



CONSEIL CONSULTATIF POUR
LES EAUX OCCIDENTALES
SEPTENTRIONALES

NORTH WESTERN
WATERS
ADVISORY COUNCIL

CONSEJO CONSULTIVO PARA
LAS AGUAS
NOROCCIDENTALES

Meeting of NWWAC FG Marine Plastics
Dublin Castle
04 September 2019
13.00 – 15:00

Minutes

1 Welcome and introductions

The Secretariat opened the meeting and welcomed everyone.

Attendees

PT	Paul Trebilcock	On behalf of Barrie Deas (National Federation of Fishermen's Organisations)	UK	IND
JW	Johnny Woodlock	Irish Seal Sanctuary	IE	OIG
JB	José Manuel F. Beltran	Organización de Productores Pesqueros de Lugo	ES	IND
NP	Norah Parke	Killybegs Fishermen's Organisation	IE	IND
OS	Oscar Sague	International Forum for Sustainable Underwater Activities	ES	OIG
PM	Patrick Murphy	Irish South and West Fish Producer's Organisation	IE	IND
MM	Mo Mathies (rapporteur)	NWWAC Secretariat	SEC	

Apologies

Caroline Ton	Comité National des Peches Maritime et des Élevages Marin	FR	IND
Geert Meun	VisNed	NL	IND
Jasmine Vlietinck	Rederscentrale (due to technical difficulties)	BE	IND
Jim Portus	South Western Fish Producers Organisation	UK	IND
Sander Meyns	Rederscentrale (due to technical difficulties)	BE	IND

2 Nomination and election of Chair (and Vice-Chair)

Johnny Woodlock was nominated and accepted as Chair of the Focus Group.

Patrick Murphy was nominated and accepted as Vice-chair.

3 Action points from last meeting

	Action
1	Identify and ratify nominations of Chair and Vice-Chair of this group. See point 3 on the agenda
2	Each country to put together a summary on how Fishing for Litter is working, recycling of gear etc. The Secretariat received information from five countries, the only country missing is UK.
3	For BE and NL put together a list of ports that have no facilities and possibly include if there are any costs to the vessels for landing FFL. Information received by the Secretariat from Belgium but not from the UK.
4	Each country to provide information (if available) on how fishing gear is being recycled. Part of information received from five countries.
5	Mo to provide information on the Circular Blue Economy project in Ireland. Links provided in country information.
6	Caroline to provide summary of French project, possibly to get organisation involved in Focus Group. Information included in country overview.

JB stated that in Spain, OppLugo is putting together a FFL project with [ECOALF](#). Bags are provided for collection on the vessels, mainly trawlers. Not all marine litter is the same. Enterprise comes to the port and collects the material for recycling. This project is nearly ready to start.

JW informed the group that some angling clubs are now collecting line and spools for recycling. Collection facilities are provided in tackle shops. The person in Ireland who is organising this initiative is the editor of 'Off the Scale'. JW offered to collect some information and distribute it to the group

4 Presentation on current state of play in Ireland

To focus the group on the task ahead and to inform participants of the current state of play in Ireland regarding the involvement of the fishing industry in tackling the marine plastic problem, Catherine Barrett, Bord Iascaigh Mhara (BIM), was invited by the NWWAC as an expert to present on BIM's Clean Ocean's Initiative.

Ireland's Minister for Agriculture, Food & the Marine, Michael Creed, announced Ireland's Clean Oceans Initiative in January 2019 and called for the participation of the entire Irish trawl fishing fleet in the scheme to manage and reduce marine litter from fisheries and aquaculture. This initiative also involves in a number of processor based programmes.

FFL was the first programme, but Ireland joined this programme late in comparison to other EU countries. Today, there are 14 EU members drawing down EMFF money in support of their FFL campaigns.

The presentation can be found on the NWWAC website [here](#).

Mention was made of the [EU project DeepNet](#) as well as challenges for the fishing sector in relation to overreporting.

IN Ireland, the inshore fleet is also involved in the Clean Ocean's Initiative, while the organisation [Clean Coasts](#) organises voluntary beach clean ups. Clean Coast currently has over 1000 registered groups in Ireland, and BIM works very closely with Clean Coasts as the solution to marine litter needs to be inclusive.

The group identified the importance of identifying what exact materials make up which net in order for the various nets to be sorted and recycled. Combinations of gear configurations also need to be classified, as fishermen can easily identify these but it is very difficult for non-industry members to identify sources. The classification of gear is necessary to help with dealing with it onshore after it has been retrieved.

