

ANNEX III

ACTIVITY REPORTS AND FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

REGIONAL ADVISORY COUNCIL FOR THE NORTH SEA INTERIM REPORT

Agreement number: SI2 548777	Convention period: 1 November 2010 – 31 October 2011
Year: 2010-11 Country: UK	Agreement duration: 12 (months)
Title: North Sea Regional Advisory Council	
Partner: North Sea Regional Advisory Council	
Partner's legal representative: Niels WICHMANN	
Period covered by the report	From: .01/11/10 To: 30/04/11
Convention amendments	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

DECLARATION OF CONFORMITY

I, the undersigned, hereby declare that the attached information is accurate and in accordance with the facts. In particular the financial data provided in this report corresponds to the expenditure actually incurred by the project partners for carrying out project activities. This information has been approved by the authorities representing the partners involved in the activities set out in this Report.

.....
(Original signature of the person legally authorised to act on behalf of the contracting organisation and who signed the agreement))

Name of partner's legal representative: Niels WICHMANN

Position within the organisation: Chairman and Director

Place & Date:

Report to be returned to the following address:	European Commission Directorate General Maritime Affaires and Fisheries Head of Unit for Information, communication, inter-institutional relations, evaluation and programming Office : J-99 00/07 B-1000 BRUSSELS
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Introduction

The interim report should be transmitted to the Commission without prior request on behalf of the Commission within the seven months of the action and should cover this period.

The interim report should briefly present the objectives, work and results achieved throughout the period concerned (6 first months).

A. ORGANISATION

Name of the organisation in national language (<i>full and abbreviated if applicable</i>)	North Sea Regional Advisory Council
Name of the organisation in EN, FR	North Sea Regional Advisory Council

Head Office

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Contact Person

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Authorised signatory

Name	Mr	Niels WICHMANN
Position	Chairman and Director	

B. OVERVIEW OF THE ACTIVITIES AND ACHIEVEMENTS

Describe actions taken by the RAC in order to fulfil its work programme. Is there any risk that the RAC do not meet its targets in terms of outcomes? If yes, explain why.

Offshore Natura 2000 network and MPAs

NSRAC's work in this field is led by the Spatial Planning Working Group. A priority has been engagement with the Fisheries Measures in Protected Areas (FIMPAS) process which aims to identify fishery management measures to meet the conservation objectives for Dutch offshore Natura 2000 sites. A meeting of the working group was held on 23 March 2011 which looked at this matter with representatives from FIMPAS, Member States and representatives of the European Commission.

NSRAC is seeking observer status in the process and looking to provide input in either the form of a position paper or full proposal with the support of the Preparatory Action on Maritime Spatial Planning in the North Sea (MASPNOSE) initiative. The MASPNOSE project will offer support to the NSRAC in developing the joint vision and the potential elements of a fisheries management plan for the Dogger Bank, taking into account wind energy development and Natura 2000 regulations. The support will consist of process management support (facilitating, workshops) and support on the contents of a potential plan (scientific support, analytical skills). A proposal is due to be made to the FIMPAS 4 workshop in September 2011. Preparing a proposal for September will be a challenge given time and resource constraints but it is anticipated that support from MASPNOSE will enable this outcome to be achieved.

Offshore renewables

Engagement with offshore wind developers has been taken forward through the NSRAC Working Groups. Representatives from Mainstream met with NSRAC members during the Demersal Working Group which took place on 18 February 2011. Representatives from Forewind presented to the Spatial Planning Working Group on 4 May 2011.

Science-fisheries partnership

NSRAC and the North West Waters RAC (NWWRAC) have worked with ICES to set up data deficiency task forces. A preliminary meeting to discuss the matter of data deficiency was held on 26/27 January 2011, hosted by ICES in Copenhagen. It was decided that ICES, the two RACs and fisheries managers from the member states should now be invited to a coordination meeting to agree terms of reference. The NSRAC Executive Committee supported NSRAC participation in the initiative at its meeting on 14/15 March 2011. The aforementioned co-ordination meeting took place on 1 April 2011 and identified priority stocks and working methods.

