

BGMCF - Meeting 23

Date: 21/05/2020

Venue: Remote Online Meeting, Microsoft Teams, hosted by BIM

In attendance: Mr Donal Maguire – Chairman of the BGMCF
Ms Joanne Gaffney – Secretariat
Dr Gary McCoy – Secretariat
Mr Michael Murphy – Secretariat
Ms Bridget Collins – DAFM
Mr Nicholas Hoffman – DAFM
Ms Roni Hawe – DAFM
Mr Brian McSweeney – DAFM
Mr Eamon Aylward – DAFM
Mr Gavin Keirsc – SFPA
Mr John McGuigan – DAERA
Mr John Kane – DAERA
Dr Mathew Service – AFBI
Ms Adele Boyd – AFBI
Dr Oliver Tully – MI
Ms Teresa Morrissey – IFA
Mr Michael Havelin – Industry Rep – Foyle
Mr William Dingemane – Industry Rep Wexford/Waterford
Mr George Golden – Industry Rep Carlingford/Dundrum

Apologies: Mr Pascal Hayes – DAFM
Mr. Nicolas Chopin – BIM
Mr Michael O’Driscoll – Vessel owner and operators association
Mr Arthur McCarthy – Industry Rep Castlemaine/Shannon/Cork
Mr. Raymond Dougal – Industry Rep Belfast/ Larne
Mr Barry Fox – Loughs Agency

Donal Maguire (DM) welcomed all to the meeting.

1. Minutes of the Last Meeting

The minutes of the last meeting from the 5th June 2019 were accepted as presented.

2. Update on the outcomes of the DAFM management review and the planned next steps

Eamon Aylward (EA) informed the meeting that the final draft version of the Summary of Public Consultation has not been published yet. Once the Summary of Public Consultation is ready for publishing, it will be posted onto the Fishing Net website (<http://www.fishingnet.ie/>) for the industry/DAERA to review.

EA provided further information regarding the Summary of Public Consultation Review. EA suggested that a consultation meeting with Industry could be arranged in late summer to provide more details of the published review.

Summary of Public Consultation Submission:

79 submissions reviewed

- 42% Bottom grown mussel operator
- 24% Member of general public
- 14% Fisherman
- 1% Representative of environmental NGO
- 1% Representative of fishermen association
- 1% Political Representative
- 1% Representative of a trade association
- 11% Other
- 4% No Responses

Geographic breakdown

- 14% South West (Cork, Kerry, Limerick)
- 4% West (Galway, Clare)
- 16% North West (Mayo, Sligo)
- 33% North (Donegal)
- 4% North East (Louth, Meath, Dublin)
- 20% South East (Wicklow, Wexford, Waterford)
- 3% Other (Inland)
- 6% Northern Ireland

A review group, consisting of the SFPA, BIM, MI and DAFM met and considered the draft report. There is no proposal to change the management of the fishery in 2020 at this time. There is a plan to collect post-fishing data from the seed beds to inform any new management measures. A late summer forum meeting is planned to facilitate further discussion on this matter.

EA asked Oliver Tully (OT) from the Marine Institute (MI) to brief the meeting on current and future mussel seed survey work.

OT discussed the review of the current survey work, the sustainability of the fishery and the mussel stocks in the Irish Sea. OT highlighted that there is limited information on the

extent of these mussel stocks. The MSC certification of the BGM Industry is based on 100% Harvest. OT discussed the perception of temporary seed bed features.

OT proposed a spring post-harvest survey assessment, to determine the potential impacts of the Autumn harvest and provide more scientific data on the seed bed's. This would provide information on the outtake of mussel seed with an immediate post survey, to match what was taken/harvested with what is left behind. Also, to determine if there are any residual mussel beds over wintering, all of which would provide information on the impacts of the Autumn harvest.

OT said this all depends on the timings of surveys and that the idea of a post survey is to provide information on the sustainability of the fishery, it will help inform the MSC process as well as provide important data for the Industry.

DM provided a final Summary of Public Consultation and highlighted that there are no proposed changes to the management of the fishery in 2020 at this time.

George Golden (GG) voiced his concern that when this Summary of Public Consultation is published in the summer is the information immediately set as the law of the land without any further consultation from the Industry?

DM assured GG that this will not be the case and that there will be more discussions needed on the soon to be published public document.

