



CONSEIL CONSULTATIF POUR
LES EAUX OCCIDENTALES
SEPTENTRIONALES

NORTH WESTERN
WATERS
ADVISORY COUNCIL

CONSEJO CONSULTIVO PARA
LAS AGUAS
NOROCCIDENTALES

MINUTES

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Bord Iascaigh Mhara & Zoom

Wednesday 08 July 2026

1 Welcome and introductions

The Chair Alexandra Philippe welcomed all participants in the room and online, and especially the representatives from the European Commission who travelled to participate in person. Apologies were received from G rald Hussenot Desenonges (Bluefish), Jean-Marie Robert (Les P cheurs de Bretagne) and Patrick Murphy (ISWFPO). The agenda was adopted.

Action points from the last meeting (06 March 2026, Brussels)

- 1 Secretariat to add issue of delayed implementation of technical measures by the UK to topics to be raised by Chair at the upcoming Inter-AC Brexit Forum on 31 March

Raised at Inter-AC 19 June including a second concern related to beam trawlers in the Channel in relation to the 30% threshold applied for the use of a 90mm mesh for sole and plaice which is not part of the UK record: Celtic Sea measures entered into force on 1 June for both parties, while on the Channel measures the UK is still facing internal procedural delays. Continued pressure is being applied by the EU on an ongoing basis, while also ensuring that any implementation maintains a level playing field and avoids uneven application, and although progress is slow, this remains a priority.

The 30% catch threshold was proposed by the EU side to determine when the 90 mm mesh size would apply, whereas the UK does not support the use of percentage thresholds and instead applies the 90 mm mesh size as a standard requirement in all cases. In contrast, EU waters apply the measure conditionally based on the 30% threshold. Discussions with the UK are ongoing, particularly as they move away from catch composition thresholds, which remain important to Member States and industry.

- 2 NWWAC to develop advice on the issue subsea cables following identification of suitable Focus Group for carrying out work.

In progress, topic to be investigated at HWG in October

- 3 Focus Group Brown Crab to include considerations regarding directed fisheries and bycatch fisheries for brown crab and planned advice development.

In progress, liaising with MS and COM on advice development



- 4 NWWAC to apply for observer status at Ocean Board.
Email sent to DG MARE A.2 09 March, appointed
- 5 Secretariat to ask members for meeting location suggestions for Year 22.
Email sent, no additional suggestions. Meeting locations: March 2026 Brussels, July 2026 Santiago de Compostela or Paris

A brief discussion followed on the location for the July 2027 meeting after Irene Prieto also suggested Coruna as a potential location. She explained that next year is a big year for Santiago de Compostela and it will be very busy with tourists.

ACTION: Secretariat to send email to members regarding meeting location for July 2027 meetings for final approval of location in October ExCom meeting.

2 Dialogue with DG MARE – Fabrizio Donatella, Director DG MARE C

The Chair welcomed Fabrizio Donatella and Norman Graham and thanked them for their continued availability to meet with the members of the Executive Committee and continuing the dialogue established several years ago.

Fabrizio Donatella opened by thanking the Chair and the NWWAC for the invitation, emphasising the high value and utility of these meetings for networking and information sharing. He noted that communication between DG MARE and the AC is progressing very positively. The relationship has matured beyond a merely official exchange of advice and recommendations and evolved into a fluid, ongoing interaction across various active working groups. This continuous dialogue is crucial for DG MARE, especially when preparing for consultations in the second half of the year, as the available timeline for these processes is highly compressed.

A number of internal **organisational changes within DG MARE** were announced, all taking effect from 01 September. Maja Kirchner will take over Unit C.5, while Raluka Ivanescu will lead Unit C.1. Arnaud Peyronnet is set to serve as the acting head of Unit C.3. Commission staff are already actively engaged in preparing for upcoming consultations and the December fishing opportunities negotiations.

Ireland has assumed the Council presidency, which is expected to be highly challenging due to the upcoming negotiations and a series of imminent policy initiatives. DG MARE is committed to providing heightened assistance to the Irish presidency during this six-month term. As a reflection of this support, the Director-General recently represented the Commissioner at an



CONSEIL CONSULTATIF POUR
LES EAUX OCCIDENTALES
SEPTENTRIONALES

NORTH WESTERN
WATERS
ADVISORY COUNCIL

CONSEJO CONSULTIVO PARA
LAS AGUAS
NOROCCIDENTALES

Ocean Act event in Wexford. The coming months will be a defining period, marked by the release of several key communications and proposals.

The internal preparations, consultations, and the upcoming **December Council** regarding Atlantic fishing opportunities are expected to be even more demanding than in previous years. This complexity is driven by the ICES advice received so far and a broader context of ongoing or anticipated changes.

Concurrently, a STECF plenary is addressing critical topics, including joint recommendations, fleet capacity, and Mediterranean matters. In an effort to balance the workload across the entire twelve-month cycle rather than backloading it, the Commission has spread out these major issues. Consequently, the relevant outcomes from the STECF plenary will be integrated directly into the preparation for the forthcoming consultations, reflecting a permanent shift toward early, year-round preparation for the latter half of the year.