Long-Term Management Plans (LTMPs)

There are presently three LTMPs being worked upon by NSRAC, co-ordinated by the Demersal Working Group:

Nephrops - A Nephrops LTMP is being developed by a dedicated Focus Group. It presented a draft LTMP to the Demersal Working Group on 5 May 2011 which will be sent to the European Commission as 'work in progress'. This is due to be sent in advance of approval by the Executive Committee (to follow later, estimated June 2011) to highlight to the Commission that extensive work is being carried out by NSRAC on

the LTMP and to urge caution against setting TACs for Nephrops Functional Units (a position agreed by the Executive Committee on 14/15 March 2011). It is planned to hold an event to present the LTMP to industry representatives after it has been adopted by the Executive Committee.

Whiting – A meeting of the Whiting Focus Group took place on 19 January 2011 and aimed to develop an LTMP for whiting. A need for more information on the whiting fisheries in different Member States was identified and a request for information will be sent to the appropriate Member States. A further meeting is scheduled for 24 June 2011, where presentations will be sought on research aiming at reducing whiting discards.

Flatfish – The prepared LTMP for Flatfish had been evaluated by STECF and a report sent to the European Commission.

The NSRAC Executive Committee has also agreed to begin work on developing an LTMP for brown shrimp.

Cod Avoidance – cod recovery

A Cod Recovery Focus Group has been established and identified a potential lack of data on how fishing fleets had reacted to the Cod Recovery Plan (and effort reductions in particular). Given the need to ensure that sufficient socio-economic data is available to allow full STECF/ICES evaluation of the plan, a short proposal to STECF was submitted which set out a way of gathering such data from stakeholders. The outcome of this proposal is awaited. NSRAC still has a number of concerns over the Cod Recovery Plan and will be producing a new position paper on this in the coming months.

Control regulations

Revisions to the regulations have been monitored by the Demersal Working Group.

Workshop on catch quotas trials – 2011

This workshop would be co-organised by NSRAC and Seas at Risk - funding is being sought.

Marine Spatial Mapping project

The MASPNOSE project will offer support to the NSRAC in developing the joint vision and the potential elements of a fisheries management plan for the Dogger Bank, taking into account wind energy development and Natura 2000 regulations. The support will consist of process management support (facilitating, workshops) and support on the contents of a potential plan (scientific support, analytical skills). A proposal is due to be made to the FIMPAS 4 workshop in September 2011.

Technical measures and how to eliminate discards

A press release on discards was issued by the Demersal Working Group in response to extensive media coverage and the High Level meeting which took place on 1 March 2011. It was decided to prepare a report highlighting discard reduction initiatives already in place and work has been ongoing to collate and compile this data. Regarding technical measures, NSRAC will await the upcoming roadmap for the development of a new package of technical measures from the Commission.

Review of CFP – with regard to NSRAC area

A meeting with Commissioner Damanaki was arranged by the Baltic Sea RAC and attended by representatives of NSRAC. NSRAC plans to set up a focus group to look at CFP reform and awaits the publication of the Commission's proposals with interest.

Continue Inter-RAC co-operation

NSRAC has continued to participate in informal Inter-RAC meetings. In addition, NSRAC participated in the meeting with Commissioner Damanaki arranged by the Baltic Sea RAC and also attended by the Pelagic RAC.

A data deficiency initiative has also been launched in co-operation with the North West Waters RAC and ICES. Regional task forces involving fisheries scientists, RACs and fisheries managers from the relevant Member States have been set up and aim to address the data deficiencies which are the principal reason why some 60% of ICES assessments do not have analytical status.

North Sea Fishers Survey

NSRAC has financed the 2010 annual stocks survey (www.nsss.eu) carried out by the NAFC Marine Centre in Shetland. The Fisher's North Sea Stock Survey is an annual survey of fisher's perceptions of the state of fish stocks in the North Sea, with the aim of making their knowledge of the state of fish stocks available to fisheries scientists and fisheries managers. NSRAC has been asked to finance the 2011 survey and is looking into the request.

To have an eco-system approach to our work

NSRAC's work is generally based on an eco-system approach, given its geographical scope. It is understood that DG MARE is working on an integrated maritime strategy for the North Sea which is due to be published later this year. In addition, NSRAC is following with great interest the implementation of the Marine Strategy Framework Directive.

