

## **Brixham 26-2-2020 NOTES from workshop 1 [Brixham Lab]**

The meeting was well attended (42) with a diverse group of 30 fishermen from around the South West, stretching from Mevagissey to Weymouth and including a wide range of vessel sizes and gear types.

The meeting began with the context of the project and wording of the fisheries white paper (FWP) with regards to 'low impact fisheries'.

Subsequently Defra gave an introduction to the rationale for the project, based on a feedback that the current under/ over 10m sharp divide is not working for those who fish against FQAs and those who fish out of the pool. The project focusses on environmental impacts of fishing and could contribute to, for example, changes in the allocation of fishing opportunities or the level of regulation for fisheries that are low impact. It was made clear that this project is going to be challenging and that these series of workshops are just one step towards hopefully arriving at a better way to manage and segment the fleet, whether through horsepower or other mechanisms which are being discussed with the industry in build up to White Paper (not in-depth).

It was made clear that this is the beginning of a different approach to fisheries management, and that the objective is to develop and agree measures, which are future proofed and don't lead to unintended consequences such as those that have arisen from management systems based on vessel length. The objectives for Defra's ongoing work are to make fisheries management better, to build on the 'future of our inshore fisheries' conference to get fishermen more involved in discussions around management and that there is a recognition within Defra that a new approach, which moves away from top-down management, is necessary. Examples from both the scallop and whelk management groups have shown that working together and combining knowledge and experience can help shape this at both local and regional levels. This project and series of workshops are part of a bigger conversation on co-management and while there will be differences of opinion, as there are a wide array of interests at stake, co-design at this early stage of possible policy development was seen as the best way to start to achieve this.

Questions from the participants focussed on the wording and prospects from the FWP as well as three specific questions: 1. About the likelihood of status quo (CFP) – which relies on negotiations and is impossible to pre-empt but may result in managing access of non-UK vessels and could be subject to annual agreements and therefore change over time (it was noted the Prime Minister stated he will be supporting the UK fishing industry in these negotiations) 2. On whether the project outputs (report) will be made public – yes they will, and 3. Why the focus is only England – due to fisheries being a devolved matter.

### **Discussion 1 – facilitator / scribe: Chris Williams / Nick Lewis**

#### GENERAL

- History of Govt not listening (any level from Defra to MMO and IFCA)
- Govt say one thing and then just do what they want anyway
- Fishermen's input won't make any difference
- There is a communication issue. Relationships with the MMO and IFCA are bad.
- Low impact is not necessarily sustainable or environmentally friendly
- Trawling is not necessarily damaging to the environment
- For a classification of what low and high impact are not everyone is going to agree

- <10m> size isn't the best measure of impact
- HP/KW is not much use either as a proxy for impact and gear ratios also need to be considered
- Rules were set up a long time ago so it's less relevant for the modern industry
- Plastic waste is collected at sea and removed through the fishing for litter scheme, but the infrastructure to deal with it is insufficient.
- The Navy do significant damage to static gear, unsure what the impact of sonar is or whether they impact the seabed in the activities they run, but one positive is that there are no windfarms as a result - noise pollution - but
- Dredge spoil grounds - spoil was dumped into the middle of the lemon sole grounds and destroyed the fishery (contaminated waste from dockyard)
- In Norwegian fisheries a 35ft/11m is used and there are different examples of low impact fisheries
- Weather has a big impact on fishing and the environment, but fishermen often get blamed (e.g. impact of storms on pink sea fans)

### LICENCING and ALLOCATION ISSUES

- Licensing in terms of KWH relates to towing power; its less relevant for static gear or rod and line, where other aspects e.g. ability to travel longer distances or need to fish drifts
- Capped licensing is having impacts on current industry and ability to operate
- It is also driving behaviour that is having negative impacts - if entitlements for whitefish, shellfish or bass are lost this limits the ability to diversify and increases reliance on single fisheries and therefore vulnerability to changes.. There is a genuine fear of losing entitlements but to keep them active there have to be catches at times where fishermen don't actually want to be targeting those species.
- Entitlements (e.g. bass) can be taken away if not used and people end up catching stuff they don't want to be targeting to ensure they keep these entitlements on their license (even if these have been paid for). Catching species for this reason is no good for fish stocks. Losing the entitlement affects smaller boats more than larger ones, and for trawling as the catches are mixed its less of an issue.
- Sudden changes in entitlements can make big impacts due to people going out and buying boats as a way to make the most of the opportunity
- Entitlement could be more sensibly applied - in the case of the bass track records for the entitlement everyone was given the 5tonnes, who had caught nay bass in the previous year so actually the bass catches increased as people with a license were then fishing as hard as they could up to the 5t limit.
- Changing allocation also means people encroaching on other fisheries (bass <> crabbing)
- Full-time (FT) v Part-time (PT) time fishermen needs to be considered in allocation: approach needs to be localised and make sense. Should someone who actually owns and runs another business but fishes a few weeks a year be treated the same as a full time fisherman?
- Allocation to those who fish FT is the same as someone who fishes part time which isn't fair; some of the Weymouth bass r&l boats are actually supporting 4 jobs so the 5t isnt actually that much compared to someone single handed having a 5t limit.
- Who is best placed to decide on allocation locally > could be done monthly and be adaptable

### <10m> issues

- Do not want under 10m pool to be privatised and quota traded. Do not want auctions as only big business can afford it.

- Could a swap system be used between fishermen, e.g. for sole caught in the scallop dredge fishery that could be used for netters who don't have enough quota.

#### OTHER POINTS RAISED

- Lack of operating a viable businesses puts off new entrants to industry
- Catamarans can go out in harsher weather
- Larger vessels can stay out much longer
- Restrictions in the Newhaven sole fishery
- IFCA tensions in relationships with industry throughout England
- Aquaculture can also be a source of conflict with fishing industry e.g. Dorset seaweed farm proposals which are planned and located in key fishing grounds - will have an impact and fishermen forced to give up (more) ground
- Charter angling and fishing fleet can work together and be respectful of each other's business
- Bass: putting strain on different parts of the fleet and commercial - recreational; for the trawlers who are not targeting bass when they do actually catch them it might 1 or 2 big hits a year when it's the majority of the catch and unavoidable, but due to the 1% allowance rule it needs to be dumped which doesn't benefit anyone or the stocks - need a more flexible approach to solve this problem (e.g. monthly or annual limit rather than trip level bycatch allowance). Do not force those discards of bass.
- Drift netting for bass had bycatches of sea birds and cetaceans
- For crabbing it's important for ground to be turned over by trawling or dredging so while areas are closed to trawling they also need to be reopened to keep the area productive
- Quota causes displacement geographically and boats from Shetland fish the South Coast.
- Scalloping and crabbing and bycatch goes back and survives
- Diesel electric hybrids could be part of future classification
- In the Icelandic cod fishery there's a TAC and once its met by the industrial vessels the crew then shift to their own smaller boats - wages are 75K in Norway for fishermen.