F. Donatella highlighted the continuous and intensive cooperation under the **EU-UK Specialised Committee for Fisheries**, specifically regarding the ongoing implementation of remedial measures. The European Commission is currently awaiting formal confirmation from the UK regarding full implementation as soon as possible.

The Commission is currently processing various studies tied to the **CFP evaluation**, including a specific review of the landing obligation. It is acknowledged that the landing obligation has not delivered its intended outcomes. However, the Commission remains firm that it will not permit a return to high discard levels, which threaten both environmental sustainability and industry profitability. An overarching communication outlining the **2040 Vision for Fisheries and Aquaculture** is scheduled for publication in early autumn. This milestone document will explicitly integrate the EU's external action framework and the energy transition roadmap. The strategic importance of the CFP's external dimension has fundamentally shifted. Rather than being treated as a distant or isolated policy area focused solely on regional fisheries organisations, it now critically encompasses the North Sea, the Northeast Atlantic, and the Mediterranean. This shift is driven by the reality of shared waters, resources, and markets. Furthermore, development of the **Ocean Act** is progressing swiftly as the primary legislative vehicle to translate the Ocean Pact into a cohesive ocean governance framework.

The evaluation is occurring alongside highly complex negotiations regarding the next **Multi-annual Financial Framework (MFF)**. F. Donatella emphasised that future funding structures will diverge significantly from current financial instruments. The relationship with Member States will evolve through national plans that combine specific reforms and investments, alongside centrally funded initiatives. Future programming will require stricter prioritisation, particularly across core elements such as data collection, fisheries control, and the energy transition. Because these negotiations heavily involve budgetary and financial administrations rather than just fisheries experts, the Council was encouraged to invite specialist financial



officials to future meetings to provide deeper insights. Regarding **legislative amendments**, he noted that the current reflection period is more condensed than in past reform cycles, such as 2013. Any formal proposals to amend the existing legislative framework will be strictly dependent on a rigorous, prior impact assessment evaluating multiple policy options.

Reflecting on the June Council debate regarding the **state of play for fishing opportunities**, the Commission's latest communication places a heavier emphasis on balancing fleet capacity with socio-economic performance and the social dimension of the CFP. Significant progress has been made since 2013, with a substantial drop in fishing pressure on historically depleted stocks. Nevertheless, serious challenges persist in areas like the Celtic Sea, where recruitment and biomass continue to decline despite reductions in fishing mortality. While acknowledging that climate change and rising water temperatures drive these declines, the Commission insists this must not stall conservation efforts. Consequently, medium-to-long-term rebuilding strategies are being prioritised over short-term decision-making to address the impacts of climate change and marine pollution.

On the **socio-economic** front, fleet viability is constrained by high operating costs, notably fuel prices. While the emergency fuel package introduced in April in response to the Middle East crisis provided short-term relief, the Commission advocates for a more strategic, long-term approach to energy transition and generational renewal. To support this, the Commission has published its first annual social report covering the sector from 2017 to 2023, which reveals several concerning data trends.

A notable shift in fishing activity toward **non-quota species** has occurred due to the poor status of several key quota stocks across the Celtic Sea, Irish Sea, and English Channel. This shift has intensified joint EU-UK efforts through the Specialised Committee for Fisheries, focusing heavily on two key dossiers: a multi-year strategy for Channel king scallops and management measures for brown crab. The NWWAC's dedicated Focus Groups has been highly influential in shaping these initiatives. The EU and UK have successfully submitted a **joint request to ICES** for scientific advice on both stocks, which is a major diplomatic milestone. For **king scallops**, the Commission is exploring common management measures to be agreed upon by the end of the year. The final report from the joint EU-UK expert group is expected before the summer recess, and a meeting is scheduled with UK counterpart on 22 July to secure concrete outcomes. For **brown crab**, following a Member State mandate on 29 May, a formal proposal was submitted to the UK, yielding a productive first round of consultations on 03 July.

Horizontally, the **rebuilding of depleted stocks** in western waters remains a critical priority requiring urgent action based on scientific consensus. To ensure stability, the Commission has requested ICES to provide a range of management scenarios and options for mixed fisheries by the end of September. The Commission also continues to closely monitor the UK's independent fisheries management plans, a task that demands significant internal resources.



CONSEIL CONSULTATIF POUR
LES EAUX OCCIDENTALES
SEPTENTRIONALES

NORTH WESTERN
WATERS
ADVISORY COUNCIL

CONSEJO CONSULTIVO PARA
LAS AGUAS
NOROCCIDENTALES

F. Donatella concluded by acknowledging that resource and time constraints affect all parties, but reaffirmed the Commission's commitment to the sector. The coming weeks and months will see critical decisions regarding EU-UK and trilateral consultations, alongside new policy and financial initiatives. The Commission highly values the mature, pragmatic relationship built with the NWWAC and welcomed further informal dialogue, highlighting an upcoming high-level meeting in mid-July featuring the participation of the Commissioner.

