



Summary Minutes

Board Meeting 24 September 2014 at ZSL (1100 to 1500)

Attendees Andrew Kerr, Richard Fordham (Sweden), Chris Leftwich, Alex Koelwijn (Holland), Jac Tijssen (Holland), Matt Gollock and Stephen Mowatt, ZSL, Andy Don, Brian Knights, Marc-Adrien Marcellier (France), Morten Lauritzen (Denmark), Arne Koops (Germany), Peter Neusinger, Peter Wood, Mogens Mathiesen (Denmark)

Guests: Andy Sadler (EA), Nonie Neusinger, Renee and Gilles (France Civile), Max (MEP)

Apologies: David Bunt, Simon Soffe, Vin Fleming, Miran Aprahamian, Alan Walker, Barry Bendall, Alastair Maltby, Corine Rosendal

1. Apologies and Welcome

FOCUS for the Meeting

The 2014 / 2015 season will soon be upon us and preparations for it need to be made. This is so important that the whole meeting has been set aside for this purpose. The situation is clear in that the major markets of North Europe want a sustainable product and that the supply chain is readying to deliver it.

The UK based fishery and collectors are delivering and now in France another collector is approved and others are very close. However the certificates for the French Fishery are expired (component 2) and there are real concerns over how these assessments are to be managed and funded. David has written two papers to help us think through these issues.

The Independent Panel will of course continue to make the decision(s) it needs to after hearing the views of the SEG Core.

2. Minutes from last meeting

2.1 The widely circulated Pierre-Etienne report which was warmly welcomed and the meeting concluded that building a credible sustainable supply chain remained the priority.

Marc-Adrien explained that the Report was well received in France but that many Fishermen could not understand the restraints on their practices given their experience of catching and seeing such huge volumes of fish and the huge financial pressures they are suffering. The French National Committee was predicting another difficult season with volume caught greater than the legal demand. In the short term the industry has requested 75t quota. The final discussions will be a political one between the leaders of environment and the leaders of the fishery. North Europe Consumption was benchmarked at about 15T so the remaining many 10's tons of consumption has a very limited market other than in Spain. There is a huge strain on French fisheries and many businesses are not viable. The

reduction is already from 1500 fishing boats to 500 boats. The members at the meeting remained totally opposed to any illegal trading and feared that a large quota in France would not help the situation.

2.2 The Balance Calculation

Alex stated that using the balance calculation it is possible to show that the impact of the aquaculture industry can be reduced to zero. It is possible to calculate the level of silver eel catch and the restocking required to offset so that its effects can be neutralised and a sustainable threshold achieved. The Dutch Government is using it to guide EMP thinking – it is written in Dutch.

Action Alex will circulate a summary in English.

2.3 Silver Eel Escapement

Richard spoke about the Conference in Sweden last week highlighting that Scientists are saying that natural mortality is less than they thought and survival from stocked fish is much greater than from wild. On silver eel escapement and the difficulties of measurement and of gauging the pre-human impact levels some are saying that there is merit in working from current levels and then demonstrating the increase. The significance of hydro mortality is gaining strength and is now thought to be greater than the mortalities from fishing.

2.4 Wetlands International SEG through AK is a partner on the European Board. There are 8 other partners who are all NGO's in their respective countries. The Dutch conservation project led by Wetlands International with the aim of opening migratory pathways is now at an advanced state and will shortly be ready to present.

Tour de Valat on the Carmargue is another partner and a similar conservation project is being developed.

Wetlands International next 5 to 10 year strategy is being developed and a major consultation exercise is underway. It highlights the importance of wetlands and rivers and promotes their role as an eco system service and the part they can play in slowing climate change and answering the critical water shortage.

The Orbatello Lagoon and region in Italy has bid successfully for EFF funding to support the fishery, the recovery of the lagoon's natural function and to address migration issues. The Veneto Region has also been successful at initiating eel projects.

2.5 WWF June 2015. Andrew with Frank Hoffmann of Wetlands International and Eric van Dijk from the Coastal and Sea Union met with Renier Hilliers Lambers of WWF and Herman Wanningen, the Dutch Water Consultant. Important information was exchanged at the meeting and afterwards through email. A follow on meeting was planned.

Herman is also planning a conference in Holland in June 2015 to focus on unblocking the migration pathways.

3.0 Building the Sustainable Supply Chain

3.1.Updating the Eel Standards Panel (*see paper*) 10 mins Brian

The paper produced positive responsiveness and complete agreement. Since the meeting several candidates have been put forward by Holland, Denmark and France.

Action David Bunt

3.2 The TOR for the Investigation into Restocking Contracts (*see paper*) 10 mins Chris

There were no additional contributions made to the content of the TOR at the meeting and these are still welcome for inclusion.

3.3 Reassessing Eel Fisheries (*see paper*) the prime focus of the meeting

The paper prepared by David Bunt was taken and detailed discussions followed. Andrew reminded the meeting that these conversations were advisory as the final decisions would be made by the independent panel. Chris and Brian from the panel would take notes of the opinions presented. There was universal acceptance that River Basin District level of certification now had severe limitations.

The meeting discussed what might be the 'unit of assessment'. Peter Wood pointed out that this approach was already operating in one fishery in France with just 12 fishermen. There were several important and supportive contributions from Renee, Gilles and Marc-Adrien. They believed that some form of contracting arrangements with the best fishermen was possible and that a joint approach (collector and fishermen) to the funding of the assessment was also possible.

Action There will be a meeting of the standards panel to conclude the issue and assessments for the fisheries will need to be quickly firmed up for the coming season.

Chris reminded the meeting of the importance of public consultation and how SEG had started with this approach. He believed that it was time to do it again and especially to supermarkets as part of engaging their programmes with ours.

Action Andrew and Simon

Andrew reported how busy the fisheries assessment team of MEP were at the moment and how the move to all 'sustainable fish' was continuing. M&S want to achieve 100% sustainability by 2015 Sainsbury have their 2020 vision. –

Chris stated that some of the assessment costs could be met via FLAGs, Fisheries Local Action Groups. This is all part of the European Fisheries Policy and funding.

Lunch

4.0 Updates and Matters Arising (5 mins each) these will only be taken once section 3 is complete

Newsletter was universally well received

Brussels update - EMFF - budget approved, national operational programme being written - funding available in 2015. The proposed new Commissioner for Environment and Fisheries is from Malta.

England and Wales Screening Requirements Andy Don briefed the meeting on the latest developments with Water Companies and Power Companies – these discussions focus on the owners of the facilities.

A Risk based approach coupled with the DEFRA cost-benefit model is being used to help plan and take effective action.

If cost is greater than value of benefit then 'alternative measures' can be considered like Install tidal flaps, eel passes, trap and transport for example.

Action Andy to send information of abstraction/screening CBA procedure and alternative measures

The need for Bio-Security when trans locating fish was brought to the meetings attention and Andy Sadler explained the concerns for the invasive of *Dikerogammarus* shrimp and the of *D. haemobaphes*

The EA is Developing bio-security protocol to mitigate risks

Matt Gollock reported on the new declaration from **Quebec conference** (August 2014). Much progress and effort on eel conservation since the first conference a decade ago and plenty more to do.