#### Session 2:

##### UK policy overview

- The distinction matters because of FQAs vs the pool
- Quality / experience of skipper matters more than vessel size or gear in terms of impact. Behaviour and knowledge are key as someone who doesn't know what they are doing in a higher capacity boat might catch less than a less powerful vessel used better.
- Under 8m / under 6m / 7m? History has shown there is a drift up that limit.
- Similar things occurred when the 40ft rule was in place
- How to define and inshore boat; sometimes they may fish in the 6nM limit but they could also be fishing 50 miles away. How does one of those vessels get categorised.
- Low impact on fish stocks or on environment? What is the starting point is it to manage stocks or gears.
- If there needs to be some degree of separation or distinction then don't want it to be unfair.
- Low impact should be considered across the whole sector, not just u10s. How to lower the impacts for both inshore and offshore.
- What do we want low impact to mean? Is it about habitat, stocks, etc
- What if you are using multiple gears you could be high impact in the morning and low in the afternoon.

- Does having a low impact definition mean you also want to categorise high impact
- Under12m is the forgotten segment (e.g. there's no app but also not in the pool)
- What about tonnage? Tonnage could be used to set thresholds fore within the 6m limit.
- Why does it say higher impact gear types in the NEF briefing > it's from FAO / global review
- Defining impacts in areas > could rank how things affect the ocean along a sliding scale
- Hard to see anything different happening at this meeting or anything in the future
- There is a nervousness about gears and division > need to give fishermen confidence to let industry help Defra > first chance to do this during a time of change > industry have heard it all. Nobody wants more division, we need to move to less division, if under 10s doesn't work maybe we need to think about license categories for management purposes, as well as quota management and management for non-quota stocks; could be done through gear categories and segmentation but not artificial barriers.
- Who wrote the FWP? > Defra policy team with input from industry, regulators, and others > also consultation.
- Opportunity to help support.
- Fishermen need assurances that they will be listened to
- Fishermen want to have healthy stocks, catch a bit more, and have less regulation
- Negotiations with EU re quota
- Perception of low impact for fishermen could be very different than from environmental groups
- Fishermen involvement in science is often only implemented several years afterwards
- Defra need to ensure they respond / follow-up in a way that builds social capital as the trust building takes time and needs to be continuous
- Fishing is so broad and diverse that the opinion of the status quo will be very different from those in different sectors.
- What are the implications of low impact - for fishermen? Why was u10 used? 10m is a line but a new line will do the same; it will be inadequate for the diversity of the industry.
- History of <10>: In 1985 licenses were introduced started at 80ft who were then able to transfer their licenses (40ft vessels were not licensed - this was taken to be approximately 10m as registered vessel length initially, then overall length). This was done purely for administrative purpose to meet regulatory requirements on fleet structures (for joining the European Common Market). This then led to rule beaters who wanted to enter the under 10m sector as they didn't need licenses and have to record catches. In 1986 logbooks were introduced which was then followed by licensing and categorisation. The u10s didn't have any FQAs and fished out of a Govt administered quota pool.
- Fishermen can't buy quotas, as FQAs are private property so they are forced into being under 10s to have access to quota through the pool, but this means they can't actually use / build the vessels they want, which are safer. (e.g. u15m)
- What will NGOs say about this work? Cuttle traps in eel grass beds that are washing away in winter storms but now conservation advice impacts trapping.
- Inshore management > fishermen want more control; need to focus on what they can influence.
- Fisheries science - Fishing into the Future is a great way to learn about the purpose, process and opportunity but only one workshop a year and can't do it for all fishermen.
- This is going to be a long, slow process > but do people want the status quo?
- What do other countries do? Are the UK learning from good examples elsewhere?

- Can't separate fishing from the environment. But is research going to be used against fishermen?
- Need real time data > not a 3 year lag.
- Need funding (from Defra or elsewhere) for bigger, longer term support. The MCZ process got £8million and this type of thing needs investment; needs to support the maximum number in the industry.
- Beam trawl sector - there has been 100% increase in sole quota. There has been 100% increase in plaice quota. The stocks are doing well. According to ICES. There are hardly any discards (according to Cefas). So we are doing everything right.
- At the next workshop can we share outputs from the SAIF (sustainable access to inshore fisheries) report please? > Defra - Yes.

#### ACTIONS:

- Share notes (NEF)
- Share summary (NEF)
- Look into a newsletter (Defra)
- Share draft literature review thorough website (NEF + CCRI)
- Set up a website with the TOR and relevant docs, notes and updates (CCRI)

**Scribe/facilitator: Harry Owen, Lydia Osbourne**

#### Session 1 –

Majority of fishers using towed gear (dredge and trawlers) and one charter/netter/potter.

#### Q 1 - What are the main environmental impacts to the marine environment?

##### Main Impacts

- Target stock- regional. Depends on the size of stock
  - Fishers will take CEFAS out quite often to demonstrate they are complying and the stock are not undersized. Also demonstrate no bycatch on beam trawlers. They have control with their gear- mesh size, doors.
  - Sole stock has increased as a result. Belgian boats don't fish like them where they are being selective. Belgian boats are coming into 6-12 and not modifying their gear (F&G areas).
  - Anecdote; in Cherbourg there are no checks and log books are filled out by the landing man on quay.
- Seabed
  - They want voluntary dredge reductions for bigger scallop boats in Brixham.
  - Beam trawling doesn't cause as much damage as people think or as much as the damage of nature. They rarely go over reefs because it damages their gear. In Weston Super Mare there was a demonstration on the beach of beam trawling. Showed the impact to the seabed but didn't show how it was restored when the tide washed over. *There was general disagreement on this point within the group.*
  - Can't leave the ground alone for too long or it loses viability (like ploughing a field).
- Ghost gear
  - Bad practice can happen anywhere and the gear will drift. If it's down to currents it could even be global.
  - Crabbers and netters are the ones who leave ghost gear. With beam trawling they can guarantee they bring their gear home.
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## Wider Ecosystem Impacts

- Scallop divers (if close to shore, there is a worry they will take every breeding individual);
- Pollution;
  - o Rotting bait from whelk pots; and
  - o Ballast water.
- Invasive species outcompeting and bringing diseases;
- Wrasse removal for salmon farms;
- Aggregate dredging causing sand bank collapse and damage to eco-system;
- Offshore installations (wind farms and cables – not oil platforms);
  - o Causing negative consequences for fish stocks (possibly vibrations [wind], or heat [cables].
  - o Whelk/ crab are attracted to it which depletes the stocks outside the area
- Noise, from all sources;
- Closed areas;
  - o Causing displacement of fishing effort;
  - o Stops fishing digging up the bed which provides nutrient enrichment / food / stimulates growth;
    - Others on the table disagreed – Lyme was thought good for fishing and was described as the “best thing that ever happened”. Good for pollock and bream at least.
- Aquaculture in general;
  - o Seaweed farming;
  - o Salmon; and
  - o Mussels.
- Climate change.

## Q 2 – What are the environmental impacts of fishing? What scale (local/regional/global)?

- Seabed impacts (but positive impacts sometimes) – local > global
- Target stock / reproduction – regional
- Fuel use – global
- Plastic pollution – local > global
- Other pollution – local
- Ghost gear – local > global
- Bycatch – local > global
- Wider ecosystem impacts (food sources etc) – local > global
- Bycatch other – local > global
- Noise – local

## White Paper (whole room discussion)

- Should be managed in smaller classes e.g. under 7m
- Size of vessel of gear doesn't matter- it's the quality of the skipper that determines the catch.
- Distance should be considered. They could stay within the 6nm but end up 50 miles away.
- What about boats that could be both high and low impact? Will they need to pick a side and restrict their activities? It's not desirable for anyone to be high impact.

