{pa} . SSB above B_{pa} in 2012.
%TAC change: increase by 94%

Management Plan:

Following the management plan is expected to lead to a TAC reduction of 5% and an effort increase of 29%.

Skagerrak-Kattegat whiting

Available landing data provide insufficient information on stock status: No Advice
Total catch (2009) 243 t comprising 8 % landings,
80 % discards; 13 % industrial by-catch

North Sea & Eastern Channel whiting

SSB in 2009 is slightly higher than in 2008 but remains below average
Fishing mortality has been stable over the last 4 years.
Recruitment has been very low between 2003 and 2007 with stronger recruitments estimated in 2008 and 2009, however the size of these recruitments are uncertain.

The assessment is uncertain. The change in assessments results since 2009 is caused by the use of increased values of natural mortality particularly at age 1

MSY approach:

There are no Reference Points to enable MSY advice.

Precautionary approach:

No PA RPs. A 50% reduction in F is needed to maintain SSB at the 2010 level.

There is no management plan

North Sea plaice

SSB well above MSY $B_{trigger}$ (230 kt)
Fishing mortality below F_{pa} (0.74) and slightly above F_{MSY} (0.20)
Recruitment around LT average from 2005 onwards

Total estimated catch (2009) 100kt: 55 % landings, 45 % discards

The assessment is uncertain: discards form a substantial part of the total catch and cannot be well estimated; large differences in abundance observed in the different regions of the North Sea

MSY approach:

Reduce F to 0.23. Increase in SSB of 11% in 2012.
%TAC change: increase by 1%

Precautionary approach:

No more than $F_{pa}=0.6$. Decrease in SSB of 16% in 2012.
%TAC change: increase by 126%.

Management Plan:

Initial evaluation: Not precautionary. The catch according to the plan can be considered precautionary in 2011

North Sea Sole

SSB fluctuated around the PA RPs for the last decade; in 2009 below MSY $B_{trigger}$ (35 kt)
Fishing mortality declining trend since 1995; below F_{pa} (0.4) in 2008 and 2009; above F_{MSY} (0.22)

Landings 2009: 14 kt

Perception of the stock remains relatively unchanged.

MSY approach:

Reduce F to 0.33. Increase in SSB of 4% in 2012.
%TAC change: reduce by 2%

Precautionary approach:

SSB above B_{pa} in 2012: increase in F of 6% (to 0.38; < $F_{pa}=0.4$)
%TAC change: increase by 10%

Management Plan:

10% reduction of F_{sq} . Increase in SSB of 5% in 2012.
%TAC change: reduce by 4%

Plaice: Skagerrak-Kattegat

No reliable assessment. The state of the stock is unknown.

MSY considerations: survey indices indicate abundance and R are higher during the last 6-8 years than in the 90's. Landings should not exceed the average level 2007-2009

PA considerations: no reason to revise the perception of stock condition. Landings should not exceed the average level 2007-2009

Sole Skagerrak-Kattegat

SSB has decreased since 2005, but is still above MSY $B_{trigger}$ (2000 t)
Fishing mortality stable slightly below F_{MSY} (0.38) since 2005
Recruitment about average since 2003

Introduction of a survey designed for sole improves fishery independent information. The inclusion of information from the Western Baltic (Subdivisions 22-24) into the assessment has improved the coverage of the complete population entity

MSY approach:

Increase F to F_{MSY} (0.38). No changes in SSB in 2012.
%TAC change: increase by 19%

Precautionary approach:

No more than F_{pa} (0.30). Increase in SSB of 6% in 2012
%TAC change: decrease by 3%

There is no management plan.

Plaice: Eastern channel

Assessment indicative of trends only

SSB since 2004 is stable at a low level

Fishing mortality varies without trend around LT average

Recruitment is stable in most recent years

Total catch (2009) 2.9 kt (including components of the IV and VIIe coming in VIId to spawn in the beginning of the year). No discards time-series are yet available.

