



## Report of ExCom Meeting October 21<sup>st</sup> & 22<sup>nd</sup> 2010, Aberdeen, Scotland

Rapporteur: Tony Hawkins

Draft

### 1. Welcome & Report

- 1.1 The Chairman of the ExCom, Hugo Andersson, welcomed participants to the Aberdeen ExCom meeting. The rapporteur, Tony Hawkins, reported on the previous ExCom meeting which had been held in Boulogne. It had been arranged that the 2010 Fishers' Survey would take place and that task had now been completed. The 'Good Practice in Fishing' booklet had been placed on the NSRAC website. Aberdeenshire Council had offered to host the NSRAC and arrangements for the new Secretariat were being discussed further with the Commission. Applications for the post of Chair of the ExCom had been invited and received, and the appointment would be made later today. The Work Plan and Budget had been discussed and subsequently approved at the General Assembly. The Commission had been asked to provide someone to explain the provisions of the Marine Strategy Framework Directive and discuss representations on issues which affected fishers directly. A meeting had been held but it did not appear that those responsible within the Commission were prepared to take the NSRAC's comments seriously. The issue of poor data availability leading to an absence of analytical assessments had been discussed further at the ICES Dialogue Meeting in Galway in August. Discussion of whether the NSRAC Socio-Economic WG should continue would be considered further at this meeting. Discussions at fishing ports on the draft Long Term Management Plan for *Nephrops* had now taken place and been reported on. A further meeting had been held with the JNCC on UK proposals for Marine Protected Areas. Advice on governance under a reformed CFP had been prepared and sent to the Commission. Further discussion had taken place on catch-quotas and the results of Danish and Scottish trials were now available. Advice on whiting discards had been prepared, agreed and sent to the Commission. A more detailed project proposal on spatial mapping of fishing activity had been prepared and we would learn more about it at this ExCom meeting. Answers to the questions on overcapacity posed by the Court of Auditors had been considered by the Demersal WG, a response sent to the Commission and a reply now received.
- 1.2 Hugo Andersson introduced the keynote speaker Michael Nielson of Marine Scotland. Mr Nielson welcomed participants to Scotland. Scotland was looking

to see stronger links between different stakeholders and different areas of maritime policy. The role of the RACs was important to this. There were two key areas for Marine Scotland:

- Discards
- Regionalisation

- 1.3 On discards, the aim was to move as closely as possible to discard-free fishing. In Scotland 17 boats had been given additional quota in return for accepting a catch-quota instead of a landings quota. Once they had taken that catch quota, they had to stop fishing. This was preventing discards and fishermen were able to work well inside this new framework, finding ways of avoiding catching cod so that they could continue to seek their full quota. The Scottish Government would like to see this measure rolled out to the CFP generally but would need to develop systems for transferability of quota or multi-species quota so that everything which was caught could be landed.
- 1.4 On regionalisation; RACs are a success. The Scottish Government was looking for a system of devolved decision-making and co-management of the fishery. The government had worked well with the industry on awarding additional days-at-sea linked with conservation credits. It did not wish to set up new institutions. Rather, it wanted to take a 'light touch', linking with Member States and the RACs into a practical reality. It wanted the overall objectives to be set at an EU level, but management at a regional level.
- 1.5 Another priority area was marine planning and renewables. The Scottish Government was looking to produce the first draft of a marine plan by the middle of 2011. A combination of marine planning, MPAs, and renewable developments would look challenging to the fishing industry but the government wanted to fully engage the industry. Areas like the Dogger Bank would bring international challenges.
- 1.6 On science, it was important to achieve MSY but we needed to move carefully towards it, seeing it as a direction of travel. As we moved towards catch-quotas we would get better information on everything caught, which in turn would inform the scientific assessments.
- 1.7 With respect to the Marine Strategy Framework Directive and achieving Good Environmental Status, there would be challenges for the fishing industry. GES for food webs and seabed objectives would have implications for Scottish waters. As a closing point, the RACs had come from within the CFP and were playing a regional role. There were also regional responsibilities under the Marine Strategy Framework Directive. We needed to make a link between the two so that we could deal with wider issues within the North Sea.
- 1.8 Barrie Deas said that finding a regional management model would be difficult. At one stage it would have been seen as outrageous even to think about it. What kind of model did we now need and how could the NSRAC fit into it? Mike Nielson thought we would have to seek flexibility within the treaties. At EU level the Council, Parliament and Commission would have to set overall targets.