- Under 12s are the 'forgotten' category. No app but still considered inshore. Suggestion to use tonnage use as a measurement. Correlates to gear and damage etc.
- Reluctance to engage in something which will pit fishermen against each other- this has happened repeatedly.
- How do you manage industry within known impacts?
- They want less division- remove O/U 10m. Licensing- Scotland ABC categories to comply with landing obligation. Gear categories can control segmentation but remove artificial barriers such as the O/U 10m limit.
- The impact and restriction of nature and weather cannot be overstated enough.
- What were the results and actions from projects such as SAIF and Cefas 5050?
  - Information on 'project 50%' is available here:
  - [https://www.seafish.org/geardb/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/project\\_50\\_printed\\_final\\_report.pdf](https://www.seafish.org/geardb/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/project_50_printed_final_report.pdf)
  - and <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LnZrpdgebek>

**Scribe/facilitator:** Jack Bradstreet / Rob Forster

### **Discussion 1**

- Confusion over distinction between first and second discussion (difference between impacts on marine environment and impacts of fishing).
- Concern over 'playing Chinese whispers' – information being passed down the chain from fishers to industry to government incorrectly/inaccurately.
- Belief that fishers haven't complained themselves about the u10/o10 distinction, curious about where industry complaints have come from.

*Participants felt uncomfortable reporting impacts of fishing, and therefore did not directly report any impacts, however these were drawn out when discussing general impacts on the marine environment. There was a sense that participants didn't want to be set against one another and report that one fishery/sector is more destructive than another.*

Impacts on the marine environment:

- Aquaculture – example of farmed salmon, artificially warming waters, and mass farming of plankton. 'Overexploitation'
- Acidification of oceans
- Algae bloom
- Pollution – specifically waste disposal
- Global warming - water temperature, sea levels rising
- Noise pollution (sonar)
- Drilling, disturbance of the seabed
- Wind farms
- MPAs/MCZs/SPAs
- Vandalism, littering (from tourists)
- Jet skis, recreational activities
- Fresh water waste
- Polluted water from factories, toxins, acid rain
- Cable laying and burying
- Carbon emissions from boats (non-fishing)

- Man-made fibres
- Seals

Impacts **of fishing** on the marine environment:

- Towed gear, dredging
- Ghost gear
- Stocks depleted
- Bycatch
- Carbon emissions of vessels
- Removing food that other marine species eat
- Management
- Discards
- Marine species e.g. seabirds being caught

Other comments:

- Identifying weaknesses or 'high-impact' behaviour is difficult to do when there are IFCA representatives in the room, as well as Defra staff. There was an IFCA rep on our table, who the fishers didn't feel comfortable sharing their behaviours in front of.
- Environmental methods of fishing aren't always economically viable for fishers. Value isn't placed high enough at markets for fish that is caught in an environmentally friendly way. Fishers at the table expressed that they would love to do line-fishing every day if they could get a good price for the fish they caught, but this isn't realistic as larger 'high-impact' vessels can quickly catch far more fish.
- Fishing will always have an impact on the marine environment because, by nature, it involved removing fish from their habitat.
- Experience of Alaskan fisheries that the fishers didn't feel like they were competing with one another between sectors of the fishery. Sense of unity that isn't found in UK fisheries.
- Contention over the cumulative impact of the u10m fleet compared to the impact of fewer o10m boats. Smaller boats are higher impact, but there are far more of them. Questions raised over whether these impacts are equal.
- UK boats in the Channel that might be categorised as 'high-impact' will still be far lower impact than the large Dutch boats that fish there.
- Concern around the displacement of high-impact boats. If new regulations cause them to move further out (e.g. to the high seas) then fish stocks will still be depleted there.
- All fishers from different sectors will argue that they are low-impact because there are different ways of justifying gear types.
- Unintended consequences of management, although originally well-intended, have caused greater discards. The UK fleet looks very different to how it did in the '70s, so the management system needs to be updated accordingly.
- Concerns around loopholes in any new system that is designed, fishers always find a way to get around legislation e.g. creating boats that are u10m but can catch lots.
- 'Low' is a relative term. What is 'low'?
- Important to differentiate between 'sustainable' and 'environmentally-friendly'.



- Smaller boats can still catch more fish than some larger ones e.g. 9m catamarans can catch greater quantities more efficiently than older 11m boats. Length/size is arbitrary.
- 'Life-cycle analysis': analysing whether certain environmental impacts are greater or lesser than other. Potential to rank these impacts and determine low-impact from this.
- Fishers are blocked from moving to using electric boats by economic barriers. Many fishers cannot afford this transition, and shouldn't be punished for this. This makes determining low-impact by engine type problematic.
- Participants didn't want to discuss the scale of the impacts.

## Discussion 2

- Smaller classification (<7m; <8m?)
- Not synonymous with size
  - Quality of the fisher is more important than vessel size
  - A good skipper can catch more fish on a smaller boat than a bad skipper with a larger boat
- How to define 'inshore' boat? Definition is difficult
- Fish stock impact vs. environmental impacts
- What do we want low impact to mean?
  - Sea – fish stocks
  - Environmental – litter, waste
  - Micro-bid level?
  - Carbon emissions
- Defra needs to have long-term investments to build social capital
- <12m are the 'forgotten category'
- Tonnage? Might be a better way of defining low-impact
  - Gear? Horse power?
- "Everybody in Brixham would be high impact fisher" – nervousness for all fishers
- Perception that Defra has previously used a "divide and conquer" strategy to set fishers from different sectors against one another
  - "Battered and bruised"
  - "Nobody wants to see more division" – the only way to have less division is to get rid of categories
  - Use criteria and quota management
- Idea of ranking impacts on the marine environment, then asking fishers how we can use management to lower these impacts.
- Questioned who wrote the White Paper – Defra officials, scientists, stakeholders etc.
- Terms of reference
  - Catch increase
  - Negative impacts decrease
  - Stocks protected
- Destructive impact of nature (e.g. wind) > fisher activity
- Lessons to be learned from other countries – Canada, New Zealand, USA
- Why define low impact? Without understanding this we can't define it/set parameters.
- o10 quota managed by government, fishers forced into the o10m with smaller engine
- Low impact on the environment vs. the broader environmental movement.