MSY approach:

The state of the stock is unknown but SSB since 2004 is stable. Reduce landings from recent level.

Precautionary approach:

No reason to revise the perception of the stock condition. Landings should not exceed average level 2007-2009.

There is no management plan

Sole: Eastern channel

SSB fluctuating around a mean of about 10 000 t since 1982, and has been above B_{pa} since 2002.

Fishing mortality increased and fluctuated between F_{pa} and F_{lim} the last 4 years

Recruitment YC 2001, 2004 & 2005 were the three highest since 1990. The 2008 year class is predicted to be the highest in the time-series

MSY approach:

Transition implies $F=0.44$, above $F_{pa}=0.40$. Reduce F to F_{pa} . SSB in 2012 above B_{pa} .
%TAC change: increase by 15 %

Precautionary approach:

No more than F_{pa} .

There is no management plan

Norway pout; NS and Skagerrak-Kattegat

In year advice: landings in 2010. Advice for 2011 to be available in autumn 2010

SSB increased recently and is considered to be above MSY $B_{escapement}$

Fishing mortality lower than the natural mortality for this stock and has decreased in recent years well below the long term average F (0.6).

Recruitment in 2007-08 was around the long term average (83 billions) and well above average in 2009. With present fishing mortality levels, the status of the stock is mainly determined by natural processes.

MSY approach:

Maintain the SSB above a reference level $MSY B_{escapement}$ by 1st Jan 2011: do not need to reduce F.

Precautionary approach:

Same as MSY approach.

Management Plan:

ICES has evaluated and commented on three management strategies, although these have not yet been decided on.

Saithe; NS, Skagerrak, West Scotland & Rockall

An update assessment could not be run in 2010 due to missing and incomplete indices for 2009: The assessment of the 2009 working group meeting has been used as a basis for the forecast run that has been extended to 4 years

SSB above B_{pa} from 2001-2008

Fishing mortality From 2001 - 2008, F has been at or below the fishing mortality target of the management plan (0.3)

MSY approach:

Marginal increase in F to F_{MSY} (0.30). SSB kept above $MSY B_{trigger}$.
%TAC change: decrease by 13%

Precautionary approach:

Keep SSB above B_{pa} .
%TAC change: increase by 5%

Management Plan:

Following the MP implies a decrease in TAC of 13%

***Nephrops*; Skagerrak-Kattegat**

State of the stock unknown. Commercial fishery indices (lpue, landings per unit effort) have been increasing in recent years suggesting that the stock is exploited sustainably. High catch rates of small *Nephrops* in 2007, 2008 and 2009 may indicate strong recruitment in these years.

MSY approach:

State of the stock unknown but stock stable or slightly increasing -> catches in 2011 should not exceed recent average

North Sea *Nephrops*

FU 10: Noup

The state of the stock is unknown (lack of data); no new advice.

FU 5 – Botney Gut

MSY approach:

State of stock unknown. Lpue fluctuating without trend indicating stable stock status -> reduce landings from recent level

Precautionary approach:

Average of past three years

FU 6 – Farn Deepes

The UWTV survey, fishery data and length frequency data all point to the stock continuing to be at a low level

MSY approach:

Harvest ratio of 14.3% with additional reduction of 20% (since SSB is below MSY $B_{trigger}$) = HR of 11.2%

FU 7 – Fladen Ground

The UWTV abundance is still at a high level relative to the historical time series. The stock is being exploited sustainably

MSY approach:

Harvest ratio be increased to 10.2 %.

FU 8 – Firth of Forth

The UWTV abundance has been at a relatively high level since 2003. The stock does not show signs of overexploitation

MSY approach:

Harvest ratio to be reduced to 21.7%.

FU 9 – Moray Firth

The UWTV abundance has been stable, but at a lower level than that evident from 2003-2005. The stock does not show signs of overexploitation although the current low discard rate suggests that recruitment may be lower than it has been previously.

MSY approach:

Harvest ratio to be slightly decreased to 13.7%.