A comment was made that classification needs to be addressed as to what is marine litter exactly and as to how and when fishing gear can be classified as abandoned or lost.

It was stated that the EU is happy with the fishing sector being involved as it is the only sector that can actively do this at this scale.

The discussion continued addressing the fact that nowadays no fishermen purposely gets rid of gear as all gear costs money. At the GGGI / API workshop in Brussels 02 July 2019 the fishing industry already commented that it is important to note that not all gear is ghost gear. Fishermen at sea cannot go through extracted gear, so the question arose what do the fishermen do with retrieved gear as they have no liability regarding retrieved gear. There is a legacy issue with old gear in the sea as nowadays gear is too expensive that nobody can afford to lose gear.

In Ireland there is a network of 12 ports where harbour masters accept material without extra costs. There is only one port where the fishermen have to manage the retrieved material themselves. The FFL programme deals with the mess that has been fished out of the sea.

The group felt it was important to recognise that fishermen are not guilty of littering, however, the public perceives it like this. The EU states that up to 50% of beach litter is single use plastics, and up to 25% is aquaculture or fishing sourced material. Irish trawlers bring up to 50% of fishing related litter because they are trawling the sea floor. It is important to analyse the source and the pathways of how this litter arrives in the sea. The positive side to FFL is that fishermen are being given credit for bringing material in. 80% of marine litter is not associated with the industry. The fishing industry should not be criticised for not recycling if there are no facilities offered.

To assist the recycling of fishing gear, the COM has tasked Member States to identify how much gear is being sold into the industry.

It is also important to find out what's being sold into the sector, and what the lifespan is of this material, for example, how long does a trawl work, how often does it get repaired, life expectancy can be different between trawlers and fleets.

This is where the modulation of fees under the SUP Directive comes in: if you can prove that material is being used not just once but over a period of time. Pelagic gear gets serviced every year. This needs to be tracked to show what the life span is of each component.

It was pointed out that fishing net is being used for a dual purpose, both for fishing and for collecting litter. Fishermen are being asked to collect rubbish so there has to be a benefit in kind to the fishermen. Waste fishing gear has to be identified and classified. The difference between lost fishing gear, discarded fishing gear, rubbish needs to be clarified. Fishermen are in a unique position to pick up marine litter. Data is key including identification and classification.

20 years ago, when the Dutch fishing industry started collecting marine litter and landing it, placing fishing gear on recycling market was not heard of. Today it is about accountability, in the figures from the COM

27% of what is washed up on the shore comes from the fishing sector and that is unacceptable. However, the majority of plastic material that is in the sea does not originate at sea.

The COM are currently developing an operational tool for reporting and monitoring, and DG MARE are going to launch a call for circular design of fishing gear.

The [Blue Circular Economy](#) project contains reference to the development of a certification programme.

5 Issues for Discussion

These were identified in the minutes from the previous meeting and revisited to inform the discussion and identification of Terms of Reference.

6 Terms of Reference

A variety of issues were discussed that could inform the Terms of Reference, including:

- Technical measures and their impact on gear changes; nets the best they can be at the moment. If netting changes it can be suddenly illegal to be used if the mesh size changes.
- port facilities: will there be a barrier to all material coming ashore, any barriers for bringing material ashore need to be removed. Ports need to be involved to identify what the issues are in the ports, so port representatives should also be involved. Hidden costs like harbour dues being increased. Fishermen only responsible to bring material onshore. There should not be a disincentive to land rubbish and there should not be a disincentive to recycle gear.
- Accountability from inception; costs
- the UK found that fishermen ask can this be done without it cost any extra money to me? Trawl net is difficult, gill net is easy to recycle.
- effort of the crew regarding stripping gear.
- how are visiting boats treated; boats moving between countries should be treated the same everywhere.
- The AC should concentrate on providing operational advice as the interpretation of the COM Directive can be different. Our advice, if a FFL bag comes ashore anywhere in the EU the cost should be fixed/same everywhere. MS need to agree on this
- what we don't want is old gear being driven into marine litter, boats are still accountable for their retired gear.
- Recyclability: Recycling comes down to the polymers, is all the netting in those 4 types of plastics that can be recycled?
- Suggestion that Focus Group invite people involved in the manufacturing to come into one room and discuss. All three groups: net manufacturers, users, recycling companies
- Suggestion to invite Karin Dubsy at the next meeting in her capacity as coordinator for Coastwatch

Europe, to give an overview of recent beach surveys including how much material related to the fishing industry is noted

- The SUP directive is not looking for all gear being recycled but for all gear to be accounted for, all fishing gear components.
- what follows up from that accountability is the fear for the industry. What is the consequence for the industry if they provide all this information. Can they be punished or fined? Non-compliance could harm fishermen.
- Advisory group to draft up what could help, AC not here to facilitate COM to get to their point.
- AC to advise on best practice and promotion of it. Our job to show changes to fishermen, important to know the other users of the marine environment and their input to marine litter. We know the fishing industry and their involvement in this but the industry are not the only polluters
- what are other groups doing and other environments, what is the compliance from other sectors.
- Extended Producers Responsibility Scheme and how to manage this in the supply chain.