MSFD Indicators

A presentation was given on this by Poul Degnbol of ICES to the NSRAC Executive Committee on 15 March 2011. This helped members to better understand the indicators being developed and their potential implications for the fisheries sector.

North Sea Stakeholder Forum Project

This project is being led by the North Sea Commission and Scottish Government, but NSRAC has been asked to provide a letter of support. The project aims to create an informal forum for all users of the North Sea to resolve conflicts and is set to apply for INTERREG North Sea Region funding later this year. A presentation on the project is sought for the next Executive Committee.

In addition to the above items from the NSRAC work plan, papers on Maximum Sustainable Yield and Real Time Closures have been prepared. An initiative on data deficiency and fisheries science has also been taken forward with ICES and the North West Waters RAC.

C. RESULTS / PRODUCTS

Table C.1 – Meetings organised by the RAC and attended by RACs representatives

Title of the meeting	Date	Place	Key results of the meeting (brief summary of the minutes)
Demersal Working Group	17/11/ 2010	Brussels	<p>Barrie Deas was reappointed as Chair of the Demersal Working Group. The EU/Norway negotiations and 2011 TACs and quotas proposals were discussed. It was noted that the transparency of the former had increased over time and that this could be enhanced further in the future. Concerns were raised over not receiving proposals from the Commission until 11 November and the dramatic reductions in TACs proposed for many species. Participants also felt that the Commission had not fully understood the letter sent to them by NSRAC on whiting discards and a need for a Long Term Management Plan (LTMP) for whiting was identified. A focus group would be set up to develop this plan, chaired by Mike Park.</p> <p>The group supported the principles set out in a paper on Maximum Sustainable Yield. A proposed data deficiency initiative, suggested by the North West Waters RAC, was discussed. This was getting support from ICES and it was agreed that NSRAC should encourage ICES to proceed with the initiative. Catch quotas were also discussed, with the potential incentive of an additional 5% in quota highlighted. It was reiterated that NSRAC's agreed position was that catch quotas had to be voluntary; required incentives; should be clearly documented; and should lead to discard reduction.</p> <p>A report on Real Time Closures (RTCs) - an output from an RTC focus group which took place in November - was also presented. The group had identified a number of issues relating to RTCs, particularly in relation to the establishment of RTCs by single Member States, which did not always respect responsibilities to vessels from other Member States. There were also problems arising from the fact that vessels which did not catch cod were expected to observe RTCs which had been set by catches from vessels which did catch cod. It was agreed that the RTC report should be simplified and converted into a position paper for sending to the Commission.</p>

			<p>Cod recovery was also discussed, with a letter having been received from the Commission acknowledging uncertainty over the cod assessments, but stating that this uncertainty should not be used as an excuse for inaction. An update was given on progress in developing an LTMP for Nephrops, with concerns raised over the potential for the Commission to take action before the plan was finalised. The LTMP for flatfish which had been evaluated by STECF was also briefly discussed, as were discards.</p> <p>The final matter raised related to the relationship between stakeholders and DG MARE, given changes in the Commission. A number of members raised concerns over a perceived lack of dialogue between stakeholders/NSRAC and the Commission. It was felt that stakeholder engagement would be undermined if all decisions were to be based solely on scientific advice.</p>
Whiting Focus Group	19/1/11	Edinburgh	<p>The purpose of the meeting was to develop a Long Term Management Plan (LTMP) for whiting. The plan would go beyond merely setting a target fishing mortality and would look at a wide range of measures for achieving sustainable fisheries for whiting. The idea of a Whiting LTMP had been endorsed during EU/Norway talks.</p> <p>In order to inform discussions, a presentation on stock information and spatial distribution was given by Colin Millar (Marine Scotland Science); ICES advice from May 2010 was discussed; and information from a French Producer Organisation on whiting fisheries presented.</p> <p>The parameters for the LTMP would need to fit with the EU/Norway plan but not have to be agreed with Norway. Consideration needs to be given to how whiting is fished in the different EU fisheries and how to maximise the yield, bearing in mind that these fisheries are mixed, and that there are other constraints. Scientific approval of the plan by STECF would also be required before it can be forwarded to the Commission. The plan would also need to be international in scope, taking account of the role and importance of whiting in different countries. One starting point would be to look at the different fisheries catching whiting and to examine their particular features.</p> <p>In recognition of the limited resources available to fund this work, it was suggested that requests to projects such as JAKFISH or MYFISH could be made. Member States would also be asked to provide information/presentations on their respective whiting fisheries for the next meeting of the group.</p>