FU 33 – Horn's Reef

Lpue has been increasing up to 2008, probably reflecting increase in gear efficiency (technological creep) in the last years. The mean sizes in 2005 catches and the increased lpue's in the subsequent years could indicate a high recruitment in 2005. The development in 2009 then suggests that the contribution of the 2005 recruitment to the stock now has faded.

MSY approach:

State of the stock unknown but lpue and R suggest no major changes in the stock -> landings in 2011 should be reduced from recent levels.

- 8.5 Hugo Andersson thanked Manuela for her presentation. There were a number of questions from participants about individual stocks. In particular there was

concern that the advice was that the TAC for saithe should decrease for the second year running; yet the Fishing Mortality was below F_{MSY} . This was unbelievable. In addition there was said to be a lack of data, but IFREMER had put additional resources into providing additional data including an observer programme. Manuela explained that ICES scientists had used all the data available to them. There was scope for providing additional data at the next Benchmark Meeting, which for saithe was in 2011. With respect to providing additional data it was agreed that the Benchmark Meetings did provide an opportunity for fishers to introduce new data. We should be systematically identifying data deficiencies for the major stocks and should be talking to ICES about this problem and what the RACs could do to rectify data deficiencies. Dialogue about missing data is also important at a national level.

- 8.6 Surprise was also expressed over the advice for cod, which in 2010 would reach an acceptable Spawning Stock Biomass and yet a reduction in the TAC was advised. ICES could only explain half the total removals. Yet there is a strong focus on this stock. Would there be an update on cod in September when the results of summer surveys would be available? Manuela said that if the signal from these surveys was strong then the advice on cod would be updated.
- 8.7 Luc Corbisier said that we had just got used to the Precautionary Approach and now the MSY Approach was being thrust upon us. Were the terms of reference for the MSY Approach firmly established? Will they remain with us until 2015? Manuela replied that we were now in a transition period. The MSY Approach had been introduced for the first time this year and for many stocks this advice was preliminary. ICES were presenting the advice in three forms and it was up to managers to decide which one to accept. Peter Hopkins pointed out that the Precautionary Approach was not a target; it was the maximum level at which you should fish. We should be moving towards F_{MSY} . In some cases there was a management plan, and where there was we would stick to that. Otherwise we would aim at achieving F_{MSY} but if we did not have that we could fall back to the Precautionary Approach.
- 8.8 Guus Pastoor was concerned at the message which would go out to the press on the new advice. Manuela said that emphasis should be placed on the adoption of the MSY Approach, and with the gradual move towards achieving MSY. Pim Visser thought that the changing of targets this year would send out a gloomy message to fishers and the public. People would not understand that this was a new approach. What had the Commission sought from ICES? Peter Hopkins answered that the Commission wanted to move to MSY in equal steps. Failing that it would fall back to the management plan and then failing that to the Precautionary Approach. This is set out in the paper on Fishing Opportunities for 2011. Michael Park said that the Commission might be aiming for 5 equal steps but it was difficult to do this as TACs are only a proxy. Reducing TACs did not mean reducing catches.

9. Commission Update

- 9.1 Peter Hopkins provided an update from the Commission. The amendment to the sandeel TAC had now been adopted. The TAC was now 400,000 tonnes for the

North Sea. With the new preliminary advice from ICES it would not be possible to amend the sprat TAC. However the Norway pout TAC would be amended by written procedure.