Member States would then have to implement plans for the North Sea and other regional basins. They would have to develop plans which would apply to fisheries, not individual stocks. And the plans would be signed off at the EU level. How the Member States would link in with the RACs was possible a matter of learning by doing. Member States would have to consult the RACs. But we are at an early stage on this

- 1.9 Pim Visser remarked that CFP reform was underway but a North/South divide was developing. Perhaps we needed to take initiatives to start to develop links between the Member States and the RACs. Links were good with officials but inevitably politicians would want to go their own way. On the Dogger Bank, discussions had taken place with the JNCC but the juggernaut still goes on its way. We need all the Member States involved to get their acts together in the months to come.
- 1.10 Ate Oostra was heartened by plans for dealing with discards and that trials with catch-quotas were giving positive results. We should be moving towards landing all that was caught. He detected that the Commission was not so keen on regionalisation although it could be done effectively for the North Sea and Baltic Sea. We already had *de facto* mechanisms. The RACs could build stronger links with the Member States and Parliament as well as with the Commission.
- 1.11 There was concern that meetings had taken place with those responsible for the MSFD, but there was clearly no mechanism for them to talk to and listen to the RACs. Member States on the other hand would support discussions with the RACs.
- 1.12 Peter Breckling said that the Natura 2000 programme already laid down common rules for establishing conservation areas. Now the UK was declaring additional areas under national legislation. Effectively it was renationalising conservation policy. Why was the UK not operating within the Natura 2000 framework, so that all those affected could become involved? We needed an integrated European approach. Mike Nielson thought the key was better communication. He recognised the importance of contacting other Member States and all the people affected. The fact that Member States were responsible for implementing GES did not preclude consulting on a wider basis. On renationalisation there were separate Scottish and English legal processes. Third parties would become involved where fisheries legislation was required. There are areas which need protection which cannot be handled through Natura 2000.
- 1.13 The November 16<sup>th</sup> meeting on reform of the CFP offered an opportunity for further comment with respect to regionalisation. There was also a need for debate on whether controlling days-at-sea was the most effective way to manage fishing. Managing total removals might be better.

## **2. Election of Chair and Vice Chairs**

- 2.1 We now had to appoint a new Chair to the ExCom. There was one nomination from the General Assembly: Niels Wichmann from Denmark. Was it the will of

- the meeting that Niels be appointed Chair? Niels Wichmann was agreed unanimously as Chair of the ExCom.
- 2.2 The next nominations were Christien Absil and Michael Park as the two Vice Chairs for the ExCom. Both were re-elected unanimously.
  - 2.3 Hugo Andersson said a few words before relinquishing the chair to Niels. Hugo thanked participants for allowing him to chair the NSRAC for 6 years. He hoped he had contributed greatly to the work of the RAC, but wished to leave while still enjoying the task. It was now time for him to step down. There would be changes to the NSRAC with reform of the CFP.
  - 2.4 It was normal for people to chair an established organisation but he had joined the NSRAC with a completely blank sheet. The North Sea Fisheries Partnership had brought together industry and scientists. It had not been eligible to take on the task of the RAC but had been helpful in setting it up. A Working Group had met in Bergen and had produced a report outlining a structure for the RACs which had been passed to the Commission. We then saw the Commission come forward in 2003 with proposals which had followed the Partnership's suggestions. The decision to establish the RACs had been taken in May 2004. The Partnership had then met in Aberdeen and had invited all the interested parties. The NSRAC then held our first General Assembly in November – despite the Commission saying that it was not possible to move at that speed. Many of us present today were part of that start-up process. We have set the standard for other RACs to follow.
  - 2.5 It had been right to gather stakeholders together to operate by consensus. It has been healthy and important for all those involved to engage with one another. We now talk to each other. In 2012 we hope that there will be a new more important role for the NSRAC. More responsibility for management must be given to fishers and other stakeholders. In the past the Commission has issued rule after rule without dialogue. The future does not rest with more complicated rules. Hugo closed by wishing the NSRAC well. He hoped it would continue to contribute to the CFP and to fisheries management. The NSRAC had been important to him on a personal level. He had made many new friends through its work but in particular wished to mention Ann, Joyce and Tony, all of whom had given him their strong support.
  - 2.6 Niels Wichmann thanked Hugo, Ann and Joyce for their contribution to the work of the NSRAC. These early years in the life of the NSRAC had been a marvellous time. He had been present during the revision of the CFP in 1993, when incentives for the catching sector were first mentioned. Those fishing larger mesh nets would gain more than others. A premium had been introduced on the landing of large fish. In the Baltic the quota for salmon was now based on numbers of fish rather than weight, encouraging fishers to catch larger fish. There had been a further revision in 2003. Concentration is now on saving cod and many other issues have been forgotten. We must now try to get back to operating normally. The RACs had come in under the heading of good governance. We were now thinking of a wider role at a regional level. We need to participate more fully in management, and we need to broaden our make-up to include more scientists. We also need to persuade high-ranking officials to

attend our meetings. We must move towards results-based management. We will never eliminate discards but we can minimise them. We need also to engage in wider maritime policy. It is now important to consolidate our Work Plan. We cannot tackle all the tasks we have listed. Niels looked forward to working with the Vice Chairs and Working Group Chairs; building on the past to go forward into the future.

