

Menai Strait Fishery Order Management Association

Meeting, 14th December 2022
Zoom Video Conference Call

Minutes

Attendance

Members

Alan Winstone*
Ioan Thomas
James Wilson*
Kim Mould*
Lewis le Vay

Chair
Cyngor Gwynedd
Bangor Mussel Producers Ltd
Myti Mussels Ltd
Bangor University

Observers

Alex Scorey
Howard Mattocks
Nia Jones
Trevor Jones

Natural Resources Wales
Beaumaris Town Council
North Wales Wildlife Trust
Menai Strait (West) Applicants

Advisors

Jim Andrews*

MSFOMA Secretariat

Notes

* *These individuals are also Directors of the Association*

1. Chair's announcements

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting, and in particular Nia Jones from North Wales Wildlife Trust, who had taken up the Association's invitation to participate as an observer at MSFOMA meetings.

The Chair reported that prior to the meeting he had received correspondence from Mr Iwan Huws of Ynys Môn County Council indicating that he would be replaced on MSFOMA by his colleague, Mr David Salisbury, the new Harbour Master for Beaumaris.

It was agreed that letter of thanks should be sent to Iwan Huws for his many years of service and support to MSFOMA.

Action: Chair & Secretariat

2. Apologies

Iwan Huws
José Constantino†
Julian Bray
Michelle Billing
Rob Floyd
Rowland Sharp
Ruth Iliffe

Isle of Anglesey County Council
Welsh Government
Welsh Government
Welsh Government
Welsh Government
Natural Resources Wales
Royal Yachting Association Cymru

3. Declarations of Interest

The Chair asked participants in the meeting to declare any interest in each agenda item before speaking.

4. Minutes of last meeting

The minutes of the meeting that took place on the 15th of September 2022 were accepted.

5. Matters Arising

It was considered that most of the matters arising from the last meeting were addressed on the agenda for the current meeting.

Some items raised at the September meeting that were not formally addressed on the agenda were discussed:-

Sand in Penrhyn Dock

James Wilson reported that there had been no further progress with removal of the sand that had accumulated in the dock and was restricting access.

It was agreed that this issue should be kept under review.

Action: JW, Secretariat

Bonamia

There had been no change to the Bonamia designated area, nor did this seem likely.

Water quality

This matter was due to be discussed under item 8 on the agenda.

Autumn conference

The Chair reported that the Shellfish Centre held a conference in Llandudno on the 9th & 10th November. This had been well attended and very constructive.

6. Register of Interests

The Chair reminded all participants to check their Statement of Interests on the MSFOMA website (https://www.msfoma.org/?page_id=478) to confirm whether it is accurate.

The Secretariat reported that this page has been updated with new photographs following the last meeting of the Association.

7. Financial Update

The meeting accepted the report that had been submitted about the Association's finances. It was noted that the same report had been presented to the AGM immediately prior to this meeting.

The Secretariat and Chair explained that in response to a discussion at the September meeting of the Association it had been agreed that a revised five year financial plan should be proposed. This would replace the financial plan agreed at the AGM in 2021. A revised plan was endorsed by a meeting of Members and Directors on 21st October 2022.

The key features of the revised financial plan were that overall expenditure could be reduced by trimming some areas of work (specifically the Menai Strait (West) Fishery Order; the number of MSFOMA meetings held per year; and the budgets for research and

the community fund). These cost-cutting measures coupled with a reduction in the target reserve from £20,000 to £10,000 would reduce the annual budget by an average of £3,300 pa over the next 5 years. This would result in a corresponding fall in lease fees by 21% from the current FY onwards.

The AGM had resolved to adopt this revised plan for the next five years. The Association meeting supported this resolution.

The Chair also reported that annual accounts were submitted on schedule in February 2022. The Association received the corresponding financial statement.

The Secretariat reported that new proposals for better financial management and control had been prepared, taking account of advice from the Association's accountants. These had been accepted at the AGM and would now be implemented.

8. Water quality

The Chair introduced the report on shellfish hygiene classifications in the Menai Strait, which are critical to the financial viability of mussel farming here.

On the 2nd December the Association had been notified by the Local Action Group (LAG) for the Menai Strait that a shellfish sample taken from the Cegin Channel had exceeded the limit value for a Class A shellfish bed (the sample was 780 *E.coli* / 100g, the limit is 700). This had triggered an "Action State" and the LAG was due to prepare an "Action State Report". The Chair had collated information to produce a report which showed that the high result was almost certainly due to high rainfall over the previous 24 hours.

The Association welcomed and endorsed the Chair's response to the Action State. It was agreed that follow-up action should be taken to include information from Combined Sewage Overflow discharges into the report once this was made available by Dŵr Cymru. It was further agreed that the Chair and Secretariat should liaise with the LAG to request that this high result is removed from the register.

