



ANNEX 1

North Western Waters Regional Advisory Council

Work Programme

Year 9

October 2013 to September 2014



1. Introduction

The North Western Waters Regional Advisory Council (NWWRAC) was established in accordance with Commission Decision 2005/668/EC on the 22nd of September 2005 as one of the seven Regional Advisory Councils, proposed under Council Decision 2004/585/EC, establishing Regional Advisory Councils under the Common Fisheries Policy.

In its ninth year of operation, which runs from October 2013 to September 2014, the NWWRAC wishes to apply for grant-aid from the EU Commission, in accordance with Council Decision 2004/585/EC, as amended by Council Decision of 2007/409/EC.

2. Objectives of the NWWRAC

The principal aim of the RACs is to bring together European stakeholders, including fishermen, representatives of producer's organisations, environmentalists, recreational anglers, processors, consumers and women's networks, amongst others, to provide evidence-based advice to the EU Commission, Member States and the European Parliament on matters of fisheries management within the geographical limits of its remit (i.e. the community waters of areas Vb, VI and VII).

The proposal, presented by the NWWRAC, aims to continue work to achieve the sustainable exploitation of the fish stocks within the geographical remit of the NWWRAC (ICES sub-areas VI and VII), in compliance with the objectives of the Common Fisheries Policy.

It is also within the scope of the proposal to address the sustainable, biological and economic management of fish stocks in the wider context of the marine biodiversity policy and an integrated maritime policy.

Given the mixed nature of the fisheries within the geographical remit of the NWWRAC, an ecosystem-based approach will provide the foundation for advice, which will contribute to the achievement of good environmental status of the marine environment by 2020 at the latest, as articulated in the Marine Strategy Framework Directive.



General Work Programme: Main Areas of Work

The work programme of the NWWRAC (2013/2014) will address the following issues:

3.1. Reform of the CFP

The NWWRAC will continue to work, both on its own initiative and in coordination with other RACs, on providing advice on implementation of the core aspects of the legislative package of the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP), namely the Basic Framework Regulation on the CFP reform and the EMFF Regulation.

The NWWRAC will continue holding discussions with both the Commission and Member States on their stakeholders' views on three key areas of CFP reform:

1. Regionalisation;
 2. Implementation of landings obligation in mixed fisheries;
 3. Role, composition and functioning of the future Advisory Councils (ACs).
1. Regionalisation: The NWWRAC is committed to providing specific ideas on the interaction of the RACs with other bodies and institutions under a new regionalised (or "decentralised") decision-making framework. The aim is to increase transparency and stakeholders' participation in decision making within the EU fisheries policy.
 2. Landings obligation: The NWWRAC will hold dedicated working groups/focus groups as well as regular communication with the Commission and Member States in order to agree on the elements needed (such as definition of fisheries, areas, métiers, discards targets, *de minimis* rules) for the development of regional discards plans. The NWWRAC will also continue to look at multi-annual fishery management plans, where feasible.
 3. Role, composition and functioning of the ACs: The NWWRAC actively participated in the coordination meetings between the RACs and the Commission held on 28 September 2012 and 1 March 2013. The outcome of these meetings was a written response by the NWWRAC to the Commission's non-paper, addressing fifteen questions related to this matter (November 2012); and a NWWRAC letter addressed to six Member States, MEPs and the Commission, offering assistance on the debate on practical aspects of regional cooperation within the trilogue deliberations hosted by the Irish Presidency of the EU (March 2013).



The NWWRAC will pursue these objectives and will actively seek engagement with Member States on these issues and regionalisation, in this context.

The NWWRAC Secretariat has also coordinated and led the Inter-RAC position paper aimed to clarify and improve the functioning of the RACs within the current CFP. This paper was submitted, following extensive discussions at inter-RAC level, on 15 April 2013, including amongst others, the following topics: drafting of a multi-annual work plan; participation in EU projects and additional sources of funding outside the operational budget; improved access to scientific knowledge and resources (such as training); definition of guidelines and criteria for RAC advice / EC responses.

Building on the work described above, it is intended to continue discussion on this issue during Year 9. In this context, the NWWRAC intends to develop its own position to be presented in future coordination meetings with the Commission and MS during the last quarter of 2013.

3.2. Development and implementation of long-term management plans for fish stocks in North Western Waters

The development and implementation of long-term management plans for mixed demersal fisheries in North Western Waters is one of the main focuses of the NWWRAC's work, and resources have been secured to this end.