### **3. Administrative Issues**

- 3.1 The appointment of the Board of Directors was discussed. Normally the Directors consist of the Chair of the ExCom, the two Vice-Chairs and the Executive Secretary. Now, Aberdeenshire Council would appoint one of the Directors – probably a senior person. Pim Visser preferred the Executive Secretary to be the person representing Aberdeenshire. Fredrik Lindberg agreed. The ExCom needed to know who the Director from Aberdeenshire would be. It was agreed that the Chair and two Vice-Chairs would be Directors. We would agree the appointment of the Aberdeenshire Director at the next ExCom.
- 3.2 We also had to appoint a representative to the Advisory Board to the Community Fisheries Control Agency. In the past this had been Hugo. The RACs rotated the position of RAC representative on the main Board of Directors. This arrangement had not worked well. We would await further information from the Commission on future arrangements before appointing a NSRAC representative.
- 3.3 We also had to revise our Working Group structure to give it the right focus. It was proposed that the Chair, Vice-Chairs and WG Chairs should meet to prioritise the Work Plan and come back to the ExCom with proposals. This approach received strong support from members. Michael Park said that we should also consider whether we should meet in one central place; be it London or Brussels. Others agreed that it was nice to travel to different ports but was often very inconvenient. We should meet at a central location. We should also have a programme of meetings prepared well in advance. And arrangements for reimbursing costs should be made simpler. Niels Wichmann would consider these suggestions with the Directors and report back to the ExCom.
- 3.4 It was agreed that we should close down the Socio-Economic WG as such issues were fundamental to all our deliberations. We did not have the resources for a full working group. Our main groups would be the Demersal, Spatial Planning and Skagerrak/Kattegat WGs. It was agreed that the current Chairs would be re-appointed to the respective WGs.
- 3.5 The overall budget for the forthcoming year was approved subject to any re-adjustment which might be necessary to provide payment to WG Chairs.
- 3.6 The remaining task was to appoint a rapporteur. Tony Hawkins was willing to continue in this role and had the support of members. Isabelle Viallon saw no problems in appointing Tony Hawkins as the rapporteur. However, she had mentioned to the Secretariat that it would be necessary in future to establish a contract appointing the rapporteur to conform to Commission procurement rules.

This could be resolved at the meeting to be held to discuss arrangements for the Secretariat. It was agreed that it was the will of the ExCom to appoint Tony Hawkins as the NSRAC rapporteur, subject to resolving any problems of a bureaucratic nature.

#### **4. Presentation on PISCES**

- 4.1 Colin Pringle gave a presentation on PISCES. This was a stakeholder project working across Member States looking for synergies for multi-sectoral decision-taking within the Celtic Sea. It was part-funded by the WWF and EU. It was intended to look at implementation of the Marine Strategy Framework Directive on a regional scale. It would translate the ecosystem approach into practice. Stakeholders from a variety of maritime industries would be taking part to shape emerging policy and practice. The work of PISCES would focus on maritime spatial planning as a tool for managing increasingly crowded seas.
- 4.2 There was agreement from participants that marine spatial planning was necessary. However, there were complaints that we were hearing once again about the ecosystem approach but had never received a satisfactory definition of what it meant in practice. Colin Pringle thought that once we practised the ecosystem approach it would become apparent what it meant. Essentially it meant acting in a sustainable manner in the use of resources, recognising that human benefits must also be considered. In response to a question it emerged that the NWWRAC was not involved in the project but French, Irish, Spanish, Welsh and English fishers were involved directly. It was remarked that this was really a top-down project seeking to promote a bottom-up approach.

#### **5. Report of the Demersal WG**

- 5.1 The Demersal WG had met on the 15<sup>th</sup> September in Brussels. A full report was available. A dialogue had been opened with the Commission on TACs and Quotas for 2011 and on the MSY approach. We had supported the NWWRAC in its initiative on data deficiencies and would be meeting with ICES to discuss this subject further. We had discussed cod recovery, some aspects of Real Time Closures and the effort regime. We had queries whether reductions in effort lead directly to a decrease in fishing mortality or whether catch-quotas and other measures are a better way of reducing F. Those discussions would continue.
- 5.2 A Focus Group on RTCs had met on the previous day to consider the different layers of RTCs now introduced. It had been agreed that stakeholders should be involved in the setting up of RTC measures but this had not always been the case. We had not been consulted over the EU/Norway arrangements and Member States had introduced their own schemes without wider consultation. There was a legitimacy deficit and a communication problem. It was also difficult to evaluate the efficacy of RTCs in reducing fishing mortality. A small research project was underway at CEFAS but there were also wider governance issues. There was to be an ICES workshop on this subject and it was hoped that stakeholders would be able to participate. We would be discussing RTCs further at the next Demersal WG on the 17<sup>th</sup> November.

