**The North Sea Advisory Council**

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**NSAC Demersal Working Group**

**29-31 Abercromby Place
Edinburgh
EH3 6QE
Scotland**

**11th July 2018**

**Rapporteur: Tony Hawkins Draft (2)**

**1 Welcome & Introductions**

1.1 Participants were welcomed to the Demersal WG Meeting by the Chairman Barrie Deas. A particular welcome was extended to Colm Lordan from ICES, Alex Kempf from the Fisheries Institute Hamburg, Vera Kopsel from the University of Hamburg, William Stewart from the Control Agency, Line Groth Rasmussen from the Commission and Roos Strating from The Netherlands Ministry. Apologies had been received from Peter Breckling, Anne-Cecile Dragon, Linda Planthof, Heather Hamilton, Erin Priddle and Henrike Semmler.

1.2 The agenda for the meeting was adopted, with no new items included. However, it was agreed that the discussion of Technical Measures (item 9 on the Agenda) would be dealt with earlier.

**2 Minutes of Previous Meeting**

2.1 The draft report of the last meeting, held in Den Haag on the 19th April 2018, had been circulated. It was adopted as a true and correct record without any further changes. Any matters arising would be dealt with in the current agenda.

**3 Action Points from the Last Meeting**

3.1 The Secretary Lorna Duguid went through the Action Points.

1. The report of the previous meeting in Den Haag had been approved and was now on the website.
2. The issue of whether there should be meetings with ICES scientists to discuss aspects of fisheries science has been placed on the agenda of the ExCom Meeting. As ICES were represented at the meeting we could discuss this further later in the day.
3. Future work on the Landing Obligation (LO), involving three phases, these would be discussed today.
4. Advice on the Joint Recommendation had been discussed at the Landing Obligation Focus Group and had been submitted to the Scheveningen Group.
5. The material from Irene Kingma on Skates and Rays had been used to help formulate advice on the LO.
6. No additional comments on the TAC paper had been sent to the Secretariat. Michael Andersen and Emiel Brouckaert had contributed to the redraft, and the paper had been discussed at the LO Focus Group. The advice had been approved at London ExCom.
7. A Focus Group will be established to work on Control issues, and will be chaired by Kenn Skau Fischer. It will meet on the 23rd August in Copenhagen.
8. A response to the Commissions consultation paper on SCIPs had been drafted, and it was approved at the Ex Com on the 19th June.
9. Discussions on Technical Measures were ongoing. New papers had been placed on the current agenda.
10. A document had been circulated setting out a timetable for the preparation of NSAC advice, and the timetable had been updated for the Ex Com.
11. Discussion of a Focus Group Meeting on Seabass had been placed on the current agenda.
12. There had been no requests to hold a meeting on the consultation by the Commission on changes to the Eel Regulation. ICES advice on eels will be published on the 7th Nov, and Eels were on the agenda of the current meeting.

3.2 All the Action Points had been dealt with or would be considered in the current agenda.

**4 ICES Advice**

4.1 Colm Lordan from ICES thanked the Advisory Council for inviting him to make a presentation to the Demersal Working Group. He would be delighted to receive feedback from stakeholders on the assessments and advice.

4.2 The basis of the advice was presented and discussed. Advice is based on clients requests and is consistent with their policy objectives and frameworks; for example, the EU’s Multi-Annual Management Plan (MAP). It is also based on the based on the AA (Administrative Agreement) with DG MARE. There were a number of stock categories. Categories 3. 4 & 5 did not have full analytical assessments and the advice for them was based on the ICES Precautionary Approach. Advice on Categories 1 & 2 was based on Management Plans/Strategies or on the ICES MSY Approach.

4.3 For some stocks, no TACs were in place. This year, advice had been requested on 23 stocks. Advice for 9 stocks was based on FMSY points and for 8 stocks on FMSY ranges. For a number of stocks, advice had been given for 2018 and 2019 last year (in 2017). New advice was now available for the remaining North Sea Demersal Stocks. Major changes in the advice existed for several species, including the Cod (-47%), Haddock (-27%), Plaice (-26%), Sole (-33%), and Cod in the Kattegat (-36%). The TAC changes that would eventually be agreed did not always follow the advice changes, however.