During the last three years, there have been a number of Geographical Working Group and technical focus group meetings examining specific fisheries. Several invited scientific experts from ICES, national scientific institutes and members of STECF have provided their views on issues such as the state of the stocks, present uncertainties in assessments and data issues. Many key representatives from national administrations of Member States have also taken part in these meetings resulting in a fruitful and frank dialogue in what can be regarded as a "precedent" or a "test case" of regional cooperation.

The NWWRAC considers it essential to continue working on the following fisheries where substantial progress is hoped to be achieved in Year 9:



3.2.1. Celtic Sea demersal stocks

The NWWRAC has held two Focus Group meetings on this topic (April (Bilbao) and September (Dublin) 2013). The Focus Groups are technical expert groups involving stakeholders from the fishing industry and other interest groups, national authorities and relevant members of the scientific community. The Expert Group is currently being directed by a steering committee to ensure that work continues between meetings. The steering committee is composed of a small group of members of the NWWRAC and scientific experts, which allows an exchange of knowledge within the group on the following: population dynamics; biological (species) and technical (fleets) interactions; exploitation patterns (including effort displacement effects) and economic performance of national fleets. Further Focus Groups are expected to be held in Year 9 and periodical reports of the work carried out at these meetings will be presented to NWWRAC Working Group 2 meetings for information and endorsement.

As a result of this work, the NWWRAC has successfully established an operational framework to develop a multi-annual mixed demersal fisheries management plan (MAMP) for the Celtic Sea (i.e. ICES subdivisions VIIIfg). In Year 8, the NWWRAC updated the terms of reference and agreed a refined set of short and long term biological, economic and social objectives.

In view of staff and resource constraints, the NWWRAC decided in Year 8 that in order to complement the work of the Focus Group, direct or indirect support and participation in external EU-funded projects (e.g. GAP2, MYFISH) was necessary. The NWWRAC has helped to provide suggestions and ideas for work to be outsourced to appropriate technical and scientific experts.

The NWWRAC is currently an associate partner of the GEPETO project (“Atlantic Area Transnational Programme”) and is the coordinator, together with the Marine Institute (Ireland), of the case study on the Celtic Sea. This ensures that no overlapping or duplication of work occurs and that the RAC can further pursue tools such as the fisheries atlas that could not be achieved at its own cost. The final outputs from GEPETO are expected to be presented in the second quarter of 2014¹.

¹ More information about the GEPETO Project can be found at: <http://gepetoproject.eu/>



The NWWRAC has also facilitated discussions between key scientists and DG MARE to elaborate the concept of developing a bio-economic model that serves as a decision support tool for managers to forecast short and medium-term biological and economic impacts and trade-offs associated with changes in fishing patterns.

The Commission launched a study in January 2013 [ref. MARE/2012/22] for scientific support in developing an analytical framework to test management options and examine trade-offs. The NWWRAC is willing to facilitate the collection of the relevant biological (e.g. reference values) and economic data (e.g. value of landings by port and gear type) needed to be analysed, processed and standardised by the body appointed to conduct this work. The NWWRAC would also like to be involved as an observer in any coordination meetings that might be organised during Year 9.

Regarding technical measures linked to future management plans, the NWWRAC has been instrumental in the past in proposing a suite of technical measures to improve the selectivity of fishing gears for those fleets operating in an area of the Celtic Sea (i.e. VIIIfg and part of j) targeting cod, haddock and whiting. The NWWRAC will continue to pursue the reduction of discards in the Celtic Sea (particularly whitefish) in Year 9, and will discuss proposals for those fisheries and/or métiers still presenting high rates of discards.

3.2.2. Evaluation of the cod recovery plan (CRP) (West of Scotland, Irish Sea and Eastern Channel)

a. Short term approach: interim measures

Following the work initiated in Year 7, the NWWRAC submitted, in Year 8, several recommendations to the Commission, the European Parliament and the Member States for a review and evaluation of the cod management plan in force (EC Regulation 1342/2008). These included amendments or changes in the interpretation of a number of articles (i.e. 9, 11, 12, 13 and 17) that would allow for better implementation of the EC Reg. 1342/2008. Some of these proposals were accepted and taken into account by the EP Fisheries Committee and the Commission.

In Year 9, the NWWRAC is committed to regularly convey the views of stakeholders on workable management measures for cod avoidance in the West of Scotland (VIa), the Eastern Channel (VIId) and the Irish Sea (VIIa). The NWWRAC expects to see the result of a formal amendment of Regulation 1342/2008 and its replacement by a new legislative instrument in the near future.

b. Long term approach: towards multi-annual fishery management plans.