- 5.3 The WG had also responded to the request for comment on over-capacity by the European Court of Auditors. One major task over the year had been taking the draft Long Term Management Plan for *Nephrops* out to the industry through meetings at fishing ports. We had provided further comment on CFP reform. We had also discussed the new Control Regulation. For convenience we had also dealt with three wider issues: the Hornsea wind-farm proposals; the Marine Strategy Framework Directive and the lack of engagement on the Directive by the Commission; and UK MPAs and their effects on international fleets.

## **6. Report of the Spatial Planning WG**

- 6.1 There had not been any meetings of the SPWG since the ExCom in Boulogne in June 2010. Since then there had been discussions with the JNCC over UK proposals for MPAs. The NSRAC's main concerns centred round a process for engaging non-UK fishers in the UK regional MCZ projects, and the development of a protocol for fishers' data protection/confidentiality. The NSRAC had written to the JNCC expressing concerns and emphasising the unacceptable delay in JNCC's feedback. JNCC's reply had been circulated to ExCom. Pim Visser had attended JNCC's recent MPA Stakeholder Forum at which these and other issues had been addressed.
- 6.2 The mapping project presented to the NSRAC in Boulogne had now gone forward. NFFO Services had now been commissioned by the Crown Estate to manage the work. The New NSRAC Secretariat would be able to play a wider role in Marine Spatial Planning. There was a need to extend the spatial scale of the mapping project already begun.
- 6.3 On management measures within SACs, the FIMPAS project had held its second workshop in Neuchatel on 30<sup>th</sup> June – 2<sup>nd</sup> July after the Boulogne meeting of the ExCom. This meeting was attended for the NSRAC by Pim Visser and Willem de Boer. The ultimate purpose of FIMPAS was to propose fisheries management measures for the offshore Dutch Natura 2000 sites (Dogger Bank, Cleaver Bank, Frisian Front). A third workshop would now be held in Den Helder and it would look at fisheries management options for the Dutch N2000 sites.
- 6.4 The UK consultation on the Dogger Bank SAC proposal had been issued by JNCC on Aug 20<sup>th</sup> and the deadline for submissions was Nov 12<sup>th</sup>. The NSRAC's response would be discussed under a separate ExCom agenda item. The UK was already coordinating on potential management options with the Netherlands and Germany (who both have adjacent Dogger Bank SACs; Germany has already designated its site and the Netherlands are in the process of preparing a designation). A key issue now was how to take forward the NSRAC's response to JNCC's consultation on the Dogger Bank SAC proposal (deadline 12<sup>th</sup> Nov).
- 6.5 An update had been received at the last Demersal WG on the Forewind wind farm development in the North Sea. As development partner for the Dogger Bank, the largest of the Round 3 offshore wind farm zones, Forewind had the objective of achieving consent for an agreed target installed capacity of 9GW of offshore wind farm projects by 2020 (13GW by 2023). There were to be four

- tranches of development, and the first of these had now been identified. We needed to provide feedback to Forewind on their proposals.
- 6.6 A planned ICES Dialogue Meeting on the ecosystem approach had been cancelled.
- 6.7 Pim Visser reported on the second FIMPAS meeting at Neuchatel. The first FIMPAS meeting had been on data gathering. The second was on potential impacts and had considered impacts for the Dogger Bank, Cleaver Bank and Frisian Front areas. Fishers had been outnumbered by NGOs and scientists at the meeting. A scoring system had been adopted for assessing the importance of impacts and this had been most un-scientific. The chair had not remained impartial and the Dutch Industry had no confidence in the process. There had been lots of tension with IMARES. FIMPAS had set out to be a good initiative, but there was all still to play for. There was a similar project for MPAs in Dutch waters. Mitigating measures were being discussed but there might be a need for fishers to take the case to the High Court. Fishers were trying to find common ground on fisheries within managed areas in the 12nm zone and would then try to move these to offshore sites. Those wishing to attend the third FIMPAS meeting in Den Helder would need to register with ICES.
- 6.8 Pim had attended a stakeholder meeting with the JNCC in London to discuss MPAs within the English EEZ. This process was going as fast as a high speed train. England has split its MPA development into three regional projects: Net Gains, Balanced Seas, and Finding Sanctuary. These were operating under different rules. Key concerns had been raised by stakeholders. Despite our representations they have not considered them. The UK is mishandling these designations. Emiel Brouckaert asked whether the UK might change its mind on this progress. Pim said absolutely not. The course is set. Barrie Deas agreed. The timetable for the English consultation was unrealistic. They had adopted a 'big bang' approach rather than doing things gradually. It would move to a political level in June, and Ministers would not want to receive any criticism of the process. Displacement of effort is one of the problems, but has not been considered adequately. The battle is not yet finished. The procedures adopted undermine the stakeholder process. Emiel Brouckaert said that the JNCC had visited Belgium the Netherlands and France. We should have strong representation at stakeholder meetings and should perhaps be named as a consultative association as the NFFO is. It was suggested that we should write to the Minister expressing concern at the procedures adopted. Barrie Deas said that a distinction would be made between the designation of sites and management measures within those sites. Management within the sites would be a key issue for us. An industry/MPA Coalition had been formed to take fishers' case forward. Peter Breckling thought that stakeholder participation had been totally cosmetic. We needed to make it clear that we were opposed to these developments and that we would not participate if our views would not be taken into account. Niels Wichmann thought that we should not leave the room if we wanted to go back in again. A letter would be drafted to the UK Minister, with an input from Euan Dunn, expressing concern at the consultation process and the speed of development.