Action: Patrick to send draft ToR

7 Liaison/ cooperation with other organisations

The Secretariat reminded the group of the upcoming NSAC Focus Group meeting to be held remotely on 10 September. A member of the NWWAC FG Marine Plastics will participate in this meeting and report back to the group.

The Secretariat informed the FG about its work with the Market AC regarding the preparation of a workshop on marine Plastics proposed to be held in Brussels on 07 November.

It is proposed that this workshop will be co-hosted and co-financed by the NWWAC with additional input from the Aquaculture AC.

The MAC held their annual meeting on 02 and 03 September and discussed the upcoming workshop.

The agreed draft timeline for the workshop is as follows (26/09/2019):

08:30 – 09:00	Registration
09:00 – 09:20	Introduction
09:00 – 09:05	Guus Pastoor (Chairperson of the MAC Executive Committee)
09:05 – 09:20	Keynote speaker: MEP requested

09:20 - 10:50	Setting the Scene
09:20 – 09:40	FAO requested
09:40 – 10:10	Legislative context - Werner Bosmans, DG ENV C2 - confirmed
10:10 – 10:30	Legislative context (DG MARE A1's Head of Unit) – confirmed
10:30 – 10:50	Q & A
10:50 – 11:20	COFFEE
11:20 – 12:40	At Sea
11:20 – 11:40	Effects of plastic pollution on the marine environment – Richard Cronin OSPAR/SAPEA - confirmed
11:40 – 12:00	The Clean Ocean's Initiative Ireland – Catherine Morrison, BIM (confirmed)
12:00 – 12:20	Project Clean Atlantic (CETMAR) confirmed
12:20 – 12:40	Q & A
12:40 – 14:00	LUNCH – DG MARE
14:00 – 15:30	On Land – Packaging & Processing: minimising the impact (of the legislation or of plastic?) along the production chain
14:00 - 14:20	Sustainable Packaging / New directions in plastics packaging (EuroCommerce?)
14:20 – 14:40	Project Oceanwise - Carlos León Perfecto - confirmed
14:40 – 15:00	Effects of microplastics on human health - Dr Brian Quinn, University West of Scotland - confirmed
15:00 – 15:20	Rethink Plastic Alliance requested
15:20 – 15:30	Q & A
15:30 – 16:00	COFFEE
16:00 16:50	Panel discussion – bringing it all together:
	<u>Moderator: Georg Werner (Chairperson of the MAC's Working Group 3)</u>
	Maris Stulgis (DG MARE), Catherine Morrison (BIM), Carlos León Perfecto (Sustainn), Project Clear Atlantic, Dr Brian Quinn (University West of Scotland)

16:50 – 17:00

Conclusions

Emiel Brouckeart (Chairperson of the NWWAC Executive Committee)

The Secretariat will continue liaising with the MAC Secretariat regarding this workshop. The MAC has requested budgetary assistance and the group agreed to pose this request to the ExCom.

ACTION: FG to request budget allowance for MAC/NWWAC workshop.

The group agreed that the proposed programme for the above workshop is very wide ranging and that it would be useful to identify if there was any interest in holding a workshop that is focussed in more detail on the needs of the fleet. This could be carried out in conjunction with the North Sea AC and their Focus Group on the circular design of fishing gear.

ACTION: FG to propose to NSAC joint workshop on gear – Jan Feb next year

8 Action points/ timeline/ date of next meeting

	Action
1	Johnny Woodlock to collect information on the collection and recycling of angling gear and distribute to the FG.
2	Patrick Murphy to send draft Terms of Reference so that the members of the Focus Group can agree these before the ExCom meeting tomorrow.
3	FG to request budget allowance for MAC/NWWAC workshop.
4	FG to propose to NSAC joint workshop on gear – Jan Feb next year

Timeline: The group agreed to prepare a draft advice document ready for presentation at the ExCom meeting Ghent, July 2020.

Next meeting: The date for the next meeting via video conference is proposed for the week starting 07 October.