4.4 For Cod in the North Sea, fishing pressure has declined since 2000, but fishing mortality remains above FMSY. The spawning stock has increased since 2006 and is below MSY Btrigger, although last year’s stock size was larger. Recruitment since 1998 has remained poor, and was especially low in 2016. There was a 46725 tonne catch last year, with 19 % of itdiscarded. The causes of the changes in the Cod are unclear; possibilities include climate change, biological changes, and/or fisheries effects. It was pointed out by fishers that although there appeared to be a decline in biomass the catches had actually been stable. Also, the year class that was thought to be especially low was still appearing in catches. There were differences between the actual catches and the stock assessments. There were major issues here and the science seemed to be insecure. It was also pointed out that the scientific assessments were different to the political advice on this stock. Moreover, the TAC is being reduced, although fishers felt there were improvements in the catches. The TAC reduction is very detrimental to the industry, and it is based on uncertain assessments. These issues would affect the negotiations this autumn. As fishers did not want the certification of this stock to be taken away, they asked whether there would be a revision of the assessments? Colm replied that there would be an updating of the advice. However, the reference points were considered to be solid.

4.5 Haddock in the North Sea had shown very volatile recruitment. The spawning stock had generally been above MSY Btrigger since 2002. Fishing pressure had been above FMSY in 2017. Recruitment since 2000 had been low – with occasional larger year classes of diminishing size, although the overall stock size was still large. A 27% reduction in the TAC was suggested, as fishing mortality needed to be reduced in the short term. It was poor recruitment that was bringing the stock size down.

4.6 Saithe in the North Sea and the Skagerrak and Kattegat had fluctuated without a particular trend and the spawning stock had been above MSY Btrigger since 1996. Fishing pressure had reduced to below FMSY since 2013. Recruitment had been below the long-term average since 2003. A TAC increase was suggested.

4.7 Whiting in the North Sea had a spawning stock biomass above MSY Btrigger. Fishing mortality remained above FMSY. Recruitment had been lower since 2002 and was weak in 2017. The recommended catch was below the 2017 level, with a fall in the TAC. The assessments had recently been benchmarked.

4.8 Plaice in the North Sea and Skagerrak showed an increasing spawning stock, which was well above MSY Btrigger. Fishing pressure was at FMSY. Recruitment remained around the long-term average. The stock is in a good state and there had only been a minor change (-2%) in the assessment advice. It was pointed out by fishers that the catches included discards, and it was important to take this into account when preparing the advice.

4.9 Plaice in the eastern English Channel were also considered. The spawning stock has increased since 2008 and has been above MSY Btrigger since 2012. Fishing mortality has declined since the early 2000s and has been below FMSY since 2009. Recent Recruitment has been low. Most of the catch is from the local stock, but there are also catches composed of stocks from adjacent areas. Concern was expressed that the TAC is to be reduced. This was partly the result of the impact of the Landing Obligation on the catch advice, as the catch included discards. It is quite hard to deal with this.

4.10 For Sole in the North Sea, the spawning stock is increasing, and is above MSY Btrigger. Fishing mortality is decreasing, and is slightly above FMSY. There is no particular trend in recruitment. The advice is for a downward change in the catch. Pulse trawling in the Dutch fishery operating in the North Sea has increased to 76 vessels. For Sole in the eastern English Channel the spawning stock is close to Blim. The latest assessment has revised the SSB downwards because the estimate of the 2014 year-class has had to be revised. Fishing mortality has been decreasing since 2014 and was below FMSY in 2017. Recruitment has been fluctuating and has not been strong since 2011. A large reduction in the TAC is recommended.