Action: Chair & Secretariat

It was confirmed that the actions of Gwynedd County Council and Ynyn Môn County Council Environmental Health Officers were not being challenged or called into question. The EHOs appear to have followed the correct procedures in gathering samples, getting them analysed and alerting the LAG expediently to the high result.

These comments notwithstanding, it was noted that two shellfish samples had been gathered on the 22nd November: one at low water, which triggered the action state; and one earlier in the day from a dredger at high water, which recorded just 490 *E.coli* / 100g). It was agreed that the LAG should be asked to consider opportunities to take shellfish samples in a more representative manner (i.e. from dredge samples at high water rather than by hand at low water).

Action: Chair & Secretariat

It was further agreed that the Chair and Secretariat should use this case as an example to present to the Minister and also to the Chair of the APPG on shellfish aquaculture to show how UK administrative arrangements could be revised and improved to the benefit of the UK shellfish industry.

Action: Chair & Secretariat

9. Public Profile of the Association

The Chair and Secretariat reported that Dr Andy Olivier was continuing to use Twitter to raise the profile of the Association. Andy was constantly looking for fresh news to Tweet, anyone with suitable items could e-mail them to him (avdsolivier@gmail.com).

Action: All

It was also reported that an independent journalist (Sam Andrews) had been in touch with MSFOMA Members to research an article for publication on The Fish Site website. This would focus on the impact the Brexit has had on the Menai Strait fishery. The Chair and Secretariat would circulate a link to the article once it is published.

Action: Chair & Secretariat

10. Welsh Government Activity

The Secretariat's report was noted and received.

The Chair informed the meeting that he had attended the second meeting of the new Ministerial Advisory Group for Welsh Fisheries on 24th November. The meeting had focussed on sorting out its own administration (Terms of Reference, priorities etc), and then considering a new funding scheme to replace the old European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF). This new fund will be called the Welsh Marine and Fisheries Scheme (WMFS).

The WMFS will be available for funding applications to facilitate activities that benefit Wales and/or the Welsh marine zone. The scheme is for individuals and organisations in the private, public and third sectors to access financial assistance. The scheme is due to be delivered by funding rounds that will be available through online applications and will be administered by Rural Payments Wales (RPW). Welsh Government are currently seeking expressions of interest in funding for "Marketing Measures", and for "Energy efficiency and the mitigation of climate change".

Another WG fund was also publicised at the meeting - the Coastal Communities Capacity Building Fund. This fund has been established to build upon a report produced in November 2022 that identified two broad areas (Sustainable Growth and Nature Recovery) as priorities for "capacity building" (i.e. providing funding to local groups so that they can build organisational capacity so that they can tackle local issues). The Fund is being administered by Local Nature Partnerships and by local authority area. The deadline for submitting applications for the current round of funding is 13th January 2023.

The Chair proposed that a bid for funding of a partnership project focussed on improving water quality and involving MSFOMA and The Rivers Trust could meet the funding requirements and bring benefits for shellfish farming, recreation and wildlife in the Strait. If supported, this could be submitted to the Gwynedd and Ynys Môn LNPs. After some discussion it was agreed that the Chair and Secretariat should work with partners to put together a funding proposal and to submit it to one of the LNPs.

Action: Chair & Secretariat

11. NW IFCA Activity

The report on recent activities of the NW IFCA was received and accepted by the meeting. It was noted that there had been a small seed mussel fishery in Morecambe Bay and that it would be appropriate to thank NWIFCA staff for their work to progress this.

Action: Secretariat

It was agreed that MSFOMA should continue to encourage NWIFCA to resume work on the Morecambe Bay Mussel Management Plan.

Action: Secretariat

12.All Party Parliamentary Group: Shellfish Aquaculture

There was no further news from this Group.

13.Menai Strait East Fishery Order

The report was accepted. It was noted that the only outstanding area of work for this Order was to review the “Managed Areas” around reef features. It was considered that in view of the low level of cultivation activity and the desire to minimise expenditure, this was not presently a priority and should be held in abeyance.

14.Menai Strait West

The report was accepted. The meeting acknowledged that the sticking point with the proposed new Fishery Order was the absence of a policy for managing Pacific oysters.

The Association noted that MSFOMA had commissioned and participated in research about Pacific oysters in the Strait. The report on this research concluded that Pacific oysters represent a very low environmental risk, and that there are easily accessible mitigation measures to eliminate risk.

The Minister has been sent a copy of this report and invited to progress the application for renewing the Fishery Order in the western Menai Strait. A holding response was sent to the Association in August, but no further communication had been received.