**Scribe/facilitator:** Angela Muench / Phil McBryde

**1.1. What are the impacts on marine environment?**

- Sonar
- Waste/ordnance
- Marine noise
- Ship strikes marine mammals
- Weather/storms → benthos
- Shore-based activities
  - Effluent
  - Farming
  - Pollution
  - Plastic
  - Eutrophication
  - Fuel
  - Top soil loss
  - Nitrates
  - Litter
- Leisure activities → untrained/unregulated boats
- Shipping (commercial) = invasive/non-native species; algae bloom
- Aquaculture/mariculture
- Aggregate dredging
- Ocean acidification
- 80% water, everything impacts the marine environment
- Strong seasonality

**1.2. What are the environmental impacts of fishing / angling independent of fishing type?**

- Question is too divisive; therefore, rather pointed out what “we” would do if we would be king for one day
- Deregulate <8m?
- Not all <10m are “broken”!
- Length can be arbitrary?
- <10m is naturally restricted?
- Operating costs more
- Location, weather, impacts
- Fishing zones?
- Denial of value of licences. Authorised Recognitions?
- Diversification and flexibility is key.
- ££ - quota holders?
- Trust issues.
- Data from fishermen free → utilise fishermen as “scientists” at sea.
- Artisanal has a definition, low impact doesn’t
- Environmental impacts; divide? “High impact” (=careful) vs. “low impact”
- Status quo & discussion on dropping <8m/<7m from <10m would be valid due to beach boats? Oct end of season? Seasonality.
- Quota? More available?
- Environmental links? Lower level of regulations?
- Vessel capping? 5m=punt → handicap system

- Ecosystem approach vs. “environmental impacts” → look at environment, fish, fuel/emission, etc.
  - Holistic look at fishing activity
    - Testing tech: size, location, catches, etc.
    - Building; efficiency [vessel]
    - Latent capacity action
  - Capping redressed: small boats (<6.5/7m) shouldn't be restricted
  - Diversification key
  - Benchmark for size
  - 21ft Cygnus:
    - License amalgamation
    - Aggregation?
    - Beach boats?
  - Regulation drives innovation
  - Progression in industry
    - Polarizing
    - Big companies: investment
    - Where is the money from
    - Fishing not tied to community
    - Small boats too restricted
    - “grants” for first-time fishermen?
    - Funding? Opportunity? **Work for.**
  - Categories?:
    - <7
    - 7-12
    - 12-15
    - 15-18
    - >18
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#### 1. General notes from discussion

- Concerns about what the definition will be used for → finger pointing?; be used against “us”?
- Might create conflict between mobile and static gear
- Do we need a new definition? Might be just a small fraction of fishermen unhappy about the <10/10+m definition → what's the % of the industry who want to move away?
- Definition of <10/10+ is linked to quota not to environmental impact
- License/quota management “one rule fits all” does not fit anyone. Current quota management is not great as <10 would need support because of weather/storm dependency of activity
- Smaller <10 would like effort management to allow flexibility. Restricted by weather anyway and the engine power is rather indicator for weather dependency (overcome storm) then towing strength
- Past management measure went wrong: “why should we trust that it gets better”
- Not all <10 are “broken”/need fixing → length arbitrary
- 12m can be less efficient than 9m boats due to fuel efficiency. Operating costs are very high – needs to be accounted for.

- Paperwork doesn't differentiate so far between the really small boats and <10m. The small ones are governed by the weather (capping/license value should be reflect this)
- Simpler management
- "lowest impact" would be mainly people licensing their quota
- 10 years of data providing and not listening to
- CatchApp → impact on fish
  - No way of getting true reflection of total environmental impact. There is always conflict between gear types
  - How to measure impact? Regional? What is the evidence?
  - Are we pushed into the 6-12nm zone considering MCZ, MPAs, ...
- Increased recreational use of shoreline's → disturbance of marine mammals/ birds nesting grounds...
- Fisheries are very regional
- New entrants/ latent capacity creates additional pressure & diversification is taken away
  - For example: investment from Scotland in big boats → reduced fishing communities, no license for small activity ("the young can't work their way up and grow sustainably their business"). Cost-hurdle to start your own fishing business → industrialization in potting and trawling → increased effort/fishing pressure to reach break-even point/show profit to investors
  - Quota capping led to reduced quota for species → more fishing pressures on other (unregulated) species to make a living
  - Points made here go beyond attracting new entrants into the industry and capture the challenge around retention. 'Natural progression' > in all/most workplaces people want to progress, and that fishing is no different. This had been lost. Scottish investment point and monetisation of quota as a barrier here.

**Scribe/facilitator:** Jim Masters

## **Session 1:** Impacts

### **Question 1.1** Impacts affecting the marine environment

#### GENERAL CONCERNS

- Whenever we've done this before the information has been used against us
- Reference to Lyme Bay – why is this process any different?
- Government bodies \_IFCA, MMO etc. – all take and no give back to the industry – all trust has gone (refer to Brian Tapper email thread – Brian was on my table)
- They use 'environmentally friendly' too easily – developments like the mussel farm in Lyme Bay and seaweed farms are all closing areas to fishing as a result
- There has been no research about the impacts of this aquaculture on the environment, which is another example of why should fishermen trust this process
- You can't have a blanket approach to fisheries, they are all so different and each fishery has a different characteristic
- There needs to be a discussion around license capping and management but want opportunities each year to decide how and where to fish, rather than a fixed allocation that doesn't change each year
- There are significant economic issues at play that influence the decision fishermen make about which species they are going to target. If they don't have enough quota they won't invest in the gear needed to target them, but the current system means

that they don't have the option of deciding this each year as their license to fish species is taken away if it is not used.

- So fishermen want flexibility year on year, but also certainty to help them plan their businesses and build a business model that supports long-term fishing practices based on yearly allocations
- QUESTION: how to enable the MMO to work more constructively with the Under 10m sectors so that they can remain viable and flexible?
- There is a need for an 'app' that enable people to state how much they intend to catch of any one species in a given year and therefore support exchanges of quota within and between fisheries more easily (I am guessing this is in the absence of a PO)
- QUESTION: can we assume that aquaculture is not included in this process?
- There need to be annual entitlements – but these points have all been made to Defra already and this links in heavily to the removal of arbitrary rules
- There are issues around the other unintended consequences of management such as boarding boats. If you get boarded more fish die – you have to land all you catch.
- The issue of selectivity is being ignored more now (I didn't really follow this thread of the conversation very well. There is something about how management is making fishing mortality higher whilst trying to reduce it)
- The basic point is: There is a need to do away with blanket categories and to have a more refined way of defining fishing to allow people to operate to diversify as needed within their licenses.
- Under 7m was proposed as a potential new threshold for managing and defining fishing effort as it is hard to make a 7m boat anything other than what it is – many do not even have cabins or wheelhouses.

#### IMPACTS:

- Dredging: dredging companies give government loads of money and they get things that suit them in return. Trawlers make less of an impact than dredging.
- Dredging spoil does as much damage as anyone else
- Coastal defence works also cause damage – e.g. the silt and sand from Teignmouth
- Windfarms have an impact
- Landfill and run-off entering the marine environment
- It is not just the fishermen who have an impact.
- The scallop industry is impacted by run-off -it has closed fisheries in the Fal for example
- Horsepower of engines is a ridiculous way of judging impact. Bigger horsepower does not equate to more impact. It depends entirely on the type of gear you are using, and where.
- People would find a way around any impacts associated with horsepower (drifting up against the limits) as it depends entirely on the type of gear you are using and the type of fishing you are doing
- Horsepower is only really relevant to towed gear – arbitrary rules lead to people finding ways around them or of avoiding them
- Therefore, focus efforts on each individual fishery
- Rule Beaters can do more damage but other small boats are classed just the same