4.11 For the northern stock of Hake the spawning stock has increased significantly since 2006 and it is well above historical estimates. Recruitment for 2016 and 2017 was above average. Fishing pressure has been below FMSY since 2012. It was pointed out by Michael Park that the Hake has been a choke species for many fisheries in the North Sea as it is expanding in abundance but without the required increase in relative distribution between the stock areas. Hake are being caught by fisheries that do not have sufficient TACs to land them. A note had been sent to the Commission last year, querying how best this increase in the stock can best be managed. As the Commission found that the best way was not to deal with one stock at a time, no request had been made to ICES on this. Colm confirmed that this expansion in the Hake stock was causing problems.

4.12 Megrim in the North Sea have shown an increase in spawning stock since the mid-2000s and it is now above MSY Btrigger. Fishing pressure has reduced well below FMSY since 2000. There has been a slight increase in the advice.

4.13 For Sea Bass, a benchmark was held early in 2018 and the advice for 2018 has been revised. The spawning stock has been falling and will be below Blim in 2018 but is expected to increase and reach Blim in 2019, with an advised catch of 880 tonnes. Fishing pressure is low and below FMSY. There has been a large reduction in the recreational catch. Recruitment has been poor except for 2013-2014. Barrie Deas commented that we would be discussing Sea Bass later on in the meeting.

4.14 For Cod in the Kattegat, the assessment is indicative of trends only. The spawning biomass showed some signs of a recovery in 2015 but is now approaching the historical low level again in 2018. The fishing mortality has decreased since 2008. Recruitment in the last four years has been below average. The assessments are largely precautionary and there is a reduction on the previous advice. For Sole in the Kattegat, the spawning biomass in the past three years has shown signs of recovery and is now above MSY Btrigger. Fishing mortality increased above FMSY in 2017. Recruitment since 2004 has been estimated to be below the average of the time-series. There is a slight increase in the recommended TAC.

4.15 The Pollack is taken as a bycatch in both the North Sea and the Skagerrak/Kattegat. Surveys are not considered indicative of current stock trends but should be expected to detect if there has been any increase. ICES has not been asked for advice on TACs. The Grey Gurnard is largely taken as a bycatch in the sandeel, sprat and demersal fisheries, and discarding is very high. Stock size is at a high level. It is a predator of cod and whiting juveniles. ICES assesses that fishing pressure on the stock is below FMSY. However, no reference points for stock size have been defined for this stock.

4.16 *Nephrops*, the Norway Lobster, is divided into several Functional Units (FUs) in the North Sea. For some of these only sporadic information is available. For those FUs with UWTV surveys (i.e. with abundance estimates), the advice follows the ICES MSY approach based on most recent (2017) abundance estimates; taking into account recent discard rates and mean weights. For the rest of the FUs the advice is based on average landings/catches of the last 10 years. The catch advice is based on the EU MAP ranges for EU stocks and it assumes that discarding would occur at recent observed discard rates. The advice varies between the different FUs, with some showing an increase and others a reduction. It was pointed out that last year that the basis for setting the FMSY for the FUs had been questionable. The methods for assessing *Nephrops* seemed to be poor. Colm remarked that a workshop was planned in 2019 to discuss the preparation of advice on *Nephrops*. The methods of assessment had been used since 2009/10 and they seemed to work. There was concern, however, over the catch advice, which was why the workshop was to be held.

4.17 For the North Sea Mixed-Fisheries, the analysis assumes that the Mixed-Fisheries scenarios are based on assumptions that fleet fishing patterns and catchability in 2018 and 2019 are the same as those in 2017. The “Fleets’ stocks shares” are in line with the single-species advice for 2019 and the recent proportion of stock landings taken by and effort in each fleet. Fishing opportunities are calculated for catches and all fish caught count against the TAC. Range scenarios are set. There is a need for a reduction of fishing mortality in the Mixed-Fisheries of the North Sea.

4.17 Barrie Deas thanked Colm for his presentation and remarked that consideration of the ICES advice was an important activity for the NSAC and would affect our discussions in future months.