- 6.9 Barrie Deas thought that currently we did not have enough knowledge to defend critical fishing grounds. We had decided in Boulogne to set up a collaborative mapping project. That was now underway with the SFO and NFFO fronting the project nationally. This was just one part of a project which might become international in scope. Euan Dunn said that the LOT 7 project on the Dogger Bank had been successful and we now needed a similar but wider exercise. How would we engage with Forewind on the Dogger Bank wind-farm proposals? We need a meeting of the Spatial Planning WG to discuss this and other issues which had a tight deadline. A meeting was planned for early January.

## **7. Report of the Skagerrak and Kattegat WG**

- 7.1 There had been no meeting of the Skagerrak and Kattegat Working Group since the last ExCom. An agenda is being discussed for the next meeting and topics may include a management plan for the plaice fishery in the Skagerrak; how to tie the WG into the development of a management plan for the North Sea *Nephrops* fishery; and many other issues. The WG will meet soon.

## **8. Report on progress with the Management Plan for the *Nephrops* Fishery**

- 8.1 The Development Group, led by Michael Park, had now completed five visits. Ports visited were Whitley Bay, Fraserburgh (twice), Eyemouth, and Pittenweem. All the port discussions have been different, reflecting local interests. Most fishers are prepared to go for long term stability and in terms of managing the Functional Units they are most interested in 'of which...' proposals, together with increased selectivity and the regulation of nets. They had expressed a wish for a 'land less but earn more' policy to meet economic objectives. It was emphasised that there had been a loss of dynamics within the fleet as a result of restrictions to fishing for whitefish. Some fishers would like there to be a recognised whitefish quota for *Nephrops* vessels.
- 8.2 A meeting to discuss the management plan had been held in Denmark and a meeting was planned in the Netherlands (now to be on Saturday November 20<sup>th</sup>).
- 8.3 Once we had a plan we would need to go back to the ports to present it to fishers. A further draft could be completed soon. We should also write to the Commission as they might be planning to set TACs for some of the Functional Units. We should emphasise that they should wait for our plan rather than adopting measures prematurely which might prejudice the plan. The fishing industry was strongly against the setting of individual TACs for the Units as it would affect their ability to redirect effort from one to another. It was also recognised that restrictions on a particular Unit would bear heavily on local fishers who did not have the option of fishing elsewhere. The idea had developed of providing disincentives for visiting vessels where local stocks were under threat. However, it would be difficult to define the 'local' fleet. Perhaps self-designation could play a role; or designation by track record? The problem is one of protecting Functional Units against depletion without losing flexibility within the fishery.

- 8.4 It was agreed that a draft would be completed before the next ExCom. In the meantime Niels Wichmann and the Secretariat would draft a letter to the Commission urging caution over the application of TACs to particular Functional Units.

## **10. The FIMPAS Project**

- 10.1 Ton IJlstra gave a presentation on the FIMPAS (Fisheries Measures in the North Sea) Project. The presentation would be placed on the NSRAC website.

- 10.2 The project aimed at identifying two questions:

- To what extent did specific fishing activities significantly threaten attainment of the conservation objectives of the Natura 2000 sites?
- What management measures would reduce these conflicts and how effective would they be at helping to ensure the favourable condition of these sites?

The final workshop, on management options, would take place in Den Helder in January. Applications to attend should be made to ICES.

- 10.3 At the second workshop, on conflict resolution, in Neuchatel, there had been disagreement amongst the participants with industry opposing the views of scientists. There had been discussion of the impacts that beam trawls had on the seabed compared to natural impacts e.g. from storms. With respect to the impact of gillnetting there had been concern over the differences that different gillnets might have on by-catch.

- 10.4 The Commission had insisted on a particular way of working. First there would be referral to an International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES) Advisory Commission in February/March 2011. Then advice would be sought from ACOM in August 2011. The Netherlands proposal to the EU/EC would take place in the autumn of 2011.