- litter pollution, tanker scrubbing, angling gear and commercial fishing gear (ghost gear), shore angling, natural events (storm damage), anchoring of boats in eel-grass areas
- Kelp and eel grass also subject to natural damage, seasonal variation and die-back
- Rubbish at sea and marine litter (from tourists)
- Climate change and sea temperatures
- Dissolved CO<sub>2</sub>
- Seal predation
- Gear needs to be properly marked so that if it is lost/found then it can be traced back to its owner.
- Gear interference between static and towed gear
- Ocean currents are changing – other fish are moving in, some fish are moving away. Fish follow bait fish, these changes are different at different depths
- There are too many private angling boats on wrecks and it has become too easy for people to find fish/wrecks, meaning there are more impacts on these places than there were even 5 years ago
- Improvements in all technology has had a big impact – e.g. slave haulers, GPS,
- Leisure angling is not regulated and can't be policed but has a big impact – e.g. they are not on a quota for cod but can significantly impact cod stocks when fishing with a full charter boat.
- Charter skippers catch to sell fish -to pay for their trips etc. Not a level playing field.
- Most fishermen are brilliant – but there will always be rogues
- Small Scale Fishermen are more impacted by the weather so they have less impact than bigger boats
- You need to think about the combination of 'tonnage' and power for towed gear
- Static gear – there are gear limitations on how much they can fish. There is a need for a pot limit per man to ensure you give a living to the families of each person involved
- This would influence how many people you carry and therefore would be difficult to regulate
- Need to also regulate string length
- Can we rotate 'closed areas' – people move on to opened areas and annihilate them after they have been closed
- Fish 'ownership' and slipper-skippers is a massive issue – quota can be bought and leased by other countries who are not regulated the same as us
- Smaller rod and line fishermen don't need quota

## **Session 2:** Question and answer session

JM scribed the Q&A session as best he could. The content below might help augment notes from other people made during this open debate.

- U10m definition is tricky- it is unwanted and inappropriate but hard to change
- The skipper is the key component – good skippers catch more fish
- If there was a new breakpoint which removed U10m altogether you will still get 'snow' drifting up against this limit – you always will, no matter what level you set it at – wherever you set something there is always a tendency to drift up against it
- U10m can fish "inside 6nm but 50 miles from home" – what category does that put them in to?

- Are there other ways of defining or management the huge variation in fisheries and therefore fisheries management?
- Inshore is not a helpful limitation on thinking here as everyone needs to think about lowering their impacts
- What is the current definition of Low Impact?
- There is currently no definition but we need one
- What do you do for boats that fish either side of the 'low impact' division – are we looking at categorising fishing on these grounds too?
- Is there a better way of categorising fishing activities than low/high impact?
- The U12m is a forgotten category – can we refer to tonnage as a better measure of impact
- Demersal fishing gear is all defined as high-impact by the FAO – and this is a concern
- This project does not want to single out gear types
- There is a nervousness for all fishermen there has been a history of 'divide and conquer' we need confidence to help you, we have heard all this before
- The literature does a job of defining impacts – can you come to fishermen with a framework of options of how best to manage fisheries within known impacts?
- Nobody wants to see more division in the industry than there already is – does this project imply there is going to be less division by doing away with the U10m category?
- We also need to look at license categories: as reworking these could provide opportunities for managing different sectors more easily.
- E.g. in Scotland they have done away with license A,B,C but retained non-quota license components and criteria, which means there is some segmentation
- These recommendations were made 10 years ago (Sustainable Access to Inshore Fisheries project) – can this project be revisited rather than re-inventing the wheel?
- Where does the White Paper content come from – were there extensive consultations about what should be in there at all?
- There were consultations, conversations and stakeholder engagement
- The people in this room want some Terms of Reference to enable them to feel confident about participating in the process
- There needs to be a level of regulation to demonstrate fisheries management
- What will the impacts of defining low impact be?
- Where did the U10m definition come from in the first place?
- It was purely administrative – based on the old 40ft definitions
- It was used as reflection of joining the Common Market (decimalisation...)
- How will this project 'square' the impacts we choose to define with those already put forward by NGOs?
- We need more context about what is possible in terms of management – a reality check with how things are going to work at a legislative level
- What can fishermen actually influence here through this project?
- It's about how we can enable regional and sustainable fisheries
- Personal Observation: Investing in group formation could prove a worthwhile investment – social capital – the short-term nature of this project is a weakness and something that could be worked on at Stage II
- Fishermen need to be able to feed-in intelligence about fisheries and as to what data is needed/what questions do people want answered in terms of improving science and management

- Fishing into the Future is recognised as a good vehicle for building trust
- We need to give regulators more information and we need to interact with them to try to influence what happens
- Defra is looking at the long-haul for this project – a serious commitment from them
- These resources are not guaranteed in terms of supporting dialogue
- Can we assess what is right/wrong with the status quo – for stringent interrogation – before we continue so that we can really scrutinise what is working and what needs to change?
- **ACTION: Summarise definitions of low impact from other countries – how and where were these derived?**
- Bring back the Sustainable Access to Inshore Fisheries project outputs as a starting point for more information and ensure we don't cover old ground and waste time.

4<sup>th</sup> March 2020



### **North Shields low impact workshop 11-3-2020. Fishermen's Mission.**

The meeting was well attended with 25 fishermen and representatives from around the North East, covering ports from Northumberland through Durham and Yorkshire.

The background and context of the project was described and it was emphasised that this was an early phase of policy development, that Defra was seeking industry views early on and that this project was part of a larger, longer conversation and process. Any comments or views provided will be treated anonymously and ground rules for participation were laid out.

Next the rationale and recognition that the under/over 10m separation for fisheries management purposes had not worked well was presented and Defra were therefore seeking views as to whether a definition of 'low impact' could replace the u/o10 distinction. The question was asked whether 'low impact' fishing could be defined and then be subject to lighter regulation or increased fishing opportunities, but that without a definition or criteria to determine who qualifies as low impact no policy could be developed or applied. The participants were asked whether this was a good approach, way of thinking about it and that Defra had tendered for this project to find out as early as possible.

Defra subsequently presented the need for a different framework after leaving the CFP, that there would be new quota as a result of Brexit and that therefore they wanted to start early discussion to agree the best way forward in inshore fisheries reform. The focus is on the potential benefit of low impact fishing, and a central focus on sustainability in the Fisheries White Paper (FWP), Fisheries Bill and that an outcome could be more quota from the pool for those classified as low impact.

Defra want to see whether this is feasible, and what the starting point for those discussions is.

A question was asked about the fitting of square mesh panels and whether these technical measures were linked to this project. The answer was that these are distinct projects / issues.

The participants began a series of questions and observations (\*):

\*The biggest challenge perceived locally was that Defra and the MMO needed to simplify the rules and make them manageable. Furthermore there was a clear view expressed that this approach of defining low impact would cause a form of division and that this was not a good first step on a new path.

The response was that there were two objectives to be met, one around a conversation on low impact and what can be done to move away from a sharp length based approach and secondly to see if there were alternatives that would be welcomed and implementable.

\*The observation was made that when the u/o10m policy was rolled out that it was done badly and that when Defra originally allocated quota it did not match regional differences.

\*For inshore fishing, having both full time (FT) and part time (PT) fishermen accessing the pool was also not justifiable as some were wholly reliant on the fishery whereas others had other income streams and security but were given the same fishing opportunities. The management approach went wrong in the 2000's and now urgently needs reform.

Defra emphasised there was no predetermined outcome, but simply a recognition of what had not worked well and needed addressing. It is a key priority to focus on building trust, being open, honest and acknowledging mistakes that had been made in the past as well as avoiding making new mistakes. There was a focus on less of a 'top down' approach and acknowledgement that 'one size

fits all' is not a suitable approach and that diversity within the fleet and regions needs to be recognised. There needs to be a starting point, and low impact seemed a good way to start the conversation but there will also be space for the other issues to be aired and discussed. A web page has been published that offers information about the project and there will be other ways to engage, i.e. this is only the start and not the only way or opportunity to input into these decisions around creating a better system (that will require input from fishermen).