- 9.2 The MRAG report on the sole and plaice economic impact assessment will be completed soon (in August) and it will be sent out immediately for comment. The Commission will then decide on the options for the multi-annual plan for 2011. The stocks are of course shared with Norway and there will have to be discussions with them.
- 9.3 The Commission had hoped to implement the Real Time Area Closures Regulation this year but has run into a legal problem. Legal services have objected to the proposal to limit the number of closures in areas like the Skagerrak. The Control regulation does not allow restrictions to the number of simultaneous closures and the inclusion of that measure would require derogation from the Control Regulation. The RTA Closures Regulation now excludes the Skagerrak – to the annoyance of the Norwegians. It is hoped that the amended regulation will now be adopted on the 6th & 7th July. From that date there will be a legal obligation for RTCs to apply, with defined trigger points. Within the regulation cod/haddock/whiting will be lumped together.
- 9.4 The Commission had received the NSRAC policy paper on cod recovery and would be replying in due course. Peter was asked what the implications of the ICES advice on cod were for the effort regime next year under the cod recovery plan. The plan required a 25% reduction with respect to the F in 2008. However, if the advice is that F is increasing compared with the 2008 level then further effort reduction should take place. It is not clear yet whether the SSB is below B_{lim} but if it is then a 25% reduction in effort will be necessary. Niels Wichmann said that if it was a 25% reduction on the level for 2008 then it would be more than 25% in relation to 2010. Peter Hopkins agreed and said that the aim was to maintain the baseline. If we have overshoot then a very big reduction in effort will be required. This is a real reversal if F has increased. The situation was different for the Kattegat where the data-poor rules would apply; requiring a 25% reduction. This was worrying too. Michael Park drew attention to the 90.000 t figure for total removals compared with the 38,000 t for human consumption. That discrepancy provides a great impetus for introducing catch-quotas. Peter Hopkins said that it would, but pointed out that a move to catch-quotas would require a monitoring programme. If ICES is estimating a high level of discards then the best way out is to land all that is caught provided there is reassurance that no discarding is still taking place.
- 9.5 Isabelle Viallon reminded the NSRAC that on the 14th September a meeting of MEPs, ACFA and the RACs would take place. There would be a follow up meeting on the 14th October. In the autumn there would also be a conference on CFP reform under the Belgian Presidency. In June a consultation had been launched on seabird by-catches. A response is required by the 1st August. In July there will be a consultation exercise on shark-finning.

10. The Brown Crab Fishery in the German Bight

- 10.1 A letter had been received from the Brown Crab Vivier Producers' Group drawing the attention of the NSRAC to concerns about a potential rise in fishing effort on brown crab in the German Bight. The group had been formed to deal with marketing problems for brown crab and they were concerned about the opening of new fisheries at a time when marketing was proving difficult. Peter Breckling said that German fishers had become aware of the potential for a brown crab fishery in this area because of the presence of UK and Irish vessels fishing for crabs within the German EEZ. There is concern by German fishers that offshore wind-farms will cover much of the German Bight, leaving possibilities only for fishing passive gears. Fishers were therefore thinking of fishing for brown crabs and one new vessel was being built. German fishers did not want to increase the problems of marketing brown crabs but did it make sense to achieve this by restricting the fishery? It might be better to increase the market for crabs.
- 10.2 Pim Visser said that Dutch fishers were aware of the problems and knew the Irish fishers concerned. However, Pim was concerned about the problems raised by restricting catches to maintain prices. The legal framework of a producer organisation needed to be developed to protect against competition prosecutions. German and Dutch fishers could then join the PO if they wished.
- 10.3 It was agreed that the letter, from a grouping of fishermen, had no concrete proposals to make. It was simply alerting the NSRAC to a possible problem and informing other fishers of the existence of the new producers' group. We should treat the letter as informative but should not discuss prices, marketing and economic values. The subject might be relevant to the Demersal WG if there were stock management problems. We should simply note the letter and pass the information on to any interested parties.