The Chair thanked F. Donatella for his detailed overview and opened the floor to questions.

Following up on discussions from the previous day, **Emiel Brouckaert** expressed doubts regarding the quality of some of the scientific work delivered by ICES. Given that the Commission frequently tasks ICES with research and relies heavily on their findings to shape policy and management measures, Brouckaert questioned at what point the Commission actively reviews and evaluates the quality of the work being delivered, stressing that reliable data is vital since it forms the exact information base upon which everyone is expected to act.

John Lynch noted that fleet capacity was mentioned multiple times in relation to depleted stocks in the Celtic and Irish Seas. He requested clarification on whether the review and its subsequent discussion would take place at the Member State level, as a recommendation to Member States, or at the broader EU level. Furthermore, he asked whether the Commission is considering permanent or temporary measures to address the balance, and whether financial or structural support will be made available to fleets or Member States to implement any resulting recommendations.

Building upon previous comments regarding fleet capacity and new management plans, **Geert Meun** highlighted the Celtic Sea where existing measures to protect cod, whiting, and haddock have already hit the industry very hard. He expressed a strong conviction that even if the entire fleet were scrapped, stocks like cod would still not recover due to the overwhelming impact of climate change and other ecological shifts. Pointing to similar patterns where species like cod have disappeared from the southern North Sea while others like squid and red mullet have arrived, G. Meun argued that the industry must accept that stocks will naturally fluctuate across different areas. Ultimately, he questioned whether the Commission is prepared to recognise that certain environmental changes on the fishing grounds are simply beyond human control.

In response to concerns regarding the reliability of ICES scientific advice, **F. Donatella** acknowledged the recent challenges and distinct shifts in annual biomass assessments that have altered the perception of stock levels from one year to the next. He clarified that the European Commission is actively engaging with ICES to seek formal clarifications on the legitimate questions raised by stakeholders. He stressed the importance of utilising the period between the publication of advice and the final decision-making process to resolve these doubts. To prevent systemic friction when advice is released, he suggested that stakeholders



work more closely with national scientific institutes to better understand how data is aggregated and analysed before being finalised by the ICES Advisory Committee (ACOM). Minimising doubts around scientific integrity is viewed by the Commission as essential for strengthening the CFP ahead of future challenges, such as regional management in the Northeast Atlantic and potential EU enlargement. Ultimately, the goal is to foster a collective effort where stakeholders are engaged well before advice is published, ensuring absolute comfort that decisions are built on solid scientific ground.

Addressing queries regarding fleet capacity balance, F. Donatella clarified that the Commission is not initiating an EU-level review or opening a new chapter on capacity management rules. Instead, the Commission views fleet capacity as a matter that must be handled dynamically at the National State level first and foremost. While structural shifts over the past few years have highlighted the need for flexible short-, medium-, and long-term mechanisms, such as permanent or temporary cessation facilities, these must be integrated into national programming. F. Donatella emphasised that the ongoing negotiations for the next MFF represent the critical window for Member States and fleets to secure the funding necessary for these structural reforms. Because future EU funding models will transition away from ring-fenced fisheries funds toward broader national investment envelopes, strategic debates regarding funding allocations must happen immediately rather than waiting for the framework's final adoption. To assist with this complex transition, F. Donatella reiterated the Commission's recommendation that the AC organise a dedicated session with DG MARE financial specialists to fully comprehend the macroeconomic shifts and their policy consequences.

J. Lynch supported the concerns regarding ICES scientific advice, noting that the issue extends beyond data quality to how the advice is practically applied. He specifically highlighted data-limited Category 5 and 6 stocks, where the continuous application of the precautionary buffer drives catch advice down toward zero. He argued that this approach runs completely contrary to the landing obligation, creating severe choke situations for fleets because these smaller stocks are often unavoidable bycatches in main target fisheries. Drawing a parallel to past management of skates and rays, he recalled how the initial advice automatically deducted 50% and then applied a 20% precautionary buffer every two-year cycle. Once it was recognised that this was driving the fishery in the wrong direction, the Commission successfully intervened to suspend the buffer in conjunction with improved stock management. J. Lynch concluded that a similar, more flexible approach should be applied to current low-category stocks rather than systematically depleting their quotas via the precautionary buffer.

Manu Kelberine agreed with the criticisms regarding the flawed application of the precautionary approach. He pointed out that certain vessels fish very effectively for sole, creating significant value for the industry. However, he argued that repeatedly applying the precautionary buffer to these fisheries leads directly to a regulatory dead end. He concluded that while the precautionary approach can be justified as a one-off measure under specific



circumstances, its continuous and compounding use creates an unsustainable situation for the fleet, echoing the concerns raised about it driving activities into a standstill.