- 10.5 Robert Stevenson asked how the impact of gears on the seabed had been assessed. Ton IJlstra replied that it had been based on existing peer reviewed papers in scientific journals. Pim Visser disagreed. There had been voting by participants on impact at the Neuchatel workshop. Ton IJlstra denied this. Impact was not being decided through a voting process. An inventory had been made by IMARES and the participants asked their views on the results. Pim Visser remarked that whatever the process they had engaged in it had been thoroughly unsatisfactory and poorly chaired. Ton IJlstra said that the meeting had been chaired by an independent scientist and the project was using scientific data. The collation would also be done by ICES. Niels Wichmann asked why, if the process was scientific, people at the workshop had been asked to vote.

- 10.6 Arnold Locker asked for clarification of why otter trawling was assessed to be of medium risk on the Dogger Bank but the same gear was assessed as high risk on the Cleaver Bank. Ton IJlstra replied that the Dogger Bank was a submerged

sandbank whereas the Cleaver bank was a gravel reef. They were different types of habitat. Arnold Locker said that the Dogger Bank was not just a sandbank, it was more complex. And there were two distinct fisheries on the Cleaver Bank. Ton IJlstra explained that protection only had to be given to the conservation interest that had been identified. Not all the Cleaver bank was gravel – but that was the habitat type which had to be protected.

- 10.7 Arnold Locker asked what was to be done about displaced effort. Ton IJlstra replied that in some cases fishing would be allowed using more sustainable fishing techniques.
- 10.8 In answer to a question about ICES involvement, Ton IJlstra explained that this had been at the request of the Commission. The Commission wanted reassurance that the conclusions were based on science. They also wanted objective advice on what activities would be affected.
- 10.9 Pim Visser pointed out that the boundaries for the SACs were rather wide. Within them there might be different management measures applied in different sub areas. Fishers should make sure that their views were forwarded to the next workshop. There was also a need for fishers to comment on the German and UK proposals too. Luc Corbisier asked whether Germany and the UK would use similar procedures in identifying measures. Ton IJlstra said that the UK and Germany were working on similar proposals but the Commission had asked Member States to develop their own site proposals. Differences might emerge if different Member States adopted different conservation objectives for their sites. The Commission might ask what the impact of measures by other countries might have upon the need for Dutch measures. It was open to the industry to make suggestions about the need for coordination.
- 10.10 Euan Dunn asked when the next FIMPAS presentation should be made to the NSRAC. The RAC would like to hear from the project before its conclusions were cast in stone. It was pointed out by Isabelle Viallon that the Commission usually consulted the RACs formally after scientific advice is given. There would therefore be further opportunity to comment. However, generally the NSRAC liked to get involved in things earlier, while options were still being considered. Ton IJlstra replied that he would be happy to consult the NSRAC before submission of a report to ICES – so that the NSRAC could introduce options. February might be suitable. Niels Wichmann thanked Ton IJlstra for his presentation and for the offer of a future presentation. We would also take note that there would be a further workshop in January which fishers could attend through application to ICES.

## **11. Cod Recovery & Commission Update**

- 11.1 A letter had been received from the Commission in response to the NSRACs latest advice on cod recovery. The Commission acknowledged that there had been uncertainty over the cod assessments and the resultant advice. However, it had persisted in its view that effort controls had worked and were responsible for the reduction in fishing mortality on cod. Nevertheless there was recognition that the initiatives taken by the industry had also been effective. The letter proposed

that the Commission and NSRAC should work together to resolve the various issues over cod recovery.

- 11.2 It was pointed out that the reduction in fishing mortality had started before effort controls had been introduced. The reduction had resulted from the scrapping of large numbers of fishing vessels together with selectivity measures. The Commission was being naive. The implication of the letter was that a further reduction in days at sea would reduce fishing mortality still further; whereas the view within the NSRAC was that other measures, like cod avoidance and catch quotas, would be more effective.
- 11.3 Peter Hopkins had provided an update from the Commission on the previous day. He agreed that the correlation between effort and reductions in F did not imply causation. Decommissioning may have had a major effect. However, reducing fishing effort could not be counterproductive in terms of reducing F. The recent increase in fishing mortality identified by ICES was the nub of the problem. It had occurred when industry measures might have been expected to have their greatest effect. The Commission was not critical of those measures; it was simply saying that they had not been enough. Complications in the effort regime were now making it difficult to manage; but the Commission thought that effort should be reduced still further.
- 11.4 Michael Andersen pointed out that the ICES estimate of F was uncertain. The assessment working group had urged caution over its acceptance. Moreover, it was not sensible to base further measures damaging to the fleets on the basis of a single value. We were still moving in the right direction.
- 11.5 Michael Park said that the Scottish Conservation Credit scheme tried to reward good behaviour. When the position becomes really extreme and effort reduction is impacting upon businesses then it becomes negative in its effects. Fishers would no longer behave responsibly. They would start discarding and eschew cod avoidance. Barrie Deas said that we could argue that the effort regime had not saved a single cod. It has just made fishing a more difficult task. Further effort reductions would result in fishers taking steps to retain their earnings – through capital stuffing and other actions. ICES had included capacity reductions in their estimates of effort reduction, and it was those reductions together with other restrictions in fishing activity which were most important.
- 11.6 Peter Hopkins agreed that too much attention should not be directed at a single value for F. We should set a TAC appropriate to the cod recovery plan. He was not being critical of catch quotas and cod avoidance measures. If we could get these measures to work then it would simplify the legislation and make the effort regime unnecessary. A lot had been resting on the F estimates from ICES. Concessions had been made to fishermen and the Commission was concerned that the cod avoidance measures were not working. There were increasing requests for derogation from the effort regime and for special treatment. All of these required scientific evaluation. In general the cod recovery plan was working well but ICES had identified significant unallocated removals which gave cause for concern. Revising and improving the cod recovery plan was now more complicated as it involved co-decision taking.