**5 Technical Measures**

5.1 Barrie Deas pointed out that Gabrielle Mato MEP has asked us specifically to provide advice on the new concept of Selectivity Performance Indicators and the rules governing the use of specific mesh sizes. This is the first time that the Parliament has made this kind of approach to the Advisory Councils. Following the Commission’s presentation of new material on Technical measures in Ghent, it was suggested in the subsequent discussion that the NSAC and NWWAC might wish to present a joint position on this issue. Last week the NWWAC had discussed this topic. Barrie has subsequently drafted a paper (Paper 9.2), taking account of our previous advice, which might be useful in arriving at a common position. There are two issues. Do we support the Commission’s approach? And do we wish to work with the NWWAC on this?

5.2 We have previously argued that a highly prescriptive approach to technical conservation is self-defeating. The Commission’s proposal for a new Technical Conservation Regulation is moving away from a prescriptive approach and embraces a result-based approach. However, the actual results need to be measured. There is a need to set targets relating to the levels of unwanted catches; to the level of bycatches of sensitive species and to the extent of seabed habitats adversely affected by fishing; to reflect the objectives of the CFP – and especially to increase fishing selectivity. The Commission’s original proposal was that no more than 5% of catches should be below the minimum conservation size. Many in the ACs have said that this is a reasonable solution in the circumstances. However, the figure of 5% is likely to be inappropriate for some fisheries. Does the NSAC support such an approach? This proposal for a results-based approach is subject to negotiation at the moment. The Council and the Parliament have disagreed with the 5% approach, for different reasons. They have yet to agree with the Commission on the way forward.

5.3 Line Groth Rasmussen emphasised that the Commission do want to move away from detailed and prescriptive rules and adopt a results-based approach. However, the 5% target has been rejected by the co-legislators. It is legally important to have an EU-wide common performance indicator, therefore the Commission’s non paper (Paper 9.1) is for such a proposal based on the concept of selectivity performance indicators. The Commission wants to know if it is moving in the right direction in selecting this yardstick.

5.4 Pim Visser was concerned about the setting of this indicator. In the past, we had been confronted with concepts like the MSY, and we could see how that had influenced things. He was unable to understand the thinking behind this new indicator, or what the consequences would be. We need to select an instrument, but is this the right one? It is an interesting approach but he was not really happy with it.

5.5 Michael Park thought it would be good to work with the NWWAC, as we could exert more influence by working together. However, we need to work out what this indicator actually means, and what the outcomes might be. Irene Kingma agreed. Working with the NWWAC is a good idea but what is currently on the table is a heavyweight proposal that is just not understandable or acceptable. We need to decide how we should respond to this proposal. Caroline Gamblin also had concerns about the Commission’s approach.

5.6 Barrie Deas concluded that there was an appetite to work with the NWWAC on this topic. However, there was no consensus view as yet on the content of the advice. Not everyone had agreed with the 5% approach. He emphasised that the Commission’s proposal set aspirational, not hard targets, as a way of measuring progress towards optimum exploitation patters. It was clear why it had been suggested, in the context of difficult trialogue discussions but we did have a time issue in preparing our advice on it. The Parliament needs our advice by the 1st of September, so we do not have much time to prepare it.

5.7 Michael Park thought that it was helpful that Barrie had prepared a draft paper, but we really needed to work out what the consequences of the Commission’s proposal would be. The NWWAC was thinking of holding a meeting on this topic on the 23rd July, although it was not yet listed on its website. Emiel Brouckaert was concerned whether we had time to analyse this proposal in detail. Pim Visser agreed. There is also a danger that if we produce initial advice then it might not prove to be appropriate. The quality of the advice, and reaching consensus on it is important. He did not understand the implications of the current proposal, and thought we needed to look at any unintended consequences.