<p>Demersal Working Group</p>	<p>18/2/11</p>	<p>Edinburgh</p>	<p>The review of the Cod Recovery Plan was discussed, with a decision made that a Focus Group should be held in April. Beforehand, there would be STECF/ICES meetings which NSRAC members were encouraged to attend. An update on the annual MIRAC meeting between ICES and the RACs was given. This meeting had been followed by a meeting between the North West Waters RAC, NSRAC and ICES on data deficiency, where it was agreed that regional data deficiency task forces should be established.</p> <p>LTMPs were discussed, with updates on those for nephrops and whiting given. With regards to nephrops, the JAKFISH project had helped to support the work financially and meetings had been held with fishers to get their input into the process. Concerns had been raised by fishers over the potential introduction of TACs for nephrops functional units. A draft plan had been prepared and it was agreed to circulate this amongst members of the focus group for comment. An update on the whiting focus group meeting (details above) was given. An update on the flatfish LTMP was given, highlighting uncertainty over its status. Finally, a request to set up another focus group to look at developing an LTMP for brown shrimp was made and it was agreed to put this suggestion to the Executive Committee.</p> <p>A paper on Maximum Sustainable Yield was presented, which was supported by the group with a few small amendments. A short update was given on the status of the CFP reform, with a meeting due to be held with Commissioner Damanaki highlighted. The meeting noted that new Control Regulations were due to be adopted by 8 March.</p> <p>Media coverage and the upcoming High Level meeting on discards caused concern amongst NSRAC members. It was agreed that more could be done to promote discard-reduction initiatives and that a list of initiatives should be collated and disseminated. It was agreed to issue a press release in advance of the High Level meeting on 1 March.</p> <p>An update on the Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD) was given and it was agreed that a representative from ICES should be invited to speak to the Executive Committee on the MSFD indicators.</p>
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<p>Executive Committee</p>	<p>14-15/3/11</p>	<p>Edinburgh</p>	<p>Carla Montesi from the European Commission updated the Executive Committee on progress with regards to the CFP reform. A note on the meeting between RACs and Commissioner Damanaki on this subject had been circulated previously. It was expected that a new draft basic regulation would be available in June, with an element of decentralised management. The EU would agree general principles, targets for reaching MSY and harvesting guidance, leaving Member States and RACs to work together to achieve objectives on a regional sea basis. It was highlighted that there is likely to be an enhanced role for RACs, although their composition may need to change. The reformed CFP would also need to tackle the challenge of discards.</p> <p>NSRAC members expressed concerns over the intention to change the composition of RACs and that delegation of powers to regions would be limited. Ms. Montesi highlighted differences between the RACs and the need to improve governance arrangements, as well as legal issues over delegation of powers to regional bodies.</p> <p>It was highlighted that NSRAC members believed that the Commission did not always take on board comments from NSRAC advice and that NSRAC was at the limit of its capacity to prepare sound advice and develop initiatives. In particular, there was a desire/need to build more scientific rigour into the work of RACs. The Commission indicated that while it was too early to speak about increased budgets, they would be willing to listen to suggestions to address these concerns.</p> <p>The issue of discards was discussed, given Commissioner Damanaki's desire for a discard ban and extensive media coverage, particularly in the UK. This had been previously discussed at the latest Demersal Working Group meeting, and updates on this, the Spatial Planning Working Group and focus group meetings were given. In addition, it was agreed to set up a Focus Group for brown shrimp. An update was also given on the STECF/ICES meeting on the cod recovery plan.</p> <p>Papers/letters on Maximum Sustainable Yield, Real Time Closures, Whiting, transparency in EU-Norway negotiations and Nephrops were agreed.</p> <p>A presentation from Poul Degnbol of ICES opened the second day of the meeting. This presentation focused on indicators for the Marine Strategy Framework Directive. NSRAC members welcomed the information but expressed concerns over potentially unforeseen consequences on fisheries through the implementation of the Directive.</p>
