

Menai Strait Fishery Order Management Association

Meeting, 18th April 2024 Teams Video Conference Call

Minutes

Attendance

Members

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

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

Observers

David Salisbury
Howard Mattocks
Rowland Sharp
Trevor Jones

Ynys Môn County Council
Beaumaris Town Council
Natural Resources Wales
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.

2. Apologies

Alex Scorey
Emily Payne
Euryn Roberts
José Constantino
Julian Bray
Michelle Billing
Nia Jones
Rob Floyd

Natural Resources Wales
Dŵr Cymru / Welsh Water
Natural Resources Wales
Welsh Government
Welsh Government
Welsh Government
North Wales Wildlife Trust
Welsh Government

It was noted at this and previous meetings that Cllr Gareth Roberts from Bangor City Council had neither attended a meeting or submitted apologies for some time. It was agreed that Bangor City Council should be asked to confirm their representation. It was noted that Emlyn Williams (Pier Master) was the most frequent point of contact and could be a more appropriate representative.

Action: Secretariat

The Chair indicated that Ruth Iliffe had left RYA Cymru. It was agreed that RYA Cymru should be asked to nominate a replacement.

Action: Secretariat

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 14th of December 2023 were accepted subject to some minor alterations:-

- a) The meeting was in-person, not virtual (correction need to heading); and
- b) Emily Payne had indicated that there was an action missing relating to her, which was to find out whether Carcinus Ltd had submitted an Environmental Information Request to Dŵr Cymru as part of their work on the Sanitary Survey.

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 December meeting that were not formally addressed on the agenda were discussed:-

Dŵr Cymru / Welsh Water

The website showing information about sewage overflows was discussed. All agreed that it was a step in the right direction, but that the most critical information for the shellfish industry was the volume of sewage discharged.

The Secretariat read Emily Payne's update on spreading biosolids on farmland - very briefly, that since the start of 2020 a total of 3,126.16t had been spread on ~390 acres of farmland. She had sent a map showing the general location of the areas where this had been used as well as the risk analysis and information about soil sampling.

With regard to Environmental Information Requests, Emily had confirmed that Carcinus Ltd had not submitted an EIR to Dŵr Cymru.

All expressed their thanks to Emily for providing this information.

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

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.

7. Financial Update

The meeting accepted the report that had been submitted about the Association's finances. Performance against the current financial plan was noted.

The Chair and Secretariat reported that the costs for taking legal action against FSA Wales were being shared between MSFOMA and the three mussel farmers. An initial payment of £5,000 had been made at the start of this action. Further legal fees were due but had not yet been received.

Since the end of the 2023-24FY, MSFOMA had received a sum of £11,000 to cover its contribution to the Menai Strait Partnership Forum project.

8. Shellfish hygiene

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

The Secretariat explained the steps that had led to MSFOMA working with the mussel farmers to commence legal action against FSA Wales in January-February 2024 and the subsequent response from FSA Wales. After carefully considering this response, all parties to the legal action had agreed that it would be appropriate to explore the options for closer working that had been proposed by FSA Wales, rather than proceeding with the legal action. FSA were advised of this on the 22nd March 2024.

During early April the Chair and Secretariat had liaised with the Director of FSA Wales (Nathan Barnhouse) to organise a meeting with him. He visited the Menai Strait on the 15th of April to see the operation of the mussel farming industry at first hand and to discuss the challenges associated with shellfish hygiene.

James Wilson, Kim Mould, Trevor Jones and Lewis LeVay all met with Mr Barnhouse and his colleagues (Delyth Murray-Lines & Sarah Aza). They felt that Mr Barnhouse was very keen to work with the shellfish industry. It was also felt that it was fortunate that Delyth and Sarah had been present, as it allowed Mr Barnhouse to see both sides of several issues that need to be addressed.