5.8 Barrie concluded that the NSAC did wish to work with the NWWAC, and we needed to meet with them to discuss this topic, preferable with Norman Graham of the Commission present to help us understand the proposal. We now need volunteers from the NSAC to form a group with the NWWAC to produce some text by the date set by the Parliament. This is the first time that the Parliament has asked for our advice and we do need to provide it. Michael Andersen suggested that we should explain to them why our advice was incomplete and thank them for contacting us. Lorna Duguid suggested that we needed the draft advice by the 17th August at the very latest, in order to meet the September 1st deadline. It was also important that Norman Graham be asked to help us in our discussions. Barrie thought that the provisional NWWAC meeting on the 23rd July could be useful, but we needed to set up a Working Group to resolve some of the issues. It was later found that Norman Graham is available on the 23rd July. Initially the NWWAC wished to hold its meeting at Dún Laoghaire, but it has now been decided to hold it at Dublin airport.

**6 Landing Obligation**

6.1 Barrie pointed out that much of our time had been spent on discussing the implementation of the Landing Obligation. We had made a decision earlier in the year that we would provide our advice in three phases:

1. Advice on the Joint Recommendation.
2. Advice on measures that might be taken at the December Council or autumn negotiations.
3. The identification of residual issues.

 Our advice on the JR had been submitted on time. We had also submitted some advice on the removal of TAC status for some stocks to accommodate the LO. Our focus was now on the December Council issues. We are currently working on:

1. A letter to Member States and the Commission flagging up issues of concern for the autumn negotiations.
2. A more substantive piece of advice developed by the LO Focus Group following a meeting on 19th June (NSAC Paper 5.2).

6.2 Michael Park and Irene Kingma had attended a meeting of the Scheveningen Technical Group in Hamburg on the 27th June, where the LO and other topics had been discussed. There had been discussions of the involvement of UK representatives in the NSAC following Brexit. The Scheveningen High Level Group had discussed this issue and the group believed it should be up to the NSAC to decide who participates and represents them. With regard to the SHLG itself, they were waiting to see if there would be a transitional period before it took a decision on UK involvement in the group. The point was made by the Chair that the SHLG is not constituted in law and as such it would be up to the group collectively who they, and they alone, wished to participate. NSAC paper 5.1 provides feedback from the Meeting, including discussions on Inter-Species Flexibility and on Sea Bass. It also summarises the input to the meeting from the NSAC representatives

6.3 The draft letter to the Commission and Member States was discussed (Paper 5.4). It is very much a compromise, flagging up issues of concern and raising questions on the way forward, and this has made agreement of the text a little difficult. Requests have been made for changes. Rederscentrale (Emiel) would like bullet points 2 and 3 on the removal of TAC status and quota uplifts removed. Perhaps it could be changed to: “The potential for a range of category two and category one chokes is recognised but remains to be resolved”. Pim Visser had inserted a new paragraph in bullet point 5 saying that a new culture of compliance needed to be achieved by clear communication with fishers at vessel level regarding the purpose of proposed measures and ensuring that the measures supporting the landing obligation are practical, proportionate and consistent with maintaining an economically viable fleet. Was this insertion OK? Danish fishers had raised an issue about the bullet point on footnotes and whether these could play a useful role in resolving particular chokes. STECF had also raised a number of concerns about how footnotes were to be used. There were also concerns whether the LO would lead to the degradation of catch data, and how this should be dealt with. What steps can be taken to address this? There was also a general concern within the NSAC that the LO could reverse the trend towards lower fishing mortalities through failure to deal with chokes. Barrie asked whether we could agree to all the changes that had been suggested to the current draft?

6.4 Irene Kingma could not understand why bullet points 2 and 3 were considered contentious. Emiel replied that in providing advice on the removal of TACs he did not want conditions to be imposed on their removal. He also did not agree that stepping away from Relative Stability was a good idea. In terms of survival exemption, he thought there should be cooperation on choke species. Line Groth Rasmussen added that the Commission always appreciates AC advice, as we are on a steep learning curve and any advice that the AC provides would be welcomed. The Commission would in any case consider NSAC advice on the removal of TACs. It is not a legal requirement that the 'top-ups' should be allocated based on relative stability. This year the Commission will not propose 'top-ups', instead it will, based on the scientific advice, propose catches, reducing the proportion of the exemptions approved.

