

## **BGMCF - Meeting No.25**

**Date:** 12/05/2022

**Venue:** BIM, Dún Laoghaire.

**In attendance:** Mr Rory Campbell – Chairman of the BGMCF (BIM)  
Ms Joanne Gaffney – BIM  
Mr Martin Flanigan – Secretariat (BIM)  
Mr Nicolas Chopin – BIM  
Ms Patricia Daly - BIM  
Ms Carol Collins – DAFM  
Ms Sinéad McSherry – DAFM  
Ms Geraldine O’Donovan– DAFM  
Mr Gavin Keirse – SFPA  
Mr John McGuigan – DAERA  
Mr John Kane – DAERA  
Mr Jim Watts – DAERA  
Mr Michael Havelin – Industry Rep – Foyle  
Mr Arthur McCarthy – Industry Rep Castlemaine/Shannon/Cork  
Mr George Golden – Industry Rep Carlingford/Dundrum

**Online** Ms Adele Boyd – AFBI

**Apologies:** Ms Teresa Morrissey – IFA  
Mr Raymond Dougal – Industry Rep Belfast Lough.  
Mr William Dingemane - Industry Rep Wexford / Waterford

Meeting started 13:30 hr

### **1. Welcome**

Rory Campbell (RC) welcomed all the attendees to the meeting.

### **2. Minutes of the Last Meeting**

The minutes of the previous BGMCF meeting (6<sup>th</sup> May 2021) were reviewed and accepted.

### **3. Note on Belfast Lough Election Result (Sept. 2021)**

Martin Flanigan (MF) outlined the re-election process undertaken in October 2020. One alternative nomination was received for Belfast Lough area. An election process as outlined in the Rising Tide report was completed. Raymond Dougal was re-elected as the Industry Representative in September 2021.

### **4. Access Arrangements Post Brexit**

Carol Collins (CC) informed the group that on application, Irish vessels have access to 0-6 nm NI waters in 2022. Irish vessels applications are made through DAFM and licences are issued by the UK Single Issuing Authority (UKSIA). To date, 50% of Irish vessels involved in the 2021 fishery have applied and been granted 2022 licences by the UKSIA. The application takes 2-3 weeks to process, and licences can still be applied for. Details of the application process will issue with the EOI form.

Under the Sea Fisheries (Amendment) Act 2019, vessels owned and operated in NI have access to fishing in 0-6nm zone in Coastal waters in Ireland, once authorised to do so by the EU Commission.

**Action 1:** DAFM to update information and revert to the forum.

#### 5. Seed Figures for 2021

Gavin Keirse (GK) provided the forum with the seed data for 2021. Total Fished 11,524T(Gross), 9,270T (Net). Overall this is broadly similar, to the 2020 figures.

On a net, per bay basis as follows:

Row Labels	Sum of Net Tonnage
Belfast Lough	1,045
Carlingford	3,020
Wexford Harbour	5,015
Lough Foyle	190
<b>Total</b>	<b>9,270</b>

#### 6. Potential Opening Dates of Seed Mussel Fishery 2022

It was acknowledged that uncertainty around the date of the seed fishery in September 2021 created difficulty for industry members. RC stated that in order to reduce uncertainty in 2022 that it is proposed that another meeting of the forum be held at the end of July, more information will be available from survey at that stage, and it should be possible to propose a date at that time.

CC assured industry members that EOI forms will be out before the proposed July meeting.

George Golden (GG) described how the BG sector depends on the BIM seed surveys carried out by Nicolas Chopin (NC), and that his work is of a high standard. Overall, the BG sector wants a smooth process.

GG queried the method to be used for biomass estimation if surveys were to be conducted in June/July. NC responded that historical growth data and academic papers would allow extrapolation. Joanne Gaffney (JG) assured the group that monitoring of beds would continue through July and August.

**Action 2:** Meeting of the Forum to be scheduled for late July 2022.

GG and MH highlighted that in recent years there had been no fishing in NI waters. It was queried what industry can do to improve the data collection in NI waters. John McGuigan (JMcG) acknowledged that industry is invited to declare a willingness to participate in survey. Although such a willingness has been indicated, such survey has not been permitted by the Chief Fisheries Officer (CFO).

GG and Michael Havelin (MH) asked if AFBI thought the mussel resource has moved position, and if AFBI were surveying outside traditional areas. They further stated that the current situation for industry survey in NI requires industry to map out a box of a limited area and ask to survey in that area. He suggested that the reverse be explored i.e. define the protected areas and permit searching everywhere else.