- 11.7 Pim Visser was concerned over the impact of effort reductions upon vessels which did not catch cod. We were also warning the Commission not to pay too much attention to a single value for F, which was provisional and which had been queried by the working group which had produced it. Effort reductions had reduced the ability of vessels to move towards lower impact fishing.
- 11.8 Attention then turned to plans for reform of the CFP. When would we see an options paper on CFP reform? Isabelle Viallon was not aware of any intention to produce an options paper. Impact assessment of different scenarios was being carried out and these would be published with the Commission's proposals.
- 11.9 Pim Visser asked whether there had been any further developments on electronic logbooks. The implementation plans were perhaps too strong. Peter Hopkins replied that he was not aware of any change in the proposed schedule. Pim emphasised that more and more information was required to be sent ashore from fishing vessels. Eighty percent of the information to be sent to different recipients was duplicated. The Dutch industry had discussed this problem with e-logbook people in the Netherlands and they had provided software which could split the information to the different recipients. The Dutch would be delighted to share this information with others.

## **12. The Dogger Bank SAC**

- 12.1 Euan Dunn reminded the ExCom that the NSRAC had to prepare comments for the JNCC on the UK proposal for a SAC on the Dogger Bank. The JNCC had consulted the NSRAC at an early stage. The proposal had since been delayed and the boundaries shrunk. The harbour porpoise had been removed as a qualifying interest. It is only a submerged sandbank now. The LOT 7 study of fishing activity in the area had been useful and had heavily influenced the JNCC paper. However the potential impact on fishing had not changed as a result of the boundary change. The JNCC still wanted to create a SAC on the Dogger Bank. There were now two scenarios, a maximum and a minimum scheme, with high and low intervention. The primary conservation objective was to restore the site. Closure of a small part of it to fishing would not result in heavy losses. However maximum intervention would. The JNCC had set out 14 questions to be answered. The potential loss of fishing opportunities for vessels from outside the UK is not estimated and this is a weak point in their analysis. If we could present information on the value of Dutch and Danish landings then that would be of great interest to the JNCC. The paper also listed potential benefits of closures in terms of enhancement of fish stocks.
- 12.2 What did the NSRAC now wish to do? We had to respond by November 12<sup>th</sup>. Pim Visser had provided Dutch data. Michael Andersen would provide Danish material and there may be other material to include.
- 12.3 Euan Dunn was thanked for distilling all the information for the NSRAC. He was asked to produce a draft response for agreement by written procedure. It is on the socio-economic questions that we need most information. Comments should be sent to Euan by 5<sup>th</sup> November.

### 13. Liaison with the European Parliament

- 13.1 We had identified closer contact with the Parliament's Fisheries Committee as one of our future priorities. However, little progress had been made. Should we write to the Committee? Designation of particular MEPS to liaise with the RACs had taken place and these individuals are sent invitations to our meetings. But they never turn up, although apologies are received from some.
- 13.2 It was agreed that we needed to prepare our meeting plan well in advance and that we should send this plan to the Committee and to the MEPs allocated to the NSRAC

### 14. Any other business

- 14.1 Guus Pastoor had provided two papers for information from AIPCE. The development of principles for environmentally responsible fish sourcing was important. There was a major question over what should be done with fish on the 'red list'. AIPCE has looked at this and has also produced a paper on a common approach to marketing.
- 14.2 The Secretariat would send out information on Seafood Champions.