6.5 Barrie Deas mentioned that the original mention of Relative Stability was to flag up that not all chokes are category 3. Category 1 and 2 chokes also need to be resolved – perhaps by the voluntary transfer of quotas. Changes are not needed to Relative Stability itself. On TAC removal, the latest draft just reflects our earlier paper on TAC removal, where the text was arrived at following intensive discussion. It would be good to get the text of this letter agreed, and sent to the Commission and Member States. We can always include minority positions, although we try to avoid this wherever possible. Barrie was invited to revise the text. It would then be recirculated to see whether the amendments were agreed. If they were not agreed, then a minority position would be allocated to the Rederscentrale amendments.

6.6 A more substantive piece of advice has been developed by the LO Focus Group (NSAC Paper 5.2). The LO Focus group had met in Den Haag, and conference calls had also been held online. The draft advice includes an Introduction, an Overview of TAC and quota-related options and then a long list of TAC- and quota-related considerations for those stocks regarded as potential chokes. Barrie thought that it was unlikely that we would have time to revise the text today; another meeting of the LO Focus Group might be required. It was pointed out that there were so many comments and changes to the text that even a focus group might not be able to resolve the disagreements. Perhaps the first step would be to take account of the comments and draft a new version. Irene thought that the main text was actually very good, but a meeting would be needed to resolve some of the issues. Michael Park thought that the comments should be wiped out, the adjustments accepted, and the new draft recirculated before the meeting was held. Barrie asked where and when the meeting of the focus group should be held. The advice needs to be submitted by early September (perhaps September 12th) and a face to face meeting is required. The Secretariat would look for a suitable date and location. Copenhagen in the last week of August was agreed as a possibility – perhaps the 22nd August. Attendees would include Pim Visser, Michael Andersen or Kenn Skau Fischer, and Jenny Grossman.

**7 Fishing Opportunities**

7.1 Barrie raised the issue of the Commission’s paper to the European Parliament and the Council on the state of play of the Common Fisheries Policy and Consultation on the Fishing Opportunities for 2019 (NSAC Paper 5.3). We do not normally respond to this annual paper. Do we need to comment on it this year? Points that Barrie thought should be raised in future versions of the paper would be:

* The contrast between the NE Atlantic and the Mediterranean
* A range of measures have contributed
* Some measures are more effective than others
* Some measures have generated unintended consequences
* It would be very valuable to have an authoritative assessment, an evaluation of what has contributed and what has failed
* Guide to the future
* Pitfalls to avoid.

 The Commission’s document needs to be developed further. Line said that the Commission had tried to expand it this year. Barrie Deas raised that it would be interesting to know what policies had worked well, and which ones not, in order to recover the fish stocks. Line acknowledged this being a good ideas for future work. It was agreed to give further thought to how the Communication might be developed in future meetings of the DWG.

7.2 A paper had been provided to the Demersal Working Group for information by Peter Breckling on the Landing Obligation for the Brown Shrimp Fishery (NSAC Paper 5.5).

**8 Sea Bass**

8.1 Barrie pointed out that the ICES advice on Sea Bass that had been presented earlier by Colm Lordan was reasonably positive. Fishing mortality has been reduced, recruitment is above average, and biomass is rebuilding. ICES advises (Paper 6.2) that when the MSY approach is applied, total removals in 2018 should be no more than 880 tonnes. However, there are complications due to the Landing Obligation. The current catch limit approach to reducing fishing mortality on bass is incompatible with the LO. A different approach to Sea Bass will need to be made at the December Council meeting as the LO applies to catches of bass from 1st January 2019. The big problems are with the bycatch fisheries. Some levels of bycatch are unavoidable in the mixed fisheries, and in 2019 all bass must be landed. The main issue is how to deal with the fish that have to be landed. Should they be landed for the human consumption market; processed for fishmeal, or returned to the sea, where their survival is unknown?