The **NWWAC Secretariat** requested clarification on the process and stakeholder involvement regarding the joint EU-UK request to ICES for scientific advice on scallops. The Secretariat questioned how the upcoming scientific report would inform and be integrated into the broader work developed by ICES in the coming months. Additionally, noting the Commission's target to adopt management measures before the end of the year, the Secretariat asked how EU and UK stakeholders would be involved in the process. Specifically, confirmation was requested on whether a second bilateral EU-UK workshop on scallops, which had been promised after the previous session, is still envisaged to take place prior to any formal adoption.

Norman Graham clarified that the incoming ICES scientific report is intended to supplement the broader management picture rather than delay ongoing discussions or final decisions. The Commission is aiming for a definitive decision by the end of the year, viewing the scientific process as parallel and integrated rather than strictly sequential. The joint request to ICES specifically encourages the institution to provide advice for the Eastern and Western Channel scallop stocks on either an annual or multi-annual basis, depending on what the ICES Advisory Committee deems most appropriate. The Commission has already absorbed the work completed by ICES so far to advance these policy reflections. Regarding management measures, N. Graham noted that discussions remain at an initial stage. He confirmed that the Commission will host a dedicated stakeholder gathering to discuss potential measures before any final decisions are made, alongside parallel consultations with Member States. The industry will not be presented with a *fait accompli*. Because the Commission is stepping into management territory for non-quota species where little historical regulation exists, it is intentionally pursuing a cautious, step-by-step approach similar to the process used for brown crab. Direct and primary consultation with the AC and broader industry stakeholders remains central to this entire process.

Aodh O'Donnell highlighted a recently issued report on the state of the fisheries and the industry, noting that the reality of depleted stocks in key fisheries underscores the urgent need for innovation, reform, and rebuilding strategies. However, he emphasised that the single largest obstacle to financing these essential adaptations, whether through temporary or permanent cessation schemes, general developments, or fleet renewal, is the current framework surrounding state aid. He stated that whenever the industry engages with Member State officials regarding public funding for these initiatives, state aid rules act as a major block. He concluded that this issue must be addressed both dynamically and urgently at a higher level to effectively enable the sector to adapt to its current challenges.

Dominic Rihan criticised the persistent narrative within the Commission and across Europe that portrays small-scale, low-impact vessels as positive and larger industrial vessels as negative, noting this theme appears again in the latest State of the Stocks report. He argued



that this division is highly damaging and unfair to larger vessels, which are often the most strictly regulated and compliant in the fleet. Stressing that all forms of fishing carry an environmental impact, he urged the Commission to focus instead on supporting all compliant fishing boats regardless of their size.

E. Brouckaert noted it was the first time he had heard that ICES is considering providing regular advice on Eastern and Western Channel scallop stocks, prompting him to ask if this would automatically lead to the implementation of a Total Allowable Catch (TAC), or if other management approaches, such as those used for sea bass, remain possible.

N. Graham clarified that the joint request to ICES is strictly intended to gather comprehensive data on biomass and stock status to inform future management, rather than to trigger an automatic transition to a TAC system. While acknowledging that scallop stocks vary in health across regions, such as the well-managed, healthy stocks in the Baie de Seine and 7e compared to more depleted areas, he emphasised that the Commission is far from considering TAC management. He noted that alternative approaches for non-quota species exist, similar to those used for sea bass, and reassured stakeholders that no definitive decisions regarding specific management frameworks have been made.

F. Donatella acknowledged the highly sensitive nature of state aid regulations, noting that while DG MARE cannot entirely intervene in these rules, the issue remains a critical strategic component when planning the next phase of sector financing. Following the first year of the Trade and Cooperation Agreement (TCA) implementation, there has been a noticeable shift in how future funding is approached, particularly regarding complex, long-term structural issues that lack rapid resolutions. F. Donatella was unable to comment on individual national scenarios but strongly encouraged the AC to discuss with Member States how to integrate state aid and public funding dynamics into their broader, long-term strategic planning. Responding to concerns regarding an institutional bias against larger vessels, he reassured participants that the Commission does not differentiate between small-scale and industrial vessels when managing fisheries, nor does it seek to demonise or promote any specific fleet segment. Future policy proposals will maintain a holistic focus on the fishery as a whole. While the Commission recognises the reality that certain fleet segments experience distinct challenges regarding quota access, investment, and market services, F. Donatella emphasised that ignoring the role of larger vessels would undermine the reality of integrated fisheries management.

Falke de Sager requested clarification on the purpose and integration of the newly developed national fisheries profiles and social reports. Noting that these profiles provide a deep analysis of each Member State's fleet and aquaculture sector, she raised concerns that the current drafts vary significantly from country to country and appear to be compiled in isolation. She questioned how these profiles and reports will practically feed into future management decisions and measures. Furthermore, given the rapid pace of economic changes, such as



fluctuating fuel prices, she asked how the Commission intends to keep these profiles updated to accurately reflect the shifting impacts on different fleet segments and Member States.

F. Donatella confirmed that the national profiles and the staff report represent a new, enlightening approach by the Commission to achieve a higher level of granularity in national assessments. He explained that this work is primarily intended to guide negotiations with Member States regarding the implementation and strategic programming of future financial instruments. These detailed profiles will provide the necessary data to address challenges at the national level, specifically informing future management of fleet capacity and targeting essential investments into the socio-economic and social dimensions of the sector. He concluded that while this process is still in development, having these shared elements is vital for ensuring that upcoming funding tools can effectively meet localised needs.