Three NWWRAC Focus Group meetings dealing with Cod recovery in the West of Scotland (January 2013) and the Irish Sea (June and September 2013) took place during Year 8. These meetings produced a substantial amount of debate and actions have been identified and agreed for completion in Year 9. All of the Cod Focus Groups will be coordinated with an exchange of information on their findings. They will also revert to their relevant sub-regional Working Groups to present their findings and submit their proposals for endorsement by the NWWRAC Executive Committee.

3.2.2.1. West of Scotland (VIa)

In June 2012, the NWWRAC produced an information paper entitled *“Rebooting fisheries management in the West of Scotland and Irish Sea Demersal Fisheries: Breaking the Cycle of Decline”*, which addressed key management issues in these fisheries. The plan was subsequently updated in December 2012.

In Year 8, the Focus Group met regularly and continued building on previous advice and dialogue with key stakeholders, scientists and economists to progress the development of a management plan for this area. The five key priorities of the focus group are:

1. To align TAC to total catches (i.e. landings + discards);
2. To reduce fishing mortality in a transition period to F_{max} ;
3. To put in place an effective discards reduction (and, where possible, elimination) strategy;
4. To mitigate data deficiencies in those areas that are the responsibility of the fishing industry and/or Member States (e.g. reconstruct a commercial tuning fleet(s) for the assessment);
5. To improve transparency and compliance of CFP rules by identifying the elements necessary for a fully documented fishery.



In Year 9, the NWWRAC will seek to table a proposal for a management plan, including implementing measures, to achieve the objectives set out for the West of Scotland fisheries.

However, it must be noted that this will only be possible if the current scientific uncertainties on reference values (i.e. biomass and fishing mortality) are solved and ICES is able to provide catch option tables and a reliable estimation of discards.

3.2.2.2. Irish Sea (VIIa)

The Irish Sea Focus Group members have agreed a four point plan that will serve as a guide for the development of a mixed fisheries plan for Irish Sea demersal fisheries²:

1. Carry out the single stock assessments (non-accounted mortality being the main issue);
2. Look at all the technical interactions and map the area;
3. Identify the priority actions and fix the objectives;
4. Take account of economic and social aspects.

Representatives from UK and Irish administrations have shown an interest in this initiative and may be willing to contribute funding under their national EFF programmes if a project proposal was submitted by the NWWRAC. The UK is currently reviewing and rethinking fisheries-science partnership projects for cod recovery so this is good timing. If awarded, a project coordinator would be appointed by, and work for, the NWWRAC. Belgium has also offered to collaborate with the NWWRAC in extending the scope of its national fisheries/science partnership in order to improve knowledge of VIIa Sole.

² Discussion Paper: *“Developing a Management Plan for Irish Sea Mixed Demersal Fisheries”*
http://www.nwwrac.org/admin/publication/upload/NWWRAC_DISCUSSION_PAPER_IRISH_SEA_FISH_ERIES_June2013_EN.pdf



3.2.2.3. Eastern Channel (VIId)

The NWWRAC is awaiting a reply from the Commission/STECF regarding biological and management considerations for VIId Cod within a mixed fisheries plan and uncertainties regarding this stock in terms of effort and management measures.

3.2.3. Northern Hake, Anglerfish and Megrin VI-VII

In April 2013, the NWWRAC convened a Focus Group to discuss: recent developments in ICES assessments, new trends in the state of the stocks and the effects in management measures on hake, anglerfish and megrim fisheries. Discussion led to collaboration between the NWWRAC and ICES and national scientists on data deficiencies and industry-led (technical) measures to improve management and conservation of these stocks.

In Year 9, the NWWRAC has no plans to develop a specific management plan for these species but will discuss management options with all stakeholders as a constituent part of the proceedings of this Focus Group.

Given their common interest in these stocks, members of the South Western Waters RAC may be invited, as observers, to any future technical or Focus Group meetings. Similarly, the NWWRAC will observe meetings and follow the progress of discussions on the development of a methodology and procedure for the adoption of management measures in relation to the southern hake stock.



3.2.4. Other stocks

The NWWRAC will also carry out extensive discussions and undertake some exploratory work, either at the request of the Commission or under its own initiative, on future management measures for the following stocks:

Nephrops (VII)

The December Council accepted the request made by the NWWRAC via the Commission in December 2012 to reduce the time of the seasonal closure of the nephrops fishery on the Porcupine Bank to 1 month (July).