Adele Boyd (AB) stated that there was no seed stock found on NI traditional beds last year and that AFBI are looking in other areas and open to suggestions of where to look. She further stated that much of the NI coastline is protected. John Kane (JK) said with protected areas, that usually meant NIEA need to be involved in survey efforts.

**Action 3:** JMcG committed to bringing these items back to DAERA and the CFO and revert to the forum

#### 7. **Survey Plans 2022**

AB informed the group that AFBI's completed a Roxanne survey in March 2022 and a video survey in April. Draft report is now with DAERA but there are no indications of seed <50mm. A mid-July survey is planned which would be a dredge and Roxanne / video survey.

NC outlined BIMs survey's plans. Surveyed Wicklow in previous week and the intention is to survey through August. A post-fishing seed survey will also be carried out.

Arthur McCarthy (AMcC) queried survey plans for Castlemaine. NC assured him that he will remain in contact and if there are any indications of seed, BIM would complete a survey.

**Action 4:** Seed surveys to be made available to industry members.

#### 8. **IAS Survey Plans in IE waters 2022**

This is scheduled for end of June 2022 to ensure that data is available in advance of July's meeting of the forum.

**Action 5:** BIM to complete IAS survey on identified beds.

#### 9. **MSC Management 2022**

JG updated the forum. MSC is an all-Island certification, with separate certs issued for NI and IE. A maintenance audit is due in July 2022 and BIM are committed to maintaining both certs. However, in 2023 a full recertification will be required which will require a greater financial commitment. This will need funds from NI.

**Action 6:** JMcG to contact colleges in the funding section and ask them to reach out to JG.

#### 10. **Industry Representation Items.**

##### - **Opening Date Certainty**

As outlined above, a BGMCF meeting will be convened in July to communicate clearly on potential seed fishing opening dates.

##### - **Request to open on slack tides (<6.6m)**

Opening on tides of less than 6.6m have been raised by several industry sources. RC queried if this was progressed from a Departmental perspective - would there be widespread agreement on the 6.6m tide from the BG sector?

GG stated that he would expect industry agreement, indeed industry members had previously deferred fishing until a better tide.

Sinéad McSherry (SMcS) cautioned that the legislation would need to be examined to see if it specifically mentions the previous tide levels used.

**Action 7:** DAFM to revert on this point in July.

#### **- Black Box**

The status of the Black Box requirement in applications and legislation was discussed. It was acknowledged technology moved on and current practice by SFPA and DAERA is to use VMS technology.

SMcS said there is a case, on receipt of a submission from the SFPA/DAERA, to review the legislation to see if the term Black Box can be removed. GK stated that he was not aware of any impediment to changing the legislation but acknowledged that any legislative change takes time.

GO'D asked DAERA to confirm that the use of Black Box is not mandatory in NI? JK confirmed this. DAERA also use the VMS technology.

**Action 8:** DAERA and DAFM to examine legislation and application forms, on receipt of SFPA submission, and revert to the group in July

#### **- Transparency of the Forum**

RC outlined BIM and Departmental commitment to transparency of the Forum. However, it has been suggested that the standing items of the Draft agenda would be sent to wider industry when calling for agenda items. Furthermore, timely distribution of minutes of the BGMCF would also help (2 weeks post meeting). Also, BIM will look at how a space on the BIM website could be used for communication by the forum.

**Action 9:** BIM to circulate draft agenda in advance of Forum meetings, draft minutes to be released 2 weeks post meetings, website capability to be explored.

#### **Frequency of BGMCF Meetings**

RC stated that the secretariat had received correspondence from industry stating that one meeting per year may be insufficient. The intention is to increase this to two meetings per year (i.e. May and a follow-up in July).

#### **Dalkey Sound**

GG and AMcC raised industry concern with the closure of Dalkey sound to seed fishing. The closure was conducted without any consultation with the forum, or any documentation being provided explain the basis for the closure. He queried if it is possible to reverse this decision?

**Action 10:** DAFM representatives said they would look at the documentation on this and revert to the forum.

#### **11. AOB**

RC outlined how BIM and the Departments were committed to improve the transparency of the forum and the opening of the fishery.

CC highlighted how the process comprises several stages and DAFM are dependent on external reports for this. E.g. the process involves BIM Seed surveys, the MI and SFPA's input, along with legal services and ultimately a Ministerial decision.

**Action 11:** More information on the process to be supplied at the July meeting of the Forum.