The Chair warmly welcomed the Commission's repeated recognition of the NWWAC's work, noting that such validation serves as a vital reminder to members that their advice and opinions have a tangible impact on the EU decision-making process. Reflecting on the upcoming autumn communication, she highlighted a structural gap in the current governance framework regarding the Northeast Atlantic. Since Brexit, matters in this region have shifted from internal regionalisation to the external policy dimension. She observed that while communication with Commission units has progressed, stakeholders are frequently missing a critical layer of early engagement, as major decisions are often finalised bilaterally with the UK before the AC is formally consulted. To prevent the loss of this vital regional input, she issued a strong plea for the development of new consultation tools that reflect this post-Brexit reality, suggesting this structural gap be addressed either through the upcoming communication or via the outcomes of the CFP evaluation. Regarding relations with ICES, the Chair welcomed the evolving, positive trend toward closer stakeholder engagement and praised the Commission for offering strategic debriefings ahead of key meetings like MIACO. However, she emphasised that the AC is currently operating at maximum capacity due to limited human and financial resources, relying heavily on member contributions to sustain participation in these scientific working groups. Turning to the MFF, she noted the recommendation for a dedicated meeting and agreed that stakeholders must strategically anticipate negotiations with Member States well before the formal adoption of MFF legislation, proposing that this topic be added to the agenda for the next Horizontal Working Group meeting in October. Concluding with a personal reflection on the CFP evaluation, the Chair identified a major shortcoming in how the review has been framed. She expressed concern that the evaluation consistently attributes structural failures to poor implementation by Member States and stakeholders, rather than questioning the viability of the regulations themselves. Using the landing obligation as a prime example, she warned that this approach risks alienating the industry by implying an unwillingness to comply, rather than investigating whether a policy is practically implementable. She argued that to build a successful long-term relationship under the Vision 2040 framework, the Commission must



CONSEIL CONSULTATIF POUR
LES EAUX OCCIDENTALES
SEPTENTRIONALES

NORTH WESTERN
WATERS
ADVISORY COUNCIL

CONSEJO CONSULTIVO PARA
LAS AGUAS
NOROCCIDENTALES

move past this philosophical divide and demonstrate a willingness to evaluate the baseline feasibility of its regulations rather than focusing solely on enforcement.

F. Donatella noted that the upcoming Vision 2040 communication offers a vital opportunity to shape the future of strategic, long-term interactions regarding shared resources, waters, and responsibilities with coastal states like the UK following several years of implementing the TCA. Regarding regionalisation, he acknowledged differing perspectives but suggested that stakeholders focus on maximising the flexibility of existing tools within the CFP framework. He clarified that the identified implementation issues only affect a small part of a highly successful, complex framework that has made remarkable progress over the past decade. He outlined that the evaluation simply highlighted that the original, collectively agreed-upon ambitions and objectives have not yet been fully matched by reality. He concluded by assuring the AC that the Commission has no intention of pushing back on critical issues and remains fully prepared to advance this debate with more concrete elements in the coming months.

ACTION: Secretariat to include a presentation by DG MARE on the MFF legislation on the agenda for the next meeting of the Horizontal WG in October.

3 **Dialogue with NWW MSG – Tetyana Albers, French presidency of the NWW Member States Group**

Tetyana Albers thanked the Chair for the invitation and reaffirmed a strong commitment to cooperating with the Advisory Council. She thanked the AC for its ongoing responsiveness and highly valuable contributions, particularly during the drafting of joint recommendations.

She confirmed that the joint recommendation regarding King scallops was formally submitted to the European Commission last week. In response to stakeholder requests, the deadline for its entry into force has been set for the first working day after 01 October. However, due to the standard approval procedures and necessary administrative preparations, the presidency cannot guarantee it will be in force before 15 October, though they will closely monitor the adoption process.

T. Albers also highlighted the robust technical measures recommended for the Celtic Sea, West of Scotland, and Irish Sea. The primary objectives of these measures are to improve regional connectivity and ensure robust consistency between technical regulations and quota allocations, thereby guaranteeing harmonised application and long-term viability for the fishing sector.



Under the French presidency, work will continue on two recommendations currently under discussion regarding red mullet and brown crab. A primary and critical focus of the presidency will be the highly technical and complex preparations for the renewal of the discard plan regulations, as the joint recommendation on this matter must be submitted to the Commission before May 2027.

Additionally, the presidency intends to initiate discussions on broader, cross-cutting issues, including the revision of the Common Fishery Policy (CFP) and the multiannual plans. Further exchanges will also take place on the implementing act for the technical measures' regulation. The presidency also aims to explore the possibility of introducing multiannual stock management, which they believe could provide greater predictability and contribute to more efficient long-term fisheries management.