11. Management Plan for Sole and Plaice

- 11.1 Pim Visser reported on the meeting on the Multi-annual Plan for plaice and sole. STECF is seeking ways of developing the plan and the NSRAC is helping them with this task. He had also attended the scoping meeting with scientists in Copenhagen. Much was still uncertain. The MRAG impact evaluation for the plan had been very difficult and there was uncertainty about its value. STECF will keep us updated on progress. Although we were involved in these meetings as observers, we had in the past been cut out from some discussions. We had now asked that we be involved at all levels. The management plan itself is very political. There had really been no need to introduce it in the way it had been – as an emergency measure because scientists had 'lost' 100,000 tonnes of fish. It combined sole and plaice, and was dealing with a mixed fishery, so that the plan presented particular challenges.
- 11.2 Isabelle Viallon said that the next meeting in October would look at different options. It would be possible for stakeholders themselves to propose options. Then, a Commission paper at the beginning of 2011 would go out to consultation. The methodology developed in preparing this plan would be developed to evaluate other management plans. Pim Visser said that we would need to bear this in mind when preparing the Long Term Management Plan for *Nephrops*. A NSRAC summary on developing LTMPs had been presented to the meeting.

12. Fishermen's Information Mapping project

- 12.1 Nathan de Rozarieux presented an outline project proposal for mapping fishers' information in the North Sea. He works for Seafood Cornwall (part of Seafish) to improve quality of landings and promote fish but is now seconded to Natural England. This national conservation body recognises the need for fishers to be involved in spatial mapping activities and that fishers themselves should be driving the process. Current procedures for developing marine conservation zones are imperfect and do not embrace the industry. Fishermen have seen increased pressure on fishing grounds both in terms of marine protected areas and also the rapid development of the offshore renewables sector. Moreover, in the longer term detailed 'marine spatial planning' is required under the Marine Strategy Framework Directive. In the North Sea the NSRAC is the only body capable of taking a mapping programme forward which is both defensive and proactive, and serves the best interests of fishermen. The proposed project would build on expertise and data already held within Member State administrations & institutions but would also include small packages of data from fishers themselves. VMS satellite data already existed but there was a data void for vessels of less than 15m. However, Seafish had developed a 'low cost VMS' system using mobile phone data. In addition, many vessels can now map the seabed in detail. All these data are valuable and can be used to defend the fishing grounds. He understood that fishermen did not want to give these data away, and that there were problems in deciding who should hold these data and ensure that they are used for the proper purpose of assisting fishermen in protecting their future. Confidentiality is important.
- 12.2 In planning this project the intention was for the RAC to take overall responsibility, with the Spatial Planning WG and the fishing industry closely involved. The critical factor in the risk assessment was gaining the trust and support of industry. The overall total cost estimate was €180 - 280k over an estimated 2-year timeline. Option A is to prepare a detailed budget and project plan and then bid for Interreg funds. In some ways this would be the preferred route to maintain continuity, co-ordination and sense of 'project' and managing workflow. Option B is that the Crown Estate (in the UK) is keen to commission work inside UK waters as soon as possible; work could start in 2 months. A UK module could be used as a demonstration pilot, with data ownership shared.
- 12.3 Euan Dunn made it clear that this was a new project proposal, which was totally separate from any input on marine spatial planning from Aberdeenshire Council, which had expertise in this area. A previous NSRAC workshop (Feb 2006: 'Planning workshop on mapping key fishing areas in the North Sea') had outlined the need for a database of this kind and conducted a feasibility study. Confidentiality of the data is at the core. We should seize the moment and develop this project.
- 12.4 Luc Corbisier asked about the objectives. Was it to protect fisheries and fishers' livelihoods against displacement from the fishing grounds by wind-farms and protected areas? Or did the project have wider objectives? The South West Waters RAC for example was intending to use spatial data in preparing long term

management plans for fisheries. Nathan replied that the primary aim was as a defence against incursions, but helping to prepare LTMPs could also be important. Pim Visser said that there were already a number of similar projects underway, and he hoped that experience and knowledge could be shared. Isabelle Viallon wished to know who the partners in the project would be and what role would be played by the NSRAC. Nathan said there would be a number of contracting parties but the project would be led by the NSRAC. Ann Bell interjected that we were aware that we could not receive double funding for a project. At this stage we were discussing a new project proposal. Isabelle remarked that the project would need a firm decision by the ExCom if it was to go ahead.