The Commission and ICES also accepted the NWWRAC's proposal to submit ICES advice in autumn (September/October) to allow for incorporation of the result of the summer campaigns on stock abundance carried out by IEO (Spain) and Marine Institute (Ireland).

The NWWRAC is planning to organise a Focus Group on this subject in November 2013, with the view to drafting new advice in time for consideration at the December Council. The advice will be based on the outcomes of the report of the last ICES Benchmark Workshop (WKNEP – February 2013) and will take note of the ICES advice expected to be released in early November.

The NWWRAC remains aware that the Commission may launch a proposal on the management of Nephrops stocks, by area or functional unit, in 2014.

West of Scotland Haddock (VIa)

The NWWRAC has worked closely with ICES to develop a proposal for the implementation of a long-term management plan for VIa haddock, as requested by the Commission. This proposal is pending adoption by EU legislators, until a decision on the extent of co-decision powers is made. Further work might be carried out, subject to the decision of the EU institutions and the outcomes of the socio-economic impact assessment.

In the meantime, the NWWRAC will work on identifying interim technical measures to protect strong, incoming year classes and future recruitment, in order to allow the stock to rebuild towards MSY levels.

Deep-water species (VI and VII)

In Year 8, the NWWRAC put considerable efforts into this area of work and coordinated two workshops, together with the Long Distance RAC, the South Western Waters RAC and the North Sea RAC. The workshops aimed to achieve a common understanding of the scientific issues, and to look for common areas of agreement between fishing industry and NGO views in response to the Commission's proposal of Regulation on review of the access regime and specific conditions to fishing for deep-sea stocks in the North East Atlantic, repealing Council Regulation No 2347/2002.

The workshops took place in November 2012 (Paris) and May 2013 (Edinburgh) and high profile speakers were invited from DG MARE, MEPs, EU Institutions such as EESC, FAO, RFMOs, international scientific organisations, and consultancy companies. Meeting reports and presentations are available for consultation on the NWWRAC website.

The main output of these meetings was the production of a common position paper agreed by the four RACs (i.e. "*Discussion paper on the state of debate and views on management measures and access regime for Deep Sea species*"³). This paper was submitted to the EP-PECH and the Council on 28 February 2013.

In accordance with the direction of the Executive Committee, the NWWRAC has completed work on this highly controversial topic, where views from fishing industry and other groups of interest are very different.

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http://www.nwwrac.org/admin/publication/upload/JOINT_RAC_Discussion_Paper_Deepsea_Fisheries_15Feb2013_EN.pdf

The NWWRAC has, therefore, not envisaged pursuing any further action on deep-water species in Year 9 but will be kept regularly informed by the members of the NWWRAC Working Groups with interests in this area.

Skates and Rays / Sharks (ICES Subdivisions VI and VII)

Skates and Rays

The NWWRAC held detailed discussions on a proposal for a management plan for skates and rays, submitted by the Irish fishing industry. After several revisions, however, agreement could not be reached on a compromise text and the proposal was subsequently withdrawn.

However, at the last Focus Group on this subject (September 2012), the NWWRAC agreed to submit a proposal in order to establish a voluntary closure of a “hotspot” in the Irish Sea, as indicated in a scientific paper, in order to protect skate and ray spawning aggregations. This was submitted in December 2012. In September 2013, the NWWRAC subsequently submitted a request for advice to ICES, via the Commission, for an evaluation of the effectiveness of this closure, before the end of 2013.

For Year 9, the NWWRAC may address this topic at Working Group level or consider the possibility of holding a specific Focus Group on the issue.

Sharks

The NWWRAC is interested in improving knowledge in relation to the biology and stock status of elasmobranchs in areas VI and VII. A recent request for advice to ICES has been submitted to consider the possibility of allowing the landing of unintended by-catches and the assessment of alternative management measures to the present zero TAC regimes (e.g. maximum landing size, closed areas) in order to allow a better understanding of spatial and temporal aggregations of spurdog and porbeagle stocks to be achieved.



More clarification on the scientific surveys and pilot projects (including fisheries-science partnerships) carried out at Member State level will be sought for a sustainable management of the main commercial stocks.

The following is ongoing work that will be continued in Year 9:

Non-quota species

The NWWRAC will follow recent developments from the Commission, Member States, ICES WGNEW and Benchmark Workshops regarding the potential adoption of management measures for seabass and other non-quota species such as pollock and red mullet.