\*Is the low impact starting point about the vessel or the fishery? If low impact is an opportunity and could result in extra access, quota or less regulation then this will continue the problem – as it will result in division, separation and distinct rules for different parts of the fleet, rather than common rules for everyone which is what is needed. The view that this term and split will be divisive was presented as individuals would be motivated by getting the best deal for themselves and that therefore the starting point for a conversation about future management should not start with incentives.

Defra responded that for the long-term focus on sustainability (a key commitment of the FWP/Bill) then there needs to be incentives for fishermen to try to lower their environmental impacts.

\*Low impact is subjective. The Green agenda is driving a definition focussed on impacts. There will be a line in the sand again.

The FWP commits Defra to 'look at it' [i.e. low impact], but not necessarily to implement it if it is deemed not suitable.

\*What is the definition for the scope of the work? Is it about replacing the u/o10m split or is it about lowering impact at the fleet scale? It needs to be clear. What are the boundaries? If low impact is only considered in environmental terms it misses the social and economic ones, which need to be considered.

Defra agreed and said that this was a first conversation with a focus on the environment, but that didn't mean socio-economics were not going to be considered in future management.

\*Defra / MMO do not have the best track record, when u10s were only allocated 3% of the national quota. They have paid money for licences that used to be free. If this project aims to split the u10s then there will be licensing implications and linking licences to impact is a concern.

\*U10s have been telling Defra it is not working for 30 years. We have sat in rooms, spoken to civil servants, taking part in projects, pilot schemes, SAIF (sustainable access to inshore fisheries), various groups and varying methods to come to an answer and it has not changed. The quota system is not perfect, but the regional areas are also very different and there are business plans to reflect that. Investments have been made based on those (5-year) plans – and while the specific issues keep changing the inshore fleet needs to be able to have a business plan and that relies on fishing opportunities and the ability to diversify. This project / definition needs to be mindful of that.

This is an opportunity to do it differently – so it starts with the question if / how low impact could / should be defined.

\*Inshore fishermen need sustainability, they rely on it.

\*Concern that people move / leave the civil service and that fishermen invest the time and effort to educate and collaborate and then it turns out to be a waste of time..

\*Pulse fishing is the worst impact on the marine environment and the worst kind of fishing but it still continues...so it sends out the message to the UK fleet that Defra does not care. There is a perception that anyone can do what they want.

\*The Fisheries Bill (House of Lords reading) says any extra quota can be bid on by the u10s. That will exacerbate inequality. It will create have's and have nots again. New quota cannot be monetised like that, it needs to be free. Pricing and renting quota actually creates financial pressure, pressure to fish more, pressure on the fishery and therefore sustainability. This then starts a vicious cycle. What is needed instead is giving quota back to coastal communities, back to local ports.

Defra: there are mixed views on the quota system; the FB gives powers to do lots of things and that is what it is meant to do. It is one possible option, not the only option.

\*No nomadic fishing vessels have attachments to these local / home ports; we have been fishing the same grounds for 20-30 years, not chasing the fish around the country, but waiting for them to swim past. We fish seasonally and there are high annual variations. The super nomadics operate like 'smash and grab'.

\*We should rebalance the quota we already have not just any new quota.

\*Low impact fishing is day boat fishing

\*We need more protection locally for our static gear. Nomadic scallop dredgers and pulse beamers are destroying the fishery but IFCA's can't prosecute them. For the nomadic fleet it is like the Wild West. The pelagic factory ships fishing for herring are allowed to carry on as they wish, catching whales and dolphins but in the 60s our fathers herring licences were taken away and burned but now we've given those rights to the Scottish and Dutch. This is a matter of extreme injustice.

The FBill states there is a duty to provide fisheries management plans.

This means:

- More co-management
- More localised management
- More regional management

\*The scallop cat A licences give entitlements to vessels

\* the Cod recovery plan destroyed Yorkshire fisheries

***The conversation then focused on Co-design:*** Defra emphasised a different approach, acknowledging that policy and management are better when they are designed by those it affects. A collaborative approach is needed.

\*There has been fragmentation as a result of u/o10s and people have adapted to the rules, fishermen approached Defra / MAFF 20 years ago but it didn't change.

The aim with this work is to have the discussion early, there is no predetermined pathway.

\*There is a concern that reports are produced and then taken to mean "the industry agreed to this"; does participation mean endorsement? There needs to be safeguards, Q&A in the future so that the reports and discussion are not open to re-interpretation with different results for the industry in the future.

The Terms of Reference (ToR) for the project are online and will be widely shared. We also need to focus on the process

\*Scallop dredging cannot be considered low impact

\*Defra need to gain fishermen's confidence again

\*Quotas need to be given to fishermen, not sold on the open market. Quotas should be free. Like in Norway, if the licence is in a fishing family you get quota. You should need to have a boat to have quota. Should only be traded by active fishermen (if at all).

\*The Coastal PO wasn't recognised by Defra

- DEFRA: CPO was offered an opportunity to manage quota but they didn't take it.

\*If fishermen are diversifying can you gift quota you are not going to use to other fishermen in the port who need it?

\*O10s had the same problem by having to buy quota or taking it when boats left the fishery, U10s couldn't. But they still need quota to be able to solve the problems they are facing now.

- DEFRA: This is part of a long-term plan and changes so we need to be able to split issues.

### **First half (Presentation) additional notes**

- There shouldn't be any division of vessels, both u10 and o10 are all fishers. Despite diversity, fishers should be seen as a collective.
- Defra needs to consider the real impact of the application of any definition before it is implemented or publicly shared.
- The design and framing of these workshops precipitates a "win-lose" situation of "low vs. high impact" whereby participants will consciously choose to provide information which will benefit them in the policy outcome of the workshops.
- 'Low-impact is a subjective term and will have entirely different definitions for everyone, depending on relativity.
- The power and influence of the "Green agenda" [environmentalist movements] will lead to a definition which will disadvantage fishers and push them to be more low-impact, regardless of if they are already fishing in a sustainable/environmentally-friendly way.
- The information which has been received by fishers about this project has been insufficient and unclear in defining the project scope.
- Questions around whether there is scope in the project for addressing social sustainability/impact in a definition of low-impact.
- "You can't see the seabed, so why protect it?"
- This project, definition and subsequent policy outcome will only serve as another way to divide fishers and pit them against one another – divide and conquer strategy.
- Questions were raised around why Defra is only starting to use co-design now and, considering the perceived failure of previous consultations to make any positive impact based on fishers' opinions and perspectives, why do Defra believe that this will be different? Belief that Defra will still fail to integrate fishers' feedback effectively, or at all.
- Fishers don't have any intention or desire to destroy/damage the marine environment because otherwise they wouldn't have any stocks left to fish.