8.2 Only 9% of catches are in the North Sea, most are in Western waters. The NWWAC has asked whether we wish to work on Sea Bass with them, and have suggested a joint meeting. It was agreed that we would meet with them. Line pointed out that the Commission is considering how Sea Bass relates to the LO. The COM was especially interested to hear the NSAC advice on whether there are better ways of managing Sea Bass.The Commission would welcome any suggestions that the ACs might have. Consideration will be given to holding a joint meeting to discuss Sea Bass with the NWWAC.

8.2 Irene Kingma raised the issue of Skates and Rays and how the Commission intended to deal with them.

**9 Eel Management**

9.1 The NSAC had received a letter from the Commission asking for advice on what measures might be available to protect eel populations (Paper 7.1). ICES has advised for more than a decade that all fishing and angling on European Eels should cease. The Commission remains deeply committed to taking effective management measures to help improve the situation of this important stock. It would appreciate if the NSAC could consult its members on this important matter and could send it advice on Eels by 28th September 2018. Barrie asked whether there were any comments on this request?

9.2 Michael Andersen pointed out that work was being done on eels in the Baltic. He would be drafting a small paper on this topic and would be able to send this to the NSAC. He would be consulting eel experts. His offer was accepted. The draft will be circulated to NSAC members for their comments. The NSAC will also bring together a small group of members to develop a response to present to the Ex Com.

**10 Pandora Project Update**

10.1 Alex Kempf from the Fisheries Institute Hamburg gave a presentation on the Pandora Project, as he wanted close cooperation with stakeholders. The aim of the project is to increase the sustainability of EU fisheries through improved stock assessments and management recommendations. To do this, the project will provide new biological knowledge on fish and ecosystems; build more robust tools to assess future fish stocks; improve science-based advice to fisheries management; and create a “Pandora’s Box of Tools” for scientists and practitioners. Lots of National Laboratories and Universities are involved in the project, together with Danish, Dutch and Scottish pelagic fishermen, ICES and STECF. The project is funded by the EU and covers the whole of Europe, with the North Sea as one of the five case studies. They want to come up with management options in 3-4 years.

10.2 European fisheries should benefit from the project, and the organisers would welcome an input from the NSAC on immediate and future management problems in the North Sea. They have already listed the challenges for assessments and management in the North Sea:

* Density dependent effects: do we need new tools for reference point determination?
* Why are some stocks not recovering to previous levels despite lower fishing mortalities?
* Stock structure of North Sea cod: Can we do something for cod in the southern North Sea or is the further decrease a result of climate change?
* How can data from the industry be used to improve assessments and are there possibilities for science - industry partnerships (e.g., new surveys)?
* Are there alternatives to the current management of mixed fisheries? Is it sufficient if we just manage the target stocks?
* How important are food web interactions? Which interactions do really matter and can we cope with such interactions in management?

10.3 Questionnaires are currently being developed and they would like to ask whether it is possible to distribute them among AC members by e-mail. The filled in questionnaires will be analysed to set priorities in the case study. The opinion of stakeholders is important for them to ensure that the final products are helpful. The project has only just started and will end in 2022. Regional workshops will be held, and a website will be launched soon. The website will provide information on the project.

10.4 Barrie thanked Alex for his presentation. Michael Andersen thought that it was an interesting project, as stock advice currently varies too much from year to year. Niels Wichmann added that the DFPO was engaged in a similar project with DTU Aqua in Denmark. Pim Visser mentioned that Dutch fishers were involved in the Pandora project. Vera Kopsel of Hamburg University mentioned that the project included social scientists. Barrie concluded by saying that the questionnaires would best be sent via the NSAC Secretariat and would then be sent to members, who could then reply back directly.