In particular, the NWWRAC will look at the ongoing discussions at the Management Committee for Fisheries to introduce either a TAC or alternative management measures for seabass in response to decreasing trends in the stock. The NWWRAC has already received an invitation from some Member States to provide comments on their proposals and, during Year 9, will look at the possibility of setting up a dedicated Focus Group, with the view of developing NWWRAC advice.

The NWWRAC is also in regular communication with coordinators of the EU project ACRUNET, whose goal is to achieve a rational and sustainable management of European brown crab stocks, from a biological (conservation), social (employment) and economic (marketing) point of view. Its coordinators will provide regular updates of the project work, both to the NWWRAC Secretariat and at the NWWRAC Working Group meetings, and will ask for feedback on its proposal and consultations.



In relation to Scallops in the Channel, the fishing industry representatives of the NWWRAC will keep Working Group 3 informed of the outcomes of negotiations in the series of multilateral meetings between UK-FR-IE for a shared approach to scallops management in the Channel, including negotiations on seasonal closed areas and effort (i.e. kilowatt days). The NWWRAC will follow developments on this issue in case there is a need to provide an opinion or advice regarding this fishery.

3.3. Improving the quality of scientific and economic data; and Fishing Opportunities for 2014

3.3.1. Data limited stocks – collaborative work ICES-NWWRAC

In Year 9, the NWWRAC will continue its collaboration with ICES and Member States to identify measures to address data deficiencies and improve the scientific assessments for key demersal stocks categorised by ICES as “data limited stocks”. An annual report on work progress made by the NWWRAC data coordinators is planned to be submitted to ICES ACOM before the end of 2013 in order to maintain a smooth dialogue and collaboration between NWWRAC and ICES data coordinators.

The NWWRAC deepened the mutual understanding with ICES ACOM on this initiative at the Annual Meeting between ICES and the RACs (MIRAC/WKDDRAC3) held in January 2013. It was agreed that a collaborative approach should be based on an increased involvement and continuous participation of RAC representatives in ICES data compilation meetings and benchmark workshops (e.g. WKROUND, WKFLAT, WKCELT...). The designated NWWRAC data coordinators are responsible for following up on this work and reporting to the members at their respective geographical NWWRAC Working Group meetings. It is worth noting that the two main tasks of the NWWRAC data coordinators are to assess the quality of existing national and European data, and to coordinate the provision of reliable and valid data from the fishing industry that can be input into scientific assessments.



The ICES multispecies or mixed fisheries approach to fisheries management in waters to the West of Scotland, the Irish Sea and the Celtic Sea and fully documented fisheries, will also be closely followed by the NWWRAC in Year 9.

3.3.2. Fishing Opportunities (“TACs and quotas”) for EU fish stocks

As in previous years, a response to the EC Communication on Fishing Opportunities for 2014 is expected to be issued in the first quarter of Year 9 (i.e. October-December 2013).

This advice will provide NWWRAC opinion on various aspects such as the review of the state of the stocks, application of MSY, principles for setting TACs and related management measures (e.g. effort regime).

The NWWRAC advice on this topic will be submitted in due time to inform the discussions leading to the final adoption of the Regulation on Fishing Opportunities for species in Atlantic waters by the Council, in December 2013.

In common with previous years, a number of specific requests might also be submitted prior to the December Council for some stocks in light of the latest scientific advice; for example:

- Technical measures for Nephrops in FU16 (seasonal closure or sub-TAC) or skates, rays and sharks in the Irish Sea;
- In-year reviews of the TAC for some species. In the past, this has been the case for Celtic Sea cod (2011) and Northern Hake (September 2013).

4. Marine Protected Areas and Marine Spatial Planning

The NWWRAC will continue to be involved in the consultation process for the designation and management of Vulnerable Marine Ecosystems, Natura 2000, OSPAR and national (MCZ, etc.) marine offshore sites where fishing activity by EU vessels takes place in Western Waters.



The NWWRAC will also assist, where required, in the development of management measures for different marine sites in North Western waters that are to be adopted under both national and Community legislation.

Particular attention will be given to the several ongoing consultations being carried out by JNCC and Natural England in the UK (e.g. Scottish MPA and UK MCZs).

If appropriate, the NWWRAC might consider re-convening the Horizontal Working Group on Marine Spatial Planning, which was successfully led by environmental NGO representatives of the NWWRAC in the past and included a wide representation of experts, including those from appropriate, EU projects (e.g. MEFEPO, MAIA, and CHARM III in 2009/2010).