- Fishers feel that they have put a lot of time into educating and building trust/rapport with Defra M&F policy teams. However, the rapid turnover of staff in the civil service means that this time is often lost as people with whom they have built a working relationship with, move on and lose contact. Knowledge is lost, which can be demoralising and dissuade fishers to continue to work with Defra.
- Plenty of feedback is provided in these sort of projects, yet fishers feel that they are ignored as soon as the project ends. Reports are put aside, and new staff can misinterpret the results of consultations when they are eventually revisited, often assuming endorsement from fishers whereas, in actuality, there is dissent. A safeguard will need to ensure that this project is clear in its results, so that this is avoided.
- Some concern over Fisheries Bill confusion, where a participant thought that additional quota post-EU Exit would be auctioned.
- Frustration was aimed at the lack of regulation for protecting static gear, for example, dredgers/trawlers destroying pots. One potential 'reward' for obtaining low-impact status could be better protection or compensation for potting damages.
- Consensus that trawlers and dredgers are the highest impact.
- Defra needs to regain the confidence and trust of fishers after making mistakes in the past.

#### **UPSTAIRS GROUP DISCUSSION: CW notes**

\*Low impact should be defined by day boats that are owner operated

Changes as a result of leaving the CFP mean there will be a rebalancing of EU TAC shares, there will be additional quota available

\*Over 10s don't want to lose out

\*Risks stem from monetising quota

The FBill gives powers.

\*Couldn't environmental value be used as a criteria for allocation? Auctions just mean those with the deepest pockets will get more.

Minister has committed to support inshore fisheries and coastal communities. There are differences in opinion on allocation, and there is currently a set number of fishers in the pool.

\*If we are capping licences and effort what happens to latent capacity? Those license holders could just invest in a new equivalent of rule beater

\*What types of auctions are intended?

\* We need to focus on environmentally friendly methods. IFCA byelaws do that with areas and gear specific management. For inshore fisheries there needs to be flexibility in the quota system, to match seasonality and annual changes. The 3 monthly nephrops quota has worked well, given the storminess and lack of opportunity due to weather.

\*License capping has focussed on PT and FT, so will licensing be revisited now? Some of the licensing issues force negative environmental outcomes and that comes through the entitlement and lack of flexibility in the quota pool. E.g. bass, it has created a bass entitlement where anyone who caught bass now gets a tonnage.

\*SSCF (small-scale coastal fisheries) as an EU definition did not recognise the Yorkshire salmon and sea trout fishery although it is artisanal and low impact; it is managed by the EA with a different set of rules.

\*what will the impact of climate change be on entitlements and track records as species move North and new species turn up? E.g. we have red mullet up here now and bonito tuna in Yorkshire.

\*Current structure is too rigid, needs to be more flexible, to focus on the right gear in the right place. The local and regional management needs to tie together

\*What about a quota reserve and banking quota to use for later allocation if needed?

\*What about community quota schemes?

Anglo-Scottish PO holds quota that isn't used by members who are potting but it mean they can hold onto it and spread it around when needed.

Coastal PO effectively only able to hold paper quota as once the share has been caught further south there won't be any left up here. Who should run the Coastal PO?

\*Is Defra planning effort trials as part of this project?

There will always be a TAC and quota but there are options within that, e.g. effort trials and community quota schemes.

\*There are two aspects to consider for the Coastal PO, regional (e.g. nomadic scallop boats v local boats who need protection and there are impacts of displacement), and Seasonal (needs to be tailored to those ongoing regional changes)

\*Nephrops in the Farn Deeps, there are high capacity vessels catching prawns before the u10s could even get out and have a go. Weather dependence is a big factor, maybe access to the Farn Deeps could be licensed to protect local boats (but these licences then could not be sold to other parts of the country)

\*We need an IFCA 12mile limit

\*The working relationship with the MMO is very low

\*quad-rigged trawlers (NL) are fishing the 12nM limit

\*IFCA do stock assessments and permit schemes, which mean it is a managed fishery. The nomadic fleet is the problem, they can switch off AIS at night and enter inside the 12nm and overfish the grounds

\*Gear conflicts is a major issue, should be a vandalism offence. Leads to ghost fishing

\*Lobsters, why bring in the berried hens rule here but not Scotland? V notching is much better option, how can English and Scottish science reach different conclusions?

\*Southern North Sea crab stock has inconsistent regulations and minimum sizes are different but the vessels move between the 6 and 12mile limits, which makes no sense

\*Farn Deep inshore fishery has had extremely negative impacts because of nomadic vessels

\*Previous input from industry has turned out negative, need for industry led science

\*DEFRA needs to appreciate a budget is needed, focus around fisheries management plans and focus on either species, regional or mixed fisheries; there could be an inshore scallop fishery, which is well managed, could provide a good income, not trash the marine environment and reduce or eliminate gear conflict, but could a dredge fishery ever be sustainable? Yes is it low impact? What determines what are the other impacts...

\*Farn Deep twin rig ban has been a big success story. The Scottish vessels outside the 12nm were wiping out the stocks. But what about displacement?

\*Potting in Yorkshire is split: lobsters or crab & lobster

\*Cod recovery closures didn't match the areas we actually found cod and closed grounds where there were no cod. Then we lived in fear of catching any cod due to catch composition rules.

\*Low impact scallop dredging is possible on right grounds, if it's a small (5 dredge) footprint, but not 18....because of the weight of what is being towed.

\*What about a list of pre-authorized gears for U10s?

\*Recruitment into fishing is hampered by paperwork

\*Adaptive management requires information, we need to understand how that information then shapes management, and it needs to be updated over time as things change. NNFO used to produce annual fisheries reports at the metier level providing qualitative information on how fishermen were responding to management. We need to understand what institutional arrangements will be in place for this project and wider work. We need to know that all the information and projects will be pulled together.

\*The language (scientific and legal) needs to be accessible. Shouldn't be left to interpretation. Should be followed up with port level demonstrations and trials.

\*Closer engagement and more frequent dialogue is necessary.

\* The NE has limited species, needs to be considered.

\*The factory ships are treated differently, they fish with micro mesh for sandeel but they are hoovering up all of the juveniles of other species along with them

DEFRA: they will require a licence and have to follow the UK rules.

\*We need a 12mile / 20 mile / 50 mile exclusive UK zone.

\*How will this low impact work affect the MFF (funding)? There are currently favourable rates for SSCF and you can't exclude people as those intervention rates make a big difference.

\*The NE white fish infrastructure has disappeared as people have moved into shellfish. Needs funding for young people to enter. In other EU countries they have used EMFF for new vessels for new entrants under the age of 30, could we do that?

\*Capping and reference periods have caused problems, needs to be looked at again. Very small scale fishermen selling directly to tourists and not merchants look as though they don't have track records, although IFCA /(SFC) docs showed they were landing fish. They have had unfair treatment – these artisanal day boats who sell to the public are at a disadvantage but that's what brings the tourists in

\*CatchApp is a waste of time

\*Can something be done about MFF up front payments by fishermen, as the smaller ones haven't got the money to pay unfrown so they are disadvantaged again versus the bigger businesses.

\*Supertrawlers are causing whale deaths, I've seen them float by and they weren't caught in pot strings. Doesn't matter if EU or UK flagships – it needs to stop.

\*Herring spawning has been impacted by scallop dredging as there is no seaweed now which the herring need to spawn on, its impacting the whole food chain as the herring spawn forms the basis for various species at various times of year and phases.

### ***Second Session: LO notes***

How are auctions environmentally friendly if it comes down to money? Answered with the use of different criteria and designing a non-monetary focused auction system.

Can Defra rebalance quota? It should be taken off those who don't own boats.

The point of Brexit was to support coastal communities; that's what they voted for. Quota and investment should go into helping support coastal communities.