Lewis LeVay highlighted the value of a pre-meeting the week before Mr Barnhouse's visit, which had benefitted from Aoife Martin (Director of Operations, Seafish). Aoife is a key member of the Shellfish Stakeholder Working Group (SSWG), which has been considering many of these issues for years. Lewis felt that it would be good to try to get Aoife directly involved in discussions about the Menai Strait, providing that FSA Wales were in agreement.

The meeting agreed that a follow-up letter should be sent to Mr Barnhouse to confirm the key points of agreement from the meeting and to propose swift action to address issues of concern. Wording was discussed and agreed, and the Chair & Secretariat agreed to send this to Mr Barnhouse as soon as possible.

Action: Chair & Secretariat

The meeting heard with dismay that the official control samples for shellfish in the Menai Strait had not been collected in March. The reason for this was not known. It was noted that March is one of the key months for shellfish production, and that the March sample was vital both from a public health protection perspective and also for efforts to reinstate the seasonal "A" classification for the Strait.

James Wilson reported that Sarah Aza from FSA was due to be contacting the LAG members about this and to encourage industry sampling. It would be appropriate for MSFOMA to follow up on this.

Action: Chair & Secretariat

Ioan Thomas offered to organise a meeting with Gwynedd Environmental Health Officers to discuss the missing samples and industry sampling if there isn't any feedback from FSA. The Chair agreed to contact Ioan about this if no feedback had been received by the 26th April.

Action: Chair & Secretariat

9. Public Profile of the Association

The Chair confirmed that the Association's Twitter account was essentially dormant and that the focus of raising the profile of the Association lay currently in participation in projects such as the Menai Strait Partnership Forum.

Lewis LeVay and James Wilson reported that they had been interviewed by Michael Portillo as part of his "Great Railway Journeys" series. He had worn red trousers, they had not.

10. Welsh Government Activity

The Secretariat's report was noted and received.

The Chair reported that the Ministerial Statement on a strategic approach to fisheries and aquaculture had not been released before Lesley Griffiths had move on to her new role (Cabinet Secretary for Culture and Social Justice). She has been replaced as Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs by Huw Irranca-Davies.

It was agreed that it would be appropriate to write to the new Minister to introduce MSFOMA to him.

Action: Chair & Secretariat

The Chair reported that the next meeting of MAGWF was due to take place on the 25th of April. Much of that meeting, and much of WG Fisheries Division resources, are focussed on developing new Fishery Management Plans under the Fisheries Act 2020.

It was agreed that there was no need to respond to the consultation on tidal energy, as none of the areas concerned overlapped with the Menai Strait.

James Wilson noted that an NRW Fisheries & Aquaculture Group was due to meet in May. He would attend and provide an update on MSFOMA liaison with the FSA.

Rowland Sharp indicated that he is doing some work to review risks associated with Pacific Oyster cultivation to inform WG (and Defra) policy in this area. He offered to keep MSFOMA informed about this work, which may affect the MSFOMA view on the Menai Strait West Fishery Order proposal.

Action: Rowland Sharp

11. NW IFCA Activity

The report on recent activities of the NW IFCA was received and accepted by the meeting.

James Wilson reported that concerns has been raised with NWIFCA about their perception of mussel dredge impacts being comparable to scallop dredges. It was hoped that this would be reflected in any new HRAs for 2024.

The new CEO of NWIFCA had visited Port Penrhyn in February to meet the mussel farmers and see operations at first hand. This meeting had been very positive.

The new NWIFCA definition of “ephemeral” mussel beds was discussed. It was agreed that the overall approach was appropriate, but that there were some specific details (such as how much mussel mud is enough) that would benefit from being better defined.

It was agreed that it would be appropriate to write to NWIFCA to ask for the issue of mussel mud to be better defined in the seed mussel policy document, and also to thank Mark Taylor for his visit to Port Penrhyn.

Action: Chair & Secretariat

12. All Party Parliamentary Group: Shellfish Aquaculture

James Wilson reported that the meeting about shellfish hygiene had been postponed (due to the legal action reported under item 8). Instead of this the meeting in March had been about Pacific Oyster cultivation. There had been a useful discussion of the key issues involving the shellfish industry and MPs. Unfortunately nobody from Defra attended to hear or contribute to this discussion.