The NWWRAC has worked, and will continue to work to overcome difficulties concerning the exchange of information with national institutes. The NWWRAC will work with appointed officers, from designated agencies of Member States and the Commission, in the following manner:

- Participate in national debates and occasional stakeholders' forums;
- Invite relevant experts from national agencies to communicate current status reports and present timetables for consultations, where relevant;
- Circulate newsletters, maps and questionnaires provided by consultants to stakeholders and provide feedback.

5. Technical Conservation Measures and Discards Policy

Since its creation, the NWWRAC has dedicated a considerable amount of time and effort addressing the critical areas of Technical Conservation Measures and the development of policy regarding the escapement of juvenile fish and the progressive reduction, towards the elimination (where possible), of discards.

Given the importance of these issues, the NWWRAC will continue to prioritise work in these areas and provide advice and opinion to the European Commission and Member States.



5.1. Technical Conservation Measures (TCMs)

The NWWRAC is committed to addressing technical measures both for specific stocks and within the scope of multiannual management plans.

In Year 9, the NWWRAC is looking forward to providing the Commission with timely, professional opinion to forthcoming consultation papers in relation to the review of the EC Reg. 850/1998 (henceforth, “*TCM Framework Regulation*”) and its impact on fleets operating in North Western Waters. Clarification will also be sought regarding the extension and implementation of interim rules prior to the adoption of a new TCM framework regulation.

The NWWRAC will remain vigilant of the decision-making, timetable and procedure involved in the new Commission approach on TCMs in line with CFP reform and the landing obligation by area and species.

Given the complexity of the issues involved as well as the regional specificities of each fishery, the NWWRAC will require a reasonable period for consultation (i.e. at least two calendar months) from the Commission. It is also essential that proposed measures for consultation are made available, by the Commission, in all the working languages of the RAC, in order that the membership may adequately prepare their professional opinion.

5.2. Landings Obligation

Following the agreement reached by the EP and the Council on the core elements of the Basic Regulation on CFP Reform, the NWWRAC has already begun discussions on the extent and calendar for implementation of the landings obligation in north western waters (2016-2019). The NWWRAC has set up a dedicated Horizontal Working Group that held its first meeting in September 2013 to analyse all NWWRAC fisheries and identify specific problems with discards and where they occurred.

In Year 9, the NWWRAC will regularly communicate with the Commission to achieve a common understanding of the species and métiers that will define each of the fisheries and the approach to be followed. The NWWRAC is committed to providing feedback to the Commission on a definition of the fisheries, the operating fleets (gears, spatial and temporal location) and the target and by-catch species.



The terms of reference for this work by the NWWRAC will be:

- Audit of NWWRAC fisheries;
- Engagement and collaboration with concerned Member States;
- Identification of practical problems;
- Collection of data on survival rates;
- Adoption of appropriate selectivity measures;
- Funding mechanisms regarding TCMs - RACs mentioned specifically in article 15.

It must be noted that any preliminary proposals coming from the RACs should be subsequently discussed in a regional forum lead by concerned coastal Member States in line with the new regionalised approach.

6. Control and compliance

The NWWRAC will continue to follow the operational activities of the European Fisheries Control Agency (EFCA) in Areas VI and VII and will participate in Advisory Boards and other fora (e.g. Follow up Seminar on Control and Compliance, Seminar on Risk Assessments) where invited. The NWWRAC will be particularly interested in the outcomes of the multispecies Joint Deployment Plan that has been set for Pelagic Species in Western Waters. The NWWRAC will also collaborate in the development of Regional Control Areas, and may decide to set up a joint workshop with the EFCA to explore further work in this area.

7. Other topics of interest

The Executive Committee of the NWWRAC will instruct working groups to address specific topics, as considered necessary and appropriate, throughout the course of the year and dependent on the availability of existing resources and work priorities.

8. Working procedures

The NWWRAC will continue to refine its working procedures to ensure efficient and effective work practices.



The NWWRAC will work closely with the industry, NGO representatives, the Commission, Member States, Scientists and other RACs to develop appropriate work programmes to progress issues of common and specific concern.

8.1. Timetable

Appendix I details the NWWRAC meetings timetable for Year 9.

8.2. Operational Structure: meeting types and frequency

The largest budgetary expenditure incurred by the NWWRAC is associated with meetings. The NWWRAC is often liable for costs associated with meeting room hire, interpretation services and technical equipment, in addition to the travel and accommodation costs of members and experts attending NWWRAC meetings. On some occasions, public or private sponsorship may offer to cover part or all of these expenses as contributions-in-kind, which is duly reflected in the NWWRAC accounts.