Question of whether licensing will be revisited. Fishers need flexibility to diversify.

Need to understand local science to allocate quota accordingly based on local stocks and seasonality. The mackerel reference year has put them at a disadvantage. The current structure is too rigid and doesn't work. There is a need for local quota management.

Can they bank quota? They have to pay for flexibilities of banking and borrowing.

Is latent capacity still a problem and in which sector? The shellfish sector are concerned.

IFCAs are on the ground, have local knowledge and react in real time. MMO seem detached and have anecdotally declined the offer of going out with fishermen because they did not have the resource. IFCAs are seeking fishers to provide input which is improving their representation.

Questions about fisheries management plans. Are they species management plans? Regional management plans?

New entrants are giving up because they can't cope with the amount and complexity of paperwork and the financial burden of buying boats and quota.

There is a disconnect with engagement. IFCAs, MMO and Defra are all trying. Need to bring those strands together.

There is too much scientific and legal language used. This makes it difficult for interpretation and can lead to misunderstandings. They value workshops and meetings; more of those are needed.

### **Second half (Group discussion, downstairs room) JB notes**

Impacts/criteria:

- Dredging/seabed damage
- Twin-rig, high effort, intense methods
- Seals



- Destructive gears
- Vessel size and power
- **Didn't** see bycatch or discards as an issue

#### General discussion points

- Danger of taking a “utopian” perspective and ignoring whether the practical application will work in reality.
- The u10/o10 classification was an oversimplification that resulted from an attempt by Defra and regulators to make fisheries easier to manage. Ease, however, came at the expense of effectiveness and practicality.
- The Northumberland coast is entirely covered by protected areas (MPAs, MCZs), which largely restricts the impact of fishers in that area due to lack of access. Therefore, fishers local to this area are already lower impact, so would need lighter measures. Criteria could potentially be locality to protected fishing grounds.
- Strong consensual belief that MPAs/MCZs haven't helped fish stock recovery.
- “There's no cod in the North sea”
- The seal population has drastically increased in recent years due to legislation on seal culling and general shifts in public opinion towards conservation, environmentalism and animal rights. This has meant that many seals are dispersing fish before fishers can reach them, or eating fish out of their nets. However, this has had a positive impact on shellfish stocks (e.g. prawns).
- The marine environment is complex, biodiverse and interconnected. Lowering one impact can raise another, or vice versa.
- Impact is often more about the intensity of the fishing method than anything else. Twin-rig boats will be considerably higher impact than single-rig boats.
- Net size has the largest impact. If all net sizes were the same then fishing would only be determined by the skipper/fisher's individual skill and expertise.
- Locality/non-nomadic could be used as a criteria because there are not enough local vessels in an area to have a high impact, it's only the addition of nomadic fishers and foreign vessels that makes a local fleet high impact. Being local also has a positive impact on social sustainability (locally sourced fish, tourism, health & wellbeing benefits).
- Vessel maintenance and fuel costs mean that skippers of smaller vessels will often choose to not go to sea and take an economic loss. It makes rational sense to wait for stocks to recover and go out when they can take home an optimal catch.
- There is a need to recognise the drivers of different fisheries, e.g. small vs. large.
- It's difficult to separate environmental and social sustainability as they're interconnected.
- Recent reduction of locally sourced seafood restaurants is reflective of the lack of whitefish being landed in this area.
- Government should ban dredging and twin-rigs because these are the highest impact.
- Removal of restrictions for low-impact fishers wouldn't make a difference because fishers will always be restricted by weather conditions above anything else.
- This project is simply a way for Defra to “tick a box” that claims co-design/consultation has been done with fishers, but the results won't be considered when policy is formulated. Another participant responded “You've got to start somewhere though”.
- Risk of causing a “bureaucratic nightmare” as the CatchApp has done – need to ensure that any definition is operationalised for policy.

- Dredging is “strip fishing” – dredgers will clear scallop grounds until it’s empty within a week. It’s too indiscriminate and non-technical.
- Survivability of discards could be considered as a criteria.

**Main environmental threats: HC notes**

- Scallop dredging needs banning and everything that lives on the sea bed
- Twin trawlers – consensus on this
- IFCA designed to be regional body – all that’s happened is they’ve become a delivery body for national policy
- Northumberland coast MPA/MCZ – whole coast (not always out to the 6 mile, varies in depth) no one can go to sea without going into a protected area
- MPAs etc. doesn’t work and stocks haven’t improved – least fish in a long time observed by those in the room, couldn’t feed yourself
- Fisheries are becoming monoculture – prawns – if it collapsed then you’d not have a business
- Seals as a cause/threat; don’t kill them though not 100% cause but a big cause (cleaner waters and no culling has allowed their numbers to develop) SEALS AS SIGNIFICANT PROBLEM
- Lobster doing well ‘economically sustainable’ – 12 months
- Prawns are getting hammered “24/7”
- Local boats were not threatening the prawn stocks?? Small horse power cannot impact, inside the 12 and under the hp. Cheaters=Pair trawling and twin rig boats – it’s the intensity it’s because they’re taking double, clumping/impact on the sea bed. Prawns live in muddy burrows which are being destroyed.
- Gear restrictions would be a useful way of limiting impact – general consensus here
- Same engine power, same size of net? Level playing field? Leave more down to fishers’ skill
- Visiting vessels as a threat

**How non-nomadic you are?** Can we reward for this? Maybe not; exploring whether useful for describing low impact. Local boats couldn’t do any damage, these local boats don’t do any damage. Participants explained how local/small boats are self-limiting in terms of their damage (size/power/number of days/weather). Stock is the driver on smaller boats. Big boats, fishermen are the drivers – they’ll go where they need to and can go out as much as they want. They are NOT responsive to stocks, but just go and go and go because they can. Big vessels follow the stock availability – move around, following the salinity, water temp, tidal range etc. set pattern of where the fishery will be at every time of year. Big boats can monopolise this.

Big boats= overheads mean that they need to push through conditions and will push through regardless. Small boats, can stop/will stop if they don’t have resources. Small boats as more attuned.

Smaller boats taking a deliberate economic loss to protect the stocks.

“If you’ve got quota – it doesn’t matter where you’re from – you can prosecute the fishery”

Effort is linked to availability – no one is going to go away. Even low tech boats are expensive. If catch rate drops, they’ll stop. Large vessels, with money, can keep going. Section of fleet that exists within the resources they have e.g. local boats. But the big guys can keep going and going.

Too much effort in terms of hours beyond the 12 mile, only a fraction of effort from local boats

**Low impact criteria:** Being nomadic for low environmental impact (some agreement but not 100%, perhaps 80%); is there a case for non-nomadic a better social impact? Yes, **definite agreement**. Tourism, kids love it. Part of people's holidays etc. etc. Amble – a dozen pubs now serve local seafood.

How can we implement low impact criteria, summary:

- Size
- Power
- Ban scalloping – what are the impacts? Spikes about 20cm. Problem with scalloping is it's "ultra indiscriminate" – you know where the scallop ground is – shift 100 yards, strip fishing, you go to the edge of where you think is feasible. One boat can strip fish a whole area in a week. They take no account of the area. Changing the habitat. Destructive. Not a fishery that's really impacted by weather, particularly the bigger boats.
- Ban twin rigging etc.
- Gear

With no restrictions small guys = "we'd do the same"