**11 Any Other Business**

11.1 No other topics were raised.

**12 Date of Next Meeting**

12.1 The next meeting of the Demersal Working Group would take place on the 17th October in Brussels.

12.2 Barrie thanked all the participants for taking part in the meeting.

**13. Action Points**

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| **Actions** | **Responsible** |
| 1. The report of the last meeting, held in Den Haag on the 19th April 2018, was approved without any further changes. It is now available on the website. (2.1).
 | Secretariat |
| 1. It was agreed that the NSAC should work with the NWWAC in preparing advice on Technical Measures, and we needed to meet with them to discuss this topic, with Norman Graham of the Commission present to help us understand the Commission’s proposals. Volunteers from the NSAC are sought to form a group with the NWWAC, to produce advice for the 1st September deadline. The draft advice must be prepared by the 17th August at the very latest. A NSAC Working Group needs to be set up to resolve some of the issues. The meeting will be held at Dublin airport. (5.8).
 | SecretariatMembers |
| 1. Barrie Deas was invited to work with Emiel Brouckaert to revise the text of the draft letter to the Commission and Member States on Implementation of the Landings Obligation (Paper 5.4).The draft will then be recirculated. If the amendments are not agreed, then a minority position will be allocated to the Redercentrale amendments. (6.5)
 | Barrie DeasEmiel BrouckaertSecretariatMembers |
| 1. Further Advice on the LO will need to be submitted by early September (perhaps in advance of the Sch. Tech Group meeting on September 12th), and a meeting of the LO Focus Group will be required. The current draft advice will be amended and the new draft recirculated before the meeting is held. The Secretariat will look for a suitable date and location. Copenhagen on the 22nd of August is a possibility. Attendees will include Pim Visser, Michael Andersen or Kenn Skau Fischer, and Jenny Grossman. (6.6).
 | SecretariatMembers |
| 1. The DWG members will continue to discuss the issues highlighted regarding Fishing Opportunities 2019 and agree how best to form and highlight our thoughts (7.1)
 | Barrie DeasLorna Duguid |
| 1. The Secretariat will contact NWWAC to agree a joint meeting to discuss advice on Sea Bass with the NWWAC. (8.2).
 | Barrie DeasSecretariat |
| 1. The Commission has asked the NSAC to send it advice on European Eels by 28th September 2018. Michael Andersen will be consulting Eel experts and drafting a short paper on this topic and will send it to the NSAC. The draft will be circulated to NSAC members for their comments. The NSAC will also bring together a small group of members to develop a response to present to the ExCom. (9.1, 9.2).
 | Michael AndersenSecretariatMembers |
| 1. Questionnaires will be sent by the organisers of the Pandora Project to the NSAC Secretariat for circulation to the members, who will then reply directly with their comments. (10.4).
 | Pandora OrganisersSecretariatMembers |
| 1. The next meeting of the Demersal Working Group will take place on the 17th October in Brussels. (12.1).
 | SecretariatMembers |

**14 Attendance**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Family Name** | **Given Name** | **Organisation** |
| Andersen | Michael | Danish Fishermens’ PO |
| Birnie | Anne | NESFO |
| Brouckaert | Emiel | Rederscentrale |
| Clark | Ned | NFFO |
| Coull | Kenny | SFF |
| Deas | Barrie | NFFO |
|  Duguid | Lorna | NSAC Secretariat |
|  Gamblin | Caroline | CNPMEM |
|  Groth Rasmussen |  Line | DG Mare |
|  Hawkins  |  Tony | NSAC Secretariat |
|  Kempf |  Alexander | Thünen Institute of Sea Fisheries |
|  Kingma |  Irene | Dutch Elasmobranch Society |
|  Kopsel |  Vera | University of Hamburg |
|  Kruse |  Thomas Wenzel | DFPO |
|  Lindberg |  Fredrik | Swedish Fishermens’ PO |
|  Lordan |  Colm | ICES ACOM |
|  MacDonald |  Paul | Scottish Fishermen’s Federation |
|  Meun |  Geert | VISNED Dutch Fisheries Organisation |
|  Park |  Michael | SFF |
|  Ronelov Olsson |  Peter | Swedish Fishermen’s PO |
|  Stewart |  William | EFCA |
|  Strating |  Roos | Dutch Ministry |
|  Van Tuinen |  Durk | Nederlandse Vissersbond |
|  Visser |  Pim | VisNed |
|  Wichmann |  Niels | DFPO |