3. New administrative arrangements for the supporting the BGMCF

DM updated the forum that Joanne Gaffney (JG) has taken up a new role as Aquaculture Technical Manager within BIM. Dr. Gary McCoy (GM) is now taking over responsibility as Secretariat from JG and that to get in touch with GM in the future regarding MSC certification or other BGMCF matters.

DM announced that he will be retiring from BIM and the new chair to take over the forum will be the incoming Director of Seafood Technical Services Business Unit (STSBU) within BIM.

DM also mention the impacts of Brexit on the Aquaculture Initiative EEIG, which needs two members from two different EU states if it is to continue operating. DM assured the forum that BIM would continue to provide Secretariat support to the BGMCF, if the DAFM and DAERA judge it to be appropriate.

4. Seed Fishery 2019

Gavin Keirsc (GK) of the SFPA disseminated the seed fishery final figures for 2019.

All island figure for seed fished 2019:

10,345T net, 12,363T gross.

Roi registered vessels only: 9027T net.

By destination, net:

Belfast Lough	2318
Carlingford	1820
Carlingford & Belfast	250
Carlingford Lough	395
Castlemaine Harbour	560
Cromane	219
ROI?	8
Wexford	4755
(blank)	20
Grand Total	10345

5. Seed Fishery 2020

Tides

DM proposed Wednesday 9th September 2020 as the first tide to open the mussel seed fishery. This is the first good slack neap tide of 6.4 m.

Surveying

DM mentioned that there will only be an Autumn fishery and there is no Spring Fishery proposed for 2020.

Mathew Service (MS) outlined the AFBI planned survey work over the next few months.

AFBI plan to carry out their survey work in late July/early August. This will include acoustic and camera surveys on the Queen of Ulster vessel. Stock assessments by dredge surveys of the Autumn fishery may be possible by chartering local fishery vessels.

Adele Boyd has posted previous year's survey reports on the DEARA website. It was mentioned that reports have also been collated regarding post-harvest surveys by DAERA.

It was also noted that they do not allow a 100% removal of mussel seed beds.

OT asked if he could have access to the mentioned post survey reports. MS said he would send OT this information and mentioned the source online were they could be downloaded.

DM said that the T-Burke II is ready for survey work.

JG said that survey work in the Irish Sea is planned to start on the last week of June and this will be undertaken by Nicolas Chopin as in previous years. This survey work will focus on mission critical survey work, Invasive species screening on the seabed's and BIM will provide these results in a timely manner to the Industry.

6. Potential opening dates for the seed mussel fishery 2020

GG on behalf of the Industry members saw no problems with the seed fishery opening on Wednesday 9th September 2020. However, he did raise concerns of still having the option of opening the seed fishery earlier if there was excessive starfish observed on the seed beds prior to the proposed date.

DM said that the usual Force Majeure arrangements were still in place and the rules still apply for the Irish Sea (IE and NI) which allows for this provision, allowing fishing to take place in advance of the defined fishing season in the case where an identified seed bed is at risk of being lost to predation.

7. MSC Certification

Gary McCoy (GM) provided an update on MSC certification.

As a consequence of the MSC pandemic derogation, surveillance timelines have been shifted back 6 months. This means the second surveillance, which was originally scheduled for Nov/Dec 2020 is now due in June/July 2021. This will allow this surveillance to align with that of the Ireland rope grown mussel fishery (for which the client would like to maintain the existing timeline) as there is significant overlap in the stakeholders of both fisheries.

This alignment with both the RGM and BGM will mean cost and time saving for the Industry and relevant Agency's.

DM emphasized the importance of MSC particularly for opening up the markets again quickly when trading picks up again after Covid-19 restrictions are lifted.

8. Health and Safety check in with Industry

DM asked Industry members how Covid-19 was impacting on the Industry and has the Industry worked out their own arrangements to mitigate against the risks and comply with the Government advice.

William Dingemanse (WD) said that there was not much change in the protocol on board vessels due to existing organic labels and hand washing and visitor protocols which align with Covid-19 measures. WD saw no problems or issues with the fishery in that regard.

9. AOB

DM asked the group if there was any other business that they would like to discuss with the forum.

GG thanked DM and JG for all they have done for the BGMCF forum and for the Industry over the years. GG wished DM a happy retirement and congratulated JG on her new position as Aquaculture Technical Manager within BIM.

Roni Hawe (RH) seconded this and thanked DM for his help and contribution to the Aquaculture Industry.

DM acknowledged these responses and thanked them for their kind remarks.

No other items were raised.

DM thanked all for attending and then closed the meeting.