T. Albers noted that the presidency is actively monitoring the ongoing work regarding the UK fisheries management plans. She suggested strengthening exchanges with expert groups to ensure complete consistency with the high-level group's objectives. The presidency remains eager to continue discussions with the AC regarding the procedural formatting of future recommendations. To initiate this comprehensive work programme, the first working group meeting is scheduled for 15 July, with the agenda to be circulated imminently.

The Chair thanked T. Albers for her presentation and opened the floor to questions.

D. Rihan noted that Brexit has fundamentally altered regionalisation from its original format under the CFP and questioned whether the French presidency plans to host discussions among Member States to evaluate its current effectiveness, weaknesses, and potential way forward.

E. Brouckaert asked for clarification regarding the meaning and content of the Memorandum of Understanding.

T. Albers clarified that the Memorandum of Understanding currently under development is an internal framework designed specifically to govern the working rules of the regional Member States Group. It establishes procedural rules among the participating Member States and outlines the intended methodology for including external stakeholders, serving primarily as an exercise in solidifying internal procedures. In addressing the broader question of regionalisation, she noted that she could not speak definitively on behalf of the entire group but confirmed a strong willingness to discuss these governance dynamics. She emphasised that the group's objective extends well beyond merely implementing what has already been decided under the TAC and quota regulations. Instead, there is a clear ambition to proactively advance discussions on potential management measures within the regionalisation process. T. Albers highlighted that the regional group has already requested the European Commission to ensure stronger, earlier engagement with them prior to any formal consultations within the SCF. She noted that greater involvement would be highly beneficial, particularly as Member States are



eager to put forward proactive proposals, such as upcoming management measures for the Celtic Sea. T. Albers concluded by stating that significant work is already underway regarding the landing obligation and the ongoing revision of discard plans. While acknowledging that there is always room for improvement, she described current discussions among the Member States as highly fruitful and reassured the AC that the presidency remains completely open to receiving and evaluating any proposals they put forward.

The Chair recalled that on 15 July the Commission is hosting the Inter-AC meeting with all Advisory Councils, hence no representatives will be able to join the Member States Group meeting. She asked that a brief report of the points discussed would be made available in writing to the AC.

4 Approval of action points from the Working Groups

Working Group 1 - Irish Sea

1	WG1 members to send to the Secretariat any additional questions they may have for Sarah Gaichas, ACOM Vice-Chair, regarding the ICES advice for TAC 2027.
2	WG1 members to send to the Secretariat any additional input or comments they may have on the ICES Advice for 2027 to support the preparation of the NWWAC Advice on Fishing Opportunities Regulation 2027.
3	Secretariat to keep WG1 updated on the ICES Rebuilding Strategy.
4	Secretariat to continue efforts to contact MARA and liaise again with the NWW MS TG to identify contact details for representatives or experts on subsea cable issues and invite them to the next WG1 meeting in October.
5	Secretariat to follow up on the BIM trials and invite BIM to a future WG1 meeting.
6	Secretariat to monitor work of MEDAC and SWWAC on the definition of small-scale coastal fisheries.

Working Group 2 - Celtic Sea & West of Scotland

1	WG2 members to send to the Secretariat any additional questions they may have for Sarah Gaichas, ACOM Vice-Chair, regarding the ICES advice for TAC 2027.
2	WG2 members to send to the Secretariat any additional input or comments they may have on the ICES Advice for 2027 to support the preparation of the NWWAC Advice on Fishing Opportunities Regulation 2027.
3	Secretariat to keep WG2 updated on the ICES Rebuilding Strategy.
4	Secretariat/WG2 members to follow up on the ICES Stakeholder meeting on cod that should take place at the end of August.
5	Secretariat to provide update to WG2 members on a future ICES workshop of the WKRFRAME.
6	Secretariat to check for updates on the issue of <i>Nephrops</i> in the Porcupine bank for potential



CONSEIL CONSULTATIF POUR
LES EAUX OCCIDENTALES
SEPTENTRIONALES

NORTH WESTERN
WATERS
ADVISORY COUNCIL

CONSEJO CONSULTIVO PARA
LAS AGUAS
NOROCCIDENTALES

	presentation during the next WG2 meeting in October.
7	Secretariat to keep WG2 updated on Spurdog and BIM works, as well as on skates and rays through the dedicated Focus Group
8	Secretariat/WG2 to continue liaising with the Commission on hake, including the query regarding the 2004 Regulation.
9	Secretariat to share more information – once available - on the registration for two ICES workshops taking place in October 2026: 1) Workshop on VME index; 2) Workshop on static gear impact.