### 15 Action Points

1. The NSRAC will agree the appointment of the Aberdeenshire Director at the next ExCom (3.1).	Secretariat and ExCom Chair
2. The ExCom will await further information from the Commission on future arrangements for the CFCA boards before appointing a NSRAC representative (3.2).	Commission Secretariat
3. The Chair, Vice-Chairs and WG Chairs will meet to prioritise the Work Plan and come back to the ExCom with proposals (3.3).	ExCom Chair Vice-Chair Chairs of WGs
4. In future we will meet at a central location. We will have a programme of meetings prepared well in advance and arrangements for reimbursing costs will be made simpler (3.3).	ExCom Chair Secretariat
5. Current Chairs will be re-appointed to the NSRAC WGs (3.4).	Secretariat Chairs of WGs
6. The preparation of an appropriate contract with the rapporteur will be resolved at the meeting to be held with the Commission to discuss arrangements for the future Secretariat (3.6).	Secretariat
7. Those wishing to attend the third FIMPAS workshop in Den Helder in January on fisheries management options for the Dutch N2000 sites must register through ICES (6.3; 6.7; 10.2).	Members of ExCom

8. The NSRAC will need to provide feedback to Forewind on their proposals for the first tranche of their wind farm development in the North Sea (6.5).	Secretariat
9. A letter will be sent to the UK Minister, with an input from Euan Dunn, expressing concern at the consultation process and the speed of development for MPAs within the UK EEZ (6.8).	Secretariat Euan Dunn
10. A meeting of the Spatial Planning WG will take place in early January to discuss engagement with Forewind on the Dogger Bank wind-farm proposals and other topics (6.9).	Chair of SPWG Secretariat
11. The Skagerrak and Kattegat WG will meet soon to discuss a range of issues (7.1).	Chair of S & K WG
12. The Management Plan for the <i>Nephrops</i> Fisheries in the North Sea will be revised before the next ExCom (8.4).	Chair of <i>Nephrops</i> Development Group Rapporteur
13. Niels Wichmann and the Secretariat will draft a letter to the Commission urging caution over the application of TACs to particular Functional Units for <i>Nephrops</i> (8.4).	ExCom Chair Secretariat
14. Ton IJlstra will arrange for the FIMPAS project to consult the NSRAC before submission of a report to ICES (10.10).	Ton IJlstra Secretariat
15. The NSRAC will prepare comments for the JNCC on the UK proposal for a SAC on the Dogger Bank before the deadline of November 12 <sup>th</sup> . Comments required by November 5 <sup>th</sup> (12.1; 12.3).	Euan Dunn Members
16. The advance meeting plan for the NSRAC will be sent to the Fisheries Committee and to the MEPs allocated to the NSRAC (13.2).	Secretariat
17. The Secretariat will send out information on Seafood Champions (14.2).	Secretariat

## 16. In attendance

### Members

Wim de Boer	Dutch Fishing Industry
Pim Visser	Dutch Fishing Industry
Mike Park	SFF
Barrie Deas	NFFO
Pierre-Georges Dachicourt	CNPMEM
Guus Pastoor	AIPCE/CEP
Michael Andersen	Danish Fishermen's Association
Giles Bartlett	WWF
Euan Dunn	Birdlife International
Emiel Brouckaert	Rederscentrale
Antoine le Garrec	UAPF
Peter Breckling	German Fishing Industry
Arianna Broggiato	EBCD
Henrik Svenberg	Swedish Fishermen's Federation
Ate Oostra	EUCC
Hugo Andersson	Former ExCom Chair

Niels Wichmann  
Tony Hawkins  
Ann Bell  
Joyce Walker

New ExCom Chair  
NSRAC Rapporteur  
NSRAC Executive Secretary  
NSRAC Assistant Exec Sec

**Observers**

Caroline Gamblin  
Arnold Locker  
Svend Erik Andersen  
Fredrik Lindberg  
Luc Corbisier  
Robert Stevenson  
Malcolm Morrison  
Isabelle Viallon  
Eamon Mangan  
Martin Brebner  
Bruno Dachicourt  
Pierre-Georges Dachicourt  
Peter Hopkins  
Dominique Thomas  
Ton Ylstra  
Bruno Margolie  
Stephen Ritchie  
Mathias Warsson  
Colin Pringle  
Dave Linkie  
Hideo Kojimoto  
Russell Leaper  
Stephane Ramet  
Daniel Lepretre  
Thierry Lepretre  
Olivier Lepretre  
Richard Caloin  
Jean Roul  
Marc Perrault  
Reginald Cousin  
Emily Howgate

CNPMEM  
NFFO  
Danish Fishermen's Assoc  
Swedish Fishermen's Federation  
SDVO  
NESFO Ltd  
SFF  
European Commission  
French Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries  
Aberdeenshire Council  
CFTC  
CNPMEM  
European Commission  
OP CME  
Netherlands Ministry of Agriculture/Fisheries  
OP CME  
Aberdeenshire Council  
Swedish Fishermen's Federation  
PISCES/WWF-UK  
Fishing News  
Hirosaki University  
Ascobans  
CRPM  
CRPM  
CRPM  
CRPM  
From Nord  
From Nord  
CLPM  
CRPM  
Seafood Choices Alliance