In order to achieve the objectives of the work programme, the operational hierarchy of the NWWRAC is organised in the following three-tier structure:

8.2.1. Executive Committee (ExCom)

All decisions relating to the NWWRAC are made by an Executive Committee (ExCom) of up to 24 members. Currently, there are 22 members on the Executive Committee and two vacant seats to be filled by “other interest groups”.

Executive Committee meetings are held at least three times a year. These meetings normally address high level policy issues, debate the recommendations of Working Groups and reach consensus in the form of RAC advice and opinion.

Each member of the Executive Committee (plus the Chairman of each Working Group presenting the WG recommendations to the Ex.Com.) is reimbursed for attending ExCom meetings and full interpretation is provided in the three working languages of the NWWRAC (i.e. English, French and Spanish).



Representatives of the European Commission, the European Parliament, ACFA and Member States, as well as relevant experts or presenters from EU projects or scientific institutes, are also formally invited to attend Executive Committee meetings.

8.2.2. Working Groups (WGs)

Working Group meetings are held 2 to 3 times a year (budget depending) and are the main drivers of the NWWRAC. All issues necessary for debate are tabled at these meetings. A number of experts, as well as Commission members, are often invited to attend and make presentations at these meetings. There are currently 4 Working Groups in the NWWRAC, which are geographically based.

Additional, Horizontal, Working Groups are also convened, as required, to discuss issues, which are of common interest to all NWWRAC members (e.g. Technical Measures and Discards, CFP Reform or Marine Spatial Planning). Working Group meetings are normally held over a period of 1-2 days.

Membership of Working Groups varies from 25 to 40 participants depending on the subject matter and full interpretation is provided as required (i.e. English, French and Spanish).

8.2.3. Focus Groups and Workshops

Focus Group meetings and Workshops are specialist meetings, which are convened, as required, when issues of urgent concern require an immediate and very technical response from the NWWRAC.

Focus groups are formed from within the general membership and generally consist of a small group of members (5-15) with specific professional experience and expertise.



Such meetings have a specific function and require a particular outcome, such as the drafting of response papers (e.g. review of management measures for Nephrops in Porcupine), the development of management plans with the participation or opinion of relevant experts (e.g. Celtic Sea mixed demersal fisheries, Irish Sea) or to form a NWWRAC opinion, by consensus, where there are diverging positions within a working group (e.g. Deep water species, Sharks, Skates and Rays).

In order to incorporate the flexibility required to accommodate these meetings, the NWWRAC has budgeted for 5 Focus Group or Workshop meetings, with a maximum of 8 participants, in Year 9.

Depending on budgetary availability and on available slots of time at Working Group meetings, additional meetings may be held, if required. Interpretation services for these meetings are provided if required and contributions-in-kind are sought from Member States to minimise costs and maximise efficiency.

9. Improved Communications and Transparency

The NWWRAC website is the main communication tool between the NWWRAC Secretariat and the NWWRAC members, European Commission, Member States, Scientific observers and the general public. The website contains up-to-date information on membership, rules of procedure, meetings, publications, consultation papers, advices and recommendations, including all relevant replies received by the Commission and Member States. It also provides various administrative forms.

While both the Secretariat and the website users are reasonably satisfied with the functioning of the current website in terms of content and organisation of information, the website was last modified in 2007 and has reached a stage that requires it to be upgraded for enhanced web security and maintenance (e.g. hosting, backups, firewalls against third party attacks). A more reliable administrators' site ("back office") and a more visually appealing design ("front end") is also thought to be necessary as well as some additional functionalities.

As such, and following approval from the Executive Committee members in July 2013, the Secretariat allocated dedicated funding to launch a call for tender for this purpose. The tender was launched on 31 July and the contract was awarded on 6 September. Work on the website is currently underway.

The new NWWRAC website is expected to be live before the end of 2013. The NWWRAC envisages to make this website fully operational and familiar to all users. It will be built with a responsive 3-in-1 design for PCs, smartphones and tablet devices so that members can use the website to its full extent (e.g. when they are away from the office or between meetings). It will also be designed to accommodate a video element which will allow more informative communication of NWWRAC activities to be achieved.

The NWWRAC Communications Strategy is designed to increase public and professional awareness of both RAC work (e.g. meetings, initiatives and participation in projects) as well as the outputs (e.g. opinions and advice) produced.

In Year 9, the NWWRAC will make efforts to improve transparency and increase the level of communication with all stakeholders through two key actions: the monthly e-newsletters and regular press releases, which will be posted in the Press section of the NWWRAC website.