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			<p>An update on the annual MIRAC meeting between ICES and the RACs was given. This meeting had been followed by a meeting between the North West Waters RAC, NSRAC and ICES on data deficiency, where it was agreed that regional data deficiency task forces should be established. The Executive Committee supported the establishment of the task forces.</p> <p>The Executive Committee considered a number of requests for support for research projects and supported participation in MYFISH and a bid for support to develop a sustainable fishing plan for Nephrops in the Farne Deeps. It was stated that NSRAC should only participate in projects where the proposer has contacted NSRAC at an early stage and involved NSRAC in the development process. Projects should also bring some benefit in terms of advice or scientific support to NSRAC and include some funding to support RAC participation and/or assist NSRAC in holding meetings. It was also agreed that a presentation on the North Sea Stakeholder Forum project should be requested.</p> <p>The NSRAC financial situation was discussed, highlighting that NSRAC had accumulated a deficit over a number of years and that Aberdeenshire Council was no longer willing to guarantee the bank account. A proposal, whereby a proportion of Members' fees were used to pay off the deficit was discussed and Directors given a mandate to resolve the matter. An update on the current budgetary situation was given, highlighting that all budget lines were within budget, although legal fees had risen steeply due to the need to tender for the Chairman, Rapporteur and Secretariat.</p> <p>An interim travel expenses policy was agreed, although this is to be revisited for next year's budgetary year. It was agreed that a central location be selected for future meetings to save on travel costs. London was suggested by the Secretariat, but Dutch members suggested that Amsterdam be revisited. The MRAC/Poseidon study into the financing of the RACs was discussed and its findings supported by the NSRAC Executive Committee.</p>
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<p>Spatial Planning Working Group</p>	<p>23/3/11</p>	<p>Brussels</p>	<p>The meeting aim was to capture and develop NSRAC views on proposals emerging from the Fisheries Measures in Protected Areas (FIMPAS) process. FIMPAS aims to identify fishery management measures to meet the conservation objectives for Dutch offshore Natura 2000 sites. FIMPAS proposals would then be put to the European Commission at the end of the process. NSRAC raised concerns over being able to input into the process given the tight timetable (final proposals to be made at the end of 2011) and the uncertainty of the process once proposals are made to the European Commission.</p> <p>Two workshops were held during the meeting to identify ways in which NSRAC can contribute to the process. It was agreed that NSRAC would submit comments on the FIMPAS process and a proposal to develop a co-ordinated approach to management measures for the Dogger Bank together with any immediate proposals for management measures to an Inter-Governmental workshop due to take place on 16 May. The Executive Committee would be asked to decide if it is possible to deliver a proposal on a joined-up Dogger Bank management plan by the FIMPAS 4 workshop in September 2011.</p>
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<p>Skagerrak-Kattegat Working Group</p>	<p>7/4/11</p>	<p>Copenhagen</p>	<p>The Group discussed the present situation as to the state of cod in the Kattegat, where it was highlighted that the state of the seal population is presenting a problem. In addition, there were problems/inconsistencies in the application of closed areas. Danish fishermen have received compensation in the form of more effort, whereas Swedish fishermen have not. Moreover, German fishermen are allowed to fish in the closed areas. The Group identified a need for an analysis of the environmental problems in the Kattegat and found that Real Time Closures (RTCs) could be a more suitable solution to tackle existing problems than closed areas. The Group agreed that a letter would be written highlighting the reasons behind the small appearances of cod in the Kattegat apart from fisheries and arguments advocating RTCs instead of closed areas.</p> <p>With regards to plaice, a presentation was given by Clara Ulrich (DTU Aqua) on "Assessment and Management for Plaice in Skagerrak and Kattegat". It was acknowledged that it is not easy to deliver a high-quality assessment of Skagerrak plaice. Potential solutions would be including the Kattegat and Skagerrak stock in the North Sea stock; combine the Skagerrak stock with the North Sea stock and the Kattegat stock with the Baltic Sea stock; or design a management plan for the Skagerrak plaice as within the North Sea. The Group favoured the latter option and decided to begin work on developing this within the working group.</p> <p>Nephrops were also discussed, with the work of the Nephrops Focus Group considered. The Group considered whether it would be desirable to produce a distinct Skagerrak/Kattegat LTMP or follow the work of the Nephrops Focus Group, subsequently adapting it to the special circumstances of the Skagerrak Kattegat. The Group decided to closely follow the work of the existing Nephrops Focus Group and ensure that it took account of the circumstances of the Skagerrak/Kattegat area. Prawn fisheries and the state of the stock were discussed, with the future looking positive. The "Sustainable Shrimp Fishery" project was highlighted by Clara Ulrich. Discards and potential technical solutions were also discussed.