- 12.5 Eamon Mangan pointed out that within Member States there were a number of such projects, with several partners. There were big issues over making VMS data available and Member States would not readily hand over data without a strong protocol over their use. Barrie Deas thought that the project was an important step forward. In 5 years time he was sure we would wish that we had started such a project. However, lots of decisions now had to be taken. There was a need to set up a project group and to prepare governance protocols especially with respect to VMS and other data from fishers. Luc Corbisier agreed that the data ownership would need to be properly established. Caroline Gamblin did not want to take a decision today. Fishers needed to be consulted about these proposals. Jan Willem Wijnstroom asked whether 100% funding would be available for the project. Would the NSRAC have to contribute? Ann Bell said that we should come back to the next ExCom with a more detailed proposal. It was agreed that a small group would be formed to develop the proposal further.

13. European Court of Auditors

- 13.1 Colm Friel, from the European Court of Auditors explained the content of a letter from the Court to the NSRAC seeking views on issues related to fleet overcapacity. The Court is not part of the Commission but is the external auditor of the EU budget and projects, and it had produced a previous report on the CFP in 2007. It was now looking again at this subject and was seeking information on the balance between fishing fleets and fishing opportunities. The Court was focusing specifically on scrapping schemes; modernisation programmes, and entry and exit capacity regulation. The Court would visit seven Member States, consult the OECD and visit Norway. The auditors wanted to understand what overcapacity is and whether any segments were over capacity. What has been the effect of regulations? What had been the effect of community level and Member State effort reduction schemes and decommissioning schemes in particular countries? Are the right vessels being targeted? Is there a need to scrap vessels? Have modernisation schemes increased the capacity to catch fish? Are Member States sure that they have not? Member States currently have to make annual reports on fleet capacity restrictions and to seek guidance from the Commission.
- 13.2 The Court's letter had been sent to all the RACs, listing the specific questions that needed to be answered. It wanted to receive responses from stakeholders.

Hugo Andersson said that eight questions had been put to us but we could not answer them now. Indeed some of them were difficult to answer. A response was required by Christmas. Barrie Deas agreed that the questions raised complex issues, which we would need to discuss. Capacity related to a number of other topics like compliance and profitability. We could prepare answers within the Demersal WG and would place this on the agenda for the 15th September. We would need to line up some experts. Niels Wichmann also thought that the subject was a complex one, which should be one of the pillars of the CFP. We could not discuss this subject in isolation. Different countries operated in different ways and there were historical differences. We could go back to MAGP 1-IV, which saw developments in a number of Member States. Some had tradeable quotas while others did not. Sometimes it was necessary to have over-capacity – as with farming machinery – to fish effectively over a limited time period. Effort restrictions had had an impact too. We would need time to consider the issue. Colm Friel said that the Court would treat any material provided with discretion.

14. Any other business

- 14.1 The next meetings of the General Assembly and ExCom would take place in Aberdeenshire on the 21st and 22nd October. French fishers and the French government were thanked for hosting the meeting, and the interpreters thanked for their assistance.

15 Action Points

1. The Secretariat will contact the Marine Centre in Shetland and the fishers' associations to arrange for the 2010 Fishers' Survey to take place (1.4).	Secretariat
2. The 'Good Practice in Fishing' booklet will be placed on the website (1.5).	Secretariat
3. The NSRAC agreed to accept the offer from Aberdeenshire Council to host the NSRAC. Detailed arrangements for the new Secretariat will be decided following discussion with the Commission. A meeting would be arranged with the Commission to settle details (2.15).	Secretariat in liaison with the Commission
4. Those wishing to apply for the post of Chair of the ExCom should complete the appropriate tender form and submit it for consideration by the Board of Directors. Accepted nominations will be considered at the next ExCom (2.16).	ExCom Members
5. Comments on the draft budget by members should be sent in before the 1 st August so that a complete budget can be made available at the General Assembly (3.1).	Members Secretariat
6. The Secretariat will ask the Commission to meet a small group from the NSRAC to discuss the Marine Strategy Framework Directive and consider representations on issues which affected fishers directly (4.2).	Secretariat Members