The Chair reported that he is trying to get this matter on the agenda for an upcoming meeting of the new Ministerial Advisory Group, but noted that this is a strategy group so might not be prepared to consider as site-specific issue.

Action: Chair

It was agreed that in the light of the decisions of funding of the Association, the Chair and Secretariat should provide a progress update to the potential tenants of the Menai West area, and also inform them that unless and until a policy for managing Pacific Oysters is in place, MSFOMA will not be carrying out further work on the proposal.

Action: Chair & Secretariat

15.Funding proposals & Research Update

Lewis Le Vay indicated that the funding for the Shellfish Centre was due to expire at the end of December, and ongoing projects were due to be completed by then. It was hoped that some of the ongoing projects can be sustained using funds from other sources.

A brief update on projects relevant to MSFOMA was provided:-

- a) **Pacific Oysters** - this report has been produced (see Item 14 above).
- b) **Spat collectors / MOSSS** - a report for this work is being finalised. It is hoped that this project can be sustained until summer 2023.
- c) **Water quality** -a report on the work progressed through a partnership between the Shellfish Centre, Dŵr Cymru, the Rivers Trust, Deepdock and MSFOMA is

due to be completed by the end of December.

- d) **Bonamia** - the report on research into the distribution of *Bonamia* using DNA markers from shellfish samples has been completed. This showed that there is persistent *Bonamia* in the western Strait (in Chilean oysters) but very little evidence at the NE end of the Strait.
- e) **Conference** - this took place in November. It was well attended, with presentations from Shellfish Centre staff as well as from visiting experts from elsewhere in the UK and also from Denmark and Sweden.

16. Fishery Management Issues

a) Coastal / marine developments

i. **Bangor Pier**

No additional update.

ii. **Sand in the dock**

This was discussed at the start of the meeting (see Matters Arising).

b) Environmental / health issues

i. **Shellfish hygiene classification**

This was discussed earlier in the meeting (see item 9).

ii. ***Bonamia***

This was discussed at the start of the meeting (see Matters Arising).

iii. **Invasive Alien Species (IAS) / Invasive Non-Native Species (INNS)**

Nia Jones reported that North Wales Wildlife Trust has been providing species ID training as part of the Shoresearch Intertidal surveys project. She asked if there were areas in the Strait or on the Anglesey and Gwynedd coasts which it could be useful to target for IAS. All were asked to advise Nia of any suitable locations that they knew of.

Action: All

As a standing item, all were asked to be alert to the presence of slipper limpets (*Crepidula fornicata*) and to report any observations to NRW.

Action: All

iv. **Norovirus**

No further update.

17. Any Other Business

a) Correspondence

No additional correspondence had been received.

b) Website

It was suggested that the MSFOMA website could benefit from providing more information about the research work (PhDs & MSCs) that have been funded by the shellfish farmers. It was also suggested that better linkage with the Shellfish Centre website and reports would also be helpful.

Action: Secretariat

18. Dates for next meetings

Meeting dates were agreed for 2023:-

- a. 27th April 2023 (virtual)
- b. 14th September 2023 (virtual)
- c. 14th December 2023 [AGM] (in person)

Summary of Actions

Item	Action	Responsibility
1.	Thanks Iwan Huws for participation in MSFOMA	Chair & Secretariat
2.	Sand in Dock - keep under review.	James Wilson & Secretariat
3.	Contact LAG to request removal of the high shellfish sampling result of 22 nd November from register.	Chair & Secretariat
4.	Contact LAG to propose that dredge samples are used in preference to hand gathered samples for classification of shellfish beds.	Chair & Secretariat
5.	Use the 22 nd November 2022 result as an example of how the shellfish sampling regime could be improved in correspondence with the Welsh Minister and with the APPG on shellfish aquaculture.	Chair & Secretariat
6.	Social media - all to send any items suitable for the MSFOMA Twitter feed to Andy Olivier (avdsolivier@gmail.com).	All
7.	Coastal Communities Capacity Building Fund - submit bid for funding proposal for water quality project by 13 th January.	Chair & Secretariat
8.	NWIFCA - thank IFCA staff for progressing the seed mussel dredge fishery in 2022.	Chair & Secretariat
9.	NWIFCA - encourage adoption of Morecambe Bay Mussel Management Plan.	Chair & Secretariat
10.	Menai West - raise the need for a national Pacific Oyster strategy at Ministerial Advisory Group.	Chair & Secretariat
11.	Menai West - advise potential tenants that work on proposal will be halted until the Pacific Oyster stalemate is resolved.	Chair & Secretariat
12.	<i>Crepidula fornicata</i> - look out for slipper limpets and report sightings of any shells / individuals.	All
13.	Date for next meeting - 27 th April 2023	All