Working Group 3 - Channel

1	WG3 members to send to the Secretariat any additional questions they may have for Sarah Gaichas, ACOM Vice-Chair, regarding the ICES advice for TAC 2027.
2	WG3 members to send to the Secretariat any additional input or comments they may have on the ICES Advice for 2027 to support the preparation of the NWWAC Advice on Fishing Opportunities Regulation 2027.
3	Secretariat to keep WG3 updated on the ICES Rebuilding Strategy.
4	Secretariat/WG3 members to follow up on the ICES Stakeholder meeting on cod that should take place at the end of August.
5	Focus Group Sea Bass to follow up on the sea bass allocation tool and examine the possibility of AC input. FG Seabass will stand ready to contribute and support the Commission whenever AC input is sought.
6	Focus Group Scallop to continue monitoring developments regarding the multi-year strategy for king scallops and await receipt of the scientific report.
7	Secretariat to monitor work of MEDAC and SWWAC on the definition of small-scale coastal fisheries.

Horizontal Working Group

1	Members to send queries regarding Sarah Gaichas' presentation to the Secretariat.
2	Members to send queries regarding Hans Gerritsen's presentation to the Secretariat.
3	Members to send queries regarding Svein Sundby's presentation to the Secretariat.
4	Members to send queries regarding Julia Calderwood's presentation to the Secretariat.
5	Secretariat to follow up on the BIM trials and invite BIM to a future WG1 meeting.
6	Secretariat to forward to the NSAC Secretariat the issue of crew composition for discussion in the FG Social Aspects.

5 Update of NWWAC Rules of Procedure - Sara Vandamme, SeaRa

Slides can be found [here](#).

The Chair welcomed Sara Vandamme to the meeting and recalled that this Committee agreed to update the NWWAC Rules of Procedure to make them fit for purpose specifically regarding



the appointment of the Chair. In addition, this AC supported two submissions to the Commission regarding the functioning of the ACs. These are now also being used by DG MARE as part of the development of the guidelines which will be presented next week at the Inter-AC meeting. In order to anticipate this work and to align the NWWAC with the recommendations it made to the Commission, a contractor was sought to independently develop updates to our RoP, and Sara was the winning applicant.

Sara Vandamme clarified that the ongoing governance review is a collaborative effort, supported significantly on the legal and corporate governance side by the general counsel of an international company. The core objective of this initiative is to resolve existing procedural gaps while seamlessly incorporating the latest legal developments and recommendations. Vandamme noted that draft guidelines from the Commission have already been circulated by the Secretariat to all members in the AC's three working languages.

During a recent meeting, the NWWAC management team emphasised that the revised framework must prioritise maximum clarity to safeguard a safe, respectful, and professional working environment for both the secretariat and its members. Crucially, this must be achieved without introducing unnecessary bureaucracy. The review does not start from scratch, as it builds upon previous joint advice submitted in 2025 and earlier this year, alongside direct coordination with DG MARE documentation.

The updated governance framework will be divided into two distinct, interconnected documents. The first is a code of conduct, which has already been shared with the management team to outline explicit behavioural expectations. The second document consists of the updated rules of procedure, which handle the operational processes. S. Vandamme stressed the necessity of clearly and unambiguously defining the respective roles and responsibilities of members, chairs, and the secretariat. She emphasised that determining which specific mechanisms to write into the final procedures will be a collective decision made with the AC, focusing heavily on establishing a robust framework to handle disagreements and resolve internal conflicts transparently.

The original project timeline has shifted slightly due to the Commission rescheduling its meeting with the ACs to 15 July, which she will follow. Despite this change, an initial draft of the updated rules of procedure is expected to be delivered to the management team by early next week. Following the Inter-AC meeting, the management team will reconvene to provide initial feedback, leaving August and early September to finalise the text. The completed framework will be circulated to the General Assembly ahead of the September meetings, where S. Vandamme will present the details before seeking final approval from the Executive Committee.

The Chair highlighted that at the upcoming Inter-AC meeting on 15 July, she will provide general feedback on the draft guidelines and demonstrate that the NWWAC has proactively initiated its



CONSEIL CONSULTATIF POUR
LES EAUX OCCIDENTALES
SEPTENTRIONALES

NORTH WESTERN
WATERS
ADVISORY COUNCIL

CONSEJO CONSULTIVO PARA
LAS AGUAS
NOROCCIDENTALES

own governance work. She plans to present data on their extensive but low-yield membership recruitment drives for Other Interest Groups (OIGs) to show the Commissioner "the other side of the story." Finally, she emphasised the critical need to establish an independent conflict resolution mechanism within this AC to ensure equal protection for the Secretariat, management team, and members, noting that similar issues have troubled other ACs.

D. Rihan suggested that the AC should reconsider how it engages with the European Commission to achieve more meaningful outcomes rather than receiving standard, bureaucratic responses. He noted that while major topics like fishing opportunities require formal advice, less critical requests for clarification might be handled better informally via email, which allows policy officers to reply directly. Because the sheer volume of formal submissions overwhelms the Commission's tracking system across all ACs, he proposed a broader, future discussion on optimizing these communication methods.

The Chair agreed that optimising engagement with the Commission is a valid and ongoing concern for the management team, noting that the NWWAC has already implemented improvements like adding executive summaries to formal advice and offering follow-up phone calls. However, she highlighted the constant challenge of balancing efficiency with transparency, warning that shifting to entirely informal communications risks bypassing the member mandates and consensus-building required of the ACs. While acknowledging that procedural and administrative constraints make further progress difficult under current CFP obligations, she welcomed allocating time at a future Executive Committee meeting for a broader discussion on potential solutions, such as further shortening advice without losing necessary nuances.