7. The issue of poor data availability leading to an absence of analytical assessments will be raised at the ICES Dialogue Meeting in Galway in August. The Secretariat will resolve with members who will attend to represent the NSRAC (6.3).	Secretariat
8. The NSRAC will take a decision at the next ExCom on whether the Socio-Economic WG should continue (7.1).	Secretariat Members
9. Michael Park will produce a draft press release for Fishing News on discussions on a LTMP for Nephrops and will pass it to Ann Bell (7.4).	Michael Park Ann Bell
10. Euan Dunn will draft a letter from the NSRAC thanking the JNCC for the meeting on MPAs on the 11 th March and asking what progress had been made in taking forward the agreed action points (7.13).	Euan Dunn Secretariat
11. The letter from the chair of the ExCom, together with the attached note on governance under a reformed CFP, was agreed and will be sent to the Commissioner (7.15).	Secretariat
12. Consideration will be given to organising a workshop on catch-quotas in the New Year, once the results of Danish and Scottish trials are available (7.15). Catch quotas will be discussed more thoroughly at the next Demersal WG (7.15).	Secretariat Chair of Demersal WG
13. A revised draft of the paper on Whiting Discards will be prepared and agreed by written procedure (7.21).	Rapporteur Secretariat
14. A small group will be formed to prepare a more detailed project proposal on spatial mapping of fishing activity for presentation to the next ExCom (12.5).	Secretariat Chair of SPWG
15. Answers to the questions on overcapacity posed by the Court of Auditors will be considered by the Demersal WG at its next meeting (13.2).	Chair of Demersal WG
16. The next meetings of the General Assembly and ExCom will take place on Aberdeenshire on the 21 st and 22 nd October.	

16. In attendance

Members

Wim de Boer	Dutch Fishing Industry
Pim Visser	Dutch Fishing Industry
Mike Park	SFF
Barrie Deas	NFFO
Caroline Gamblin	CNPMEM
Jan Willem Wijnstroom	EAA
Guus Pastoor	AIPCE/CEP
Kathleen Laissy	EBCD
Derek Forrester	EAFPA
Michael Andersen	Danish Fishermen's Association
Bengt Olof Eliasson	Swedish Fishermen's Federation
Giles Bartlett	WWF
Euan Dunn	Birdlife International

Christine Absil
Ate Oostra
Emiel Brouckaert
Antoine le Garrec
Peter Breckling
Jarek Zeilinski

Hugo Andersson
Tony Hawkins
Ann Bell
Joyce Walker

Observers

Niels Wichmann
Svend Erik Andersen
Fredrik Lindberg
Gunter Klever
Luc Corbisier
Isabelle Viallon
Eamon Mangan
Martin Brebner
Colin Mackenzie
Elisabeth Vallet
Bruno Hoffstadt
Laurent Nicolle
Bruno Dachicourt
Thierry Lepretre
Pierre-Georges Dachicourt
Colm Friel
Laure Gatter
Manuela Azevedo
Peter Hopkins
Dominique Thomas
Nathan de Rozarieux
Ton Ylstra

North Sea Foundation
EUCC – The Coastal Union
Rederscentrale
UAPF
German Fishing Industry
Polish North Atlantic Producers' Association

NSRAC Chair
NSRAC Rapporteur
NSRAC Executive Secretary
NSRAC Assistant Exec Sec

Danish Fishermen's Assoc/ACFA
Danish Fishermen's Assoc
Swedish Fishermen's Federation
German Fishermen's Association
SDVO
European Commission
French Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries
Aberdeenshire Council
CE Aberdeenshire Council
Seafood Choices Alliance
German Ministry of Agriculture / Fisheries
From Nord
CFTC
CNP MEM
CNP MEM
European Court of Auditors
European Court of Auditors
ICES
European Commission
OP CME
Seafish
Netherlands Ministry of Agriculture/Fisheries