10. Membership

Work to increase the membership of the NWWRAC, initiated by the Secretariat in Year 7 and continued in Year 8 has proved successful. A number of organisations both from fishing industry and other groups of interest have contacted the NWWRAC Secretariat requesting information to join the NWWRAC. As a result, two new organisations (CEPESCA –Spanish fishing industry federation and Client Earth –NGO based in London) have already been accepted for Year 9 membership by Member States and the Executive Committee.

The important role of NGOs and other interest groups within the functioning of the NWWRAC is also recognised. Although logistic and financial difficulties are common to stakeholders within this group, the Secretariat will continue to work together with members to make contact with NGOs and other interest groups who may wish to join as new members. The Secretariat will actively encourage new membership in this category and will specifically strive to fill the two vacant seats on the Executive Committee for these groups.



Appendix I

The Proposed schedule of meetings to achieve the objectives of the NWWRAC work programme in Year 9 (1st of October 2013 to the 30th of September 2014)

Please note that this schedule is subject to formal adoption at the General Assembly meeting of the NWWRAC, to be held in Dublin on the 18th September 2013.

There is an on-going discussion aimed at reviewing the functioning of the sub-regional (area based) Working Groups with the aim of making them more efficient and improving their outputs, i.e. the production of evidence based advice. As a result of this discussion, and depending on the outcomes, changes may occur in the frequency and type of meetings held during the course of Year 9 to place an increased emphasis on generating output on specific key topics at horizontal and sub-regional (i.e. Working Group) level.

The Focus Groups listed below, are based on current knowledge. All dates and topics for discussion are subject to change, and will be directed by the requirements of the Commission and proposals coming from NWWRAC members.

In summary, the information presented below is indicative of NWWRAC operations in Year 9.

SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS (YEAR 9)

NORTH WESTERN WATERS REGIONAL ADVISORY COUNCIL					
Indicative Schedule of meetings in Year 9 (01 October 2013 – 30 September 2014)					
Meeting Type	Proposed dates/duration	Venue	Work Priorities		
Coordination Meeting between DG MARE and the RACs / EC Workshop on CFP reform	2 days 24-25 October 2013	Brussels	Regionalisation of EU decision making	Role, composition and functioning of new ACs	Implementation of landings obligation / discards ban
Working Groups, Executive Committee and Focus Groups on Nephrops and Discards	2 days 7-8 November 2013	Paris	<i>Relevant topics based on outstanding actions.</i>	CFP Reform: Governance / Discards Ban / TCMs	Data Limited Stocks Participation in EU Projects
<i>Focus Group on Regionalisation / Non-quota Species / Skates, Rays and Sharks</i>	<i>1 day November or December 2013</i>	<i>Tbc (France/UK?)</i>	<i>Role of Advisory Councils in CFP</i>	<i>Sea bass pollock, red mullet, brown crab</i>	<i>Management measures for Skates and Rays</i>
Annual Meeting ICES-RACs (MIRAC)	2 days January 2014	Copenhagen?	Review of Work progress of ICES-RACs and work priorities for new year	Data limited stocks: collaboration scientists-stakeholders	Multispecies / mixed fisheries advice; Links to management / discards plans

NORTH WESTERN WATERS REGIONAL ADVISORY COUNCIL

Indicative Schedule of meetings in Year 9 (01 October 2013 – 30 September 2014)

Meeting Type	Proposed dates/duration	Venue	Work Priorities		
Working Groups, Executive Committee and Focus Groups	2 days March or April 2014	<i>Spain tbc (Madrid / Vigo)</i>	<i>Relevant topics based on outstanding actions.</i>	CFP Reform: Governance / Discards Ban / TCMs	Development of mixed fisheries management plans for VIa, VIIfg and VIIa
<i>Focus Group on Marine Spatial Planning</i>	<i>Half a Day Q2 2014</i>	<i>TBC</i>	<i>Implementation of MSFD to fisheries - CFP</i>	<i>Current consultations on designation-management of marine sites in VI-VII</i>	<i>Bottom-up initiatives to improve conservation of habitats/stocks</i>
Working / Focus Groups Executive Committee	3 days 2-4 July 2014	Edinburgh	Presentation of ICES Advice 2014 and Fishing Opportunities for 2015	Election procedures for NWWRAC positions	Development of mixed fisheries management plans for VIa, VIIfg and VIIa
General Assembly and Executive Committee	1-2 days 17-18 September 2014	Dublin	Election of NWWRAC Positions	Ratify Year 9 accounts and budget for Y10	Report from the Chairman on Y9 / Work Plan Y10

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