</p> <p>The Swedish unilateral regulation regarding halibut was discussed, with the Swedish Government having sent a proposal to STECF via the European Commission. The legislation does not allow Swedish fishermen to fish halibut, but does allow other nations to. Those who had read the report believed it was not of good quality. A project proposal aiming to secure marine biological competence as for the Kattegat was presented. The Group also discussed Natura 2000 and decided to look into this further at the next meeting.</p>
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<p>Cod Review Focus Group</p>	<p>8/4/11</p>	<p>London</p>	<p>This meeting was held to prepare a response to the upcoming review of the Cod Recovery Plan. An update was given on the ICES/STECF Joint Scoping Meeting of 28 February to 4 March which had been attended by a number of NSRAC members. The Joint Scoping Meeting had been notable for the opportunity it presented for stakeholders to participate fully.</p> <p>NSRAC had been given the opportunity to prepare a position paper for the next meeting of the ICES/STECF WG will take place in Hamburg on June 20-24th and also to suggest an area of research to be carried out. A sum of €5,000 allocated by STECF for the collection of data by stakeholders would allow 15 days of time for a researcher (someone acceptable to STECF) to collate existing data.</p> <p>The group identified that information likely to be missing from the STECF analysis was how fishing fleets had reacted to the Cod Recovery Plan and to the reductions in effort in particular. It was pointed out that there had been major effects of the Cod Recovery Plan on some fleet sectors, particularly smaller vessels.</p> <p>It was agreed that the NSRAC would submit a short proposal to the ICES/STECF by Monday 11th April. This would propose a researcher carrying out telephone interviews with fishers, detailing how specific vessels had responded to the plan, whether as a result of restrictive TACs or effort controls. The proposal would aim to select at least 5 vessels from each Member State, taken from different sectors to illustrate a diversity of responses. The results would only be indicative but would enable scientists to gain a clearer appreciation of the impacts of the plan.</p> <p>NSRAC's agreed position on the Cod Recovery Plan was revisited and recognised as still valid. However, it was recognised that there was a need to revise it to take account of proposals for a discard ban. This will be prepared by the Rapporteur.</p> <p>In addition, there was extensive discussion of the Cod Recovery Plan itself, with the Group highlighting that there had been no consultation with scientists, no impact assessment, and no consultation with stakeholders before it had been introduced, leading to unforeseen consequences. The implementation of the plan by different Member States in different ways had led to a heavy administrative burden on the industry. It was also pointed out that effort had never been in balance with TACs and that some fisheries (such as Saithe) do not catch cod and should be exempt from the Cod Recovery Plan.</p>
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Nephrops Focus Group	18/4/11	Edinburgh	<p>The aim of the meeting was to take forward NSRAC's work in developing a Long Term Management Plan for Nephrops. Participants considered a revised version of the plan, which had been amended following consultation with fishers in a number of ports. Fishers had highlighted the need for greater stability within the fishery; a lack of continuity within the management regime; the need for greater flexibility and less regulation; and accepted that there was a need to slow the expansion of the fishery down. Scientists attending the meetings had emphasised the benefits of moving towards lower fishing mortality, delivering higher yields.</p> <p>One particular issue related to the setting of TACs for functional units, which it was felt would introduce problems. Given the urgency of the situation, it was agreed that the plan would be revised and put to the Demersal Working Group for approval as a work in progress. This would then be sent to the Commission to highlight the work being carried out. Once fully approved by the Executive Committee, the plan would then be presented to the industry at a single central event where comment would be invited.</p>
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Table C.2 – List of recommendations adopted by the RACs

N°	Full title	Date of adoption
1	Development of a coherent and logical approach towards Maximum Sustainable Yield (MSY)	15/3/11
2	Whiting Discards	15/3/11
3	Position Paper on the Implementation of Real Time Closures	15/3/11
4	EU-Norway Transparency	15/3/11