From an administrative perspective, the **NWWAC Secretariat** highlighted that while informal meetings with Unit C.5 have increased, written formal advice remains essential under CFP guidelines to maintain tracking transparency and allow proper follow-up. Because small-group informal meetings lack a consensus-backed mandate to speak on behalf of the entire AC, the Secretariat has adapted by inviting C.5 representatives directly into Focus Group meetings. This allows Commission officials to listen to member discussions in real time and note key points, ensuring they are engaged and aware of upcoming positions weeks before the final, formal fishing opportunities advice completes its summer approval process.

D. Rihan clarified that his intention is not to replace formal advice with informal email exchanges or to dilute the written record, but rather to establish a better balance that fosters genuinely meaningful, two-way communication. In his personal view, direct, active engagement, such as having Commission officials present at meetings, is far more valuable than generating standard correspondence that only receives superficial, bureaucratic responses. He concluded that this shift toward deeper, less transactional dialogue must also extend to discussions with Member States' groups to ensure the AC maintains a purposeful and effective role.



The **NWWAC Secretariat** confirmed that the Commission shares the desire for better, quicker engagement, which has already driven direct Unit C.5 involvement in various Focus Groups (Crab, Scallop, Skates and Rays) and upcoming in-person meetings regarding rebuilding plans in September. Additionally, a bilateral handover meeting is scheduled with the incoming head of Unit C.5, Maja Kirchner, who has shown strong reactivity to continuing this close cooperation, which may include a potential stakeholder workshop on scallops in September.

Concluding the discussion **the Chair** suggested that the AC can reduce its administrative burden and better prioritise its workload by scaling back the total number of submissions, noting that individuals requesting advice should take the lead on drafting them. While certain consultations like fishing opportunities remain compulsory, she noted the difficulty of managing multiple consultations and committed to collaborating with other ACs to find a better way forward.

6 NWWAC Work Programme and Budget Year 21 – state of play (Secretariat)

Slides can be found [here](#).

The Secretariat provided an update of the current state of play of the work programme, as well as on the current and expected expenditure for financial year 21. A personalised analysis of expenditure relating to members' reimbursements was presented based on discussions in the last meeting of the General Assembly in October 2025 where members requested the potential inclusion of travel time in the reimbursement. The budgetary assessment is based on historical travel data from Year 20, demonstrating that introducing additional reimbursements to cover travel time would create an extra deficit of up to €15,000, which the current budget cannot accommodate. A suggestion to meet the additional budget burden is to increase membership fees which have essentially remained the same since the inception of the NWWAC.

ACTION: Secretariat to send an email to all ExCom members sharing the financial analysis and asking for agreement on a way forward for the Chair to present at the upcoming GA meeting.

7 AOB

None raised.



8 Summary of actions agreed and decisions adopted by the Chair

The Chair thanked all participants and closed the meeting.

1	Secretariat to send email to members regarding meeting location for July 2027 meetings for final approval of location in October ExCom meeting
2	Members to send any additional queries for F. Donatella and N. Graham to the Secretariat for follow up.
3	Secretariat to include a presentation by DG MARE on the MFF legislation on the agenda for the next meeting of the Horizontal WG in October.
4	Secretariat to send an email to all ExCom members sharing the financial analysis and asking for agreement on a way forward for the Chair to present at the upcoming GA meeting.

Participants

NWWAC members	
Maëlys Bernard	FROM Nord
Emiel Brouckaert	BFPO
Falke De Sager	Rederscentrale
Manu Kelberine	CNPMEM
Loeiza Lancelot	CNPMEM
John Lynch	ISEFPO
Geert Meun	VisNed
Aodh O Domhnaill	IFPO
Alexandra Philippe	EBCD
Irene Prieto	OPPF4
Dominic Rihan	KFO
NWWAC observers	
Bruno Dachicourt	ETF
India Kennedy	Irish Fish Producers Organisation
Franck Le Barzic	OP COBRENORD
Jesus Lourido	PCSA
Corentine Piton	France Peche Durable et Responsable
Jean Marie Robert	Les Pêcheurs de Bretagne
Dominique Thomas	OP CME MMN
Expert & observers	
Fabrizio Donatella	DG MARE
Norman Graham	DG MARE
Julia Rubeck	DG MARE



CONSEIL CONSULTATIF POUR
LES EAUX OCCIDENTALES
SEPTENTRIONALES

NORTH WESTERN
WATERS
ADVISORY COUNCIL

CONSEJO CONSULTIVO PARA
LAS AGUAS
NOROCCIDENTALES

Sara Vandamme	SeaRa
Dirk Van Guyze	Agentschap Landbouw en Zeevisserij
NWWAC Secretariat	
Ilaria Bellomo	Fisheries Strategy & Administration Officer
Mo Mathies	Executive Secretary