Shellfish hygiene is due to be discussed at the next meeting. A change in Parliamentary rules means that the APPG may need to recruit different members in order for this meeting to take place (APPGs must have cross-party representation but not include cabinet or shadow cabinet Member – currently several Labour MPs on this group are in the shadow cabinet).

Updates will be provided at future MSFOMA meetings.

Action: JW, Secretariat

13. Menai Strait East Fishery Order

No further update.

14. Menai Strait West

No further update.

15. Menai Strait Partnership Forum

The Chair and Secretariat provided an update on the “Menai Strait Partnership Forum” (MSPF) that had been set up in collaboration with the North Wales Rivers Trust, and using funding from the Welsh Government’s Coastal Capacity Fund.

The next meeting of the MSPF Advisory Group is due to take place on the 24th April.

Funding has been secured and a Project Officer is now in post. Work on projects designed to improve water quality and awareness of key issues was underway, and more funding had been obtained to support future work.

The Chair and Secretariat agreed to work with NWRT to progress this initiative and report back to future MSFOMA meetings.

Action: Chair, Secretariat

16. Fishery Management Issues

a) Coastal / marine developments

i. Bangor Pier

The Association had been informed that maintenance work that had not been finished in 2023 would be completed in 2024. It was understood that this will involve cleaning (shot blasting) the pier and repainting it. Rowland Sharp advised the group that the operators would be required to ensure that no pollutants entered the Strait. No concerns or objections were made.

ii. Habitat restoration, The Spinnies

The Secretariat advised that North Wales Wildlife Trust had informed the Association about some outfall restoration work it was carrying out on the upper shore. No concerns were raised about this.

iii. 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 8).

ii. Bonamia

No update.

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

No update. There is a standing item to keep looking out for slipper limpets.

Action: All

iv. Norovirus

No further update.

17. Any Other Business

a) Correspondence

The Chair advised that he had been informed about a Marine Licensing Workshop in May. He & the Secretariat would forward details on to MSFOMA Members.

Action: Chair

18. Dates for next meetings

Meeting dates were agreed for 2024:-

- a. 19th September 2024 (Teams / Zoom)
- b. 12th December 2024 [also AGM] (in person, not virtual)

Summary of Actions

Item	Action	Responsibility
1.	Contact Bangor City Council to confirm representation at MSFOMA meetings.	Secretariat
2.	Contact RYA Cymru to confirm representation to replace Ruth Iliffe.	Secretariat
3.	Sand in Dock - keep under review.	James Wilson & Secretariat
4.	Update MSFOMA website to include more information about the work of participants.	All, Secretariat
5.	Shellfish hygiene - write to FSA Wales Director to follow up meeting on 15 th April and set out proposals for progress.	Chair, Secretariat
6.	Shellfish hygiene - follow up enquiries that FSA Wales make about the missing March 2024 official control samples.	Chair, Secretariat
7.	Shellfish hygiene - ask Ioan Thomas to organise a meeting with Gwynedd EHOs if no feedback received by 26 th April.	Chair, Secretariat & Ioan Thomas
8.	Write to new Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs to introduce MSFOMA and its work.	Chair, Secretariat
9.	Pacific oysters - inform MSFOMA about progress with policy development work.	Rowland Sharp
10.	NWIFCA - write to CEO to thank him for visiting and to encourage a clearer approach to the "mussel mud" part of the ephemeral mussel bed definition.	Secretariat
11.	APPG - provide update on progress to next meeting.	JW, Secretariat
12.	Work with NWRT to progress the Menai Strait Partnership Forum and report back.	Chair & Secretariat
13.	<i>Crepidula fornicata</i> - look out for slipper limpets and report sightings of any shells / individuals.	All
14.	Date for next meeting - 19th September 2024	All