

Notes of Board Meeting 28 January 2015 at Fishmongers Hall

Attendees: Andrew Kerr (Chairman), David Bunt (Standards Panel Chair), Richard Fordham (Sweden), Chris Leftwich (Fishmongers Company), Alex Koelwijn (DUPAN), Jac Tijssen (Holland), Stephen Mowatt ZSL, Miran Aphrahamian, Andy Don, Andy Sadler (EA), Brian Knights (independent scientist), Marc-Adrien Marcellier (France), Morten Lauritzen (Denmark), Arne Koops (Germany), Peter Wood (UK), Paul Coulson (IFM), Barry Bendall (Rivers Trust), Peter Neusinger.

Guests: Jeremy Souben, Jacqueline Rabic (ARA France), John Elkington, Volans/SustainAbility

Apologies: Vin Fleming, Simon Soffe, Roger Castle, Matt Gollock, Alistair Maltby. Armando Piccini (Italy), Rodolfo Barrera (Spain). Frank Hoffman (Wetlands International), Corine Rozendaal

1. Apologies and Welcome

Delegates introduced themselves. New guests: John Elkington, a leading thinker on Sustainability and ARA the organisation that manages restocking within the French Recovery Plan.

2. Minutes of the Last Meeting 24 Sept 2014

Accepted as a true record.

3. Matters Arising

3.1. Brussels. Commissions Report to Parliament. No clear indication of any change to the eel regulation yet.

3.2. Standards Panel

- **IMARES.** Institute for Marine Resources and Ecosystem Studies - Netherlands research institute to provide scientific support for developing policies & innovation for the marine environment, fishery activities, aquaculture and the maritime sector. Approached to advise on the Standard / be on the Panel. Would be willing to advise on scientific & fisheries management improvements to the Standard. But only if/when the Governance for the Standard is split between 2: (1) for the content of the standard and (2) for running the administration – issuing certificates etc.
- **Panel Members update.** We are in the process of refreshing and renewing the Panel. However, further re-structuring may be needed if and as SEG pursues ISEAL accreditation.
Current Panel: David Bunt, Matt Gollock, Chris Leftwich, Brian Knights and Patrick Prouzet (France) has recently joined the Panel
Action: Morten Lauritzen will supply details of a potential member from Denmark for David to approach.

- **Certification update:**

- 4 fisheries pending re-assessment, 4 new fisheries seeking assessment
- 2 buyers pending re-assessment
- 4 farms pending re-assessment
- 4 smokeries pending re-assessment
- Most Dutch smokeries due for renewal in April 2015

3.3. Health Checks

Andy Sadler of the Environment Agency described the bio-security procedures being developed to ensure eel stocking can be done at minimal risk of spreading diseases and non-native species such as Invasive Shrimp. Also new regulations that replace the Salmon & Freshwater Fisheries Act, Section 30 Fish Stocking consent. **Action: EA and ARA** (France) to confer on best practice.

Barry Bendall expressed that he was keen to see the process simplified so that stocking can be safe, unbureaucratic and swift. Andy said that the EA is working on this. Movements within River Basin Districts have less constraints.

3.4. Eel Regs / Exemption

Andy Don described how Ofwat had agreed the Water Industry will spend £70M on their structures to improve passage past barriers and reduce entrainment on intake screens over the next few years. This is a huge commitment and was influenced by the Environment Agency under the Eel Regulations. It is also exemplar for Europe.

3.5. 2015 Recruitment

Marc – Adrien Marellier reported that in France the price for glass eels is low, so this is restricting the fishing effort so fewer fish have been caught so it is difficult to assess recruitment so far this season, though it is believed not to be as good as 2014.

Peter Wood stated that the market is definitely not as buoyant – in part because the illegal trade to Asia is reduced, due to lower prices there; and also the vigour of the French authorities to combat illegal trade.

3.6. Communication Plan

Andrew reported on progress with a bid for funding to the MMO to assist with promoting the eel Standard in Europe.

4. Science

4.1. The ICES and EIFAC meetings and Reports

Miran Aprhamian reported on ICES and EIFAC. The 2014 advice is that there are still concerns on the status of Eel. Recruitment is up 12% on the Atlantic coast on historic values; up 4% in the North Sea Baltic. Other countries in Europe and North Africa are developing Eel Management Plans. There continue to be big gaps in our knowledge on the status of stocks in lakes and estuaries.

Action: Andrew will discuss with Vin Fleming on progress to exchange eels outside of the EU but within 'European Eel' habitats in East Europe and North Africa.

4.2. Article from Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences

Richard Fordham presented a recent report by Willem Dekker and others to provide a guide on eel stocks and management that is more accessible to the Swedish public. The main message is that things are going well in Sweden, but all European countries must show the same progress for a sustainable future for the Eel.

5. Conservation

5.1. ARA French restocking experiences and lessons learnt

Jeremy Souben of ARA presented the eel restocking programme in France. ARA is a collection of fisheries associations, fisheries committees and NGOs. Their aim is to co-ordinate the restocking of 5 – 10% of French glass eel production to assist the France EMPs.

2M Euros are available this year and the aim for 2015 is 4000kg restocking into inaccessible and poorly colonised areas, eg. above dams. Fish cannot be transferred between River Basin Districts within France.

France has been achieving its restocking targets since 2012. French recreational anglers are against restocking. Restocking programme within RBDs with a fixed price helps create some stability and continuity for glass eel fishermen.

5.2. SEG Good Practice Guide to the Management of Eel Stocking

Brian Knights introduced the report drafted by him and Chris Leftwich. It uses the Sustainable Eel Standard as a basis and other UK guides (EA and CEFAS).

Stephen Mowatt described that this has the potential to be an excellent document to demonstrate SEG's credibility in conservation practices – it will be closely scrutinised by NGOs and conservation bodies. As 'best practice' it should go beyond the minimum legislative requirements.

Alex Koelewijn felt we should draw on previous good guides too from other countries (Holland, Germany and France) and these were offered up.

Barry Bendall was unclear who this was aimed at – it should cover contract management related to the Standard, as well as good stocking practices.

The Board agreed it would like to see a Europe-wide Eel Stocking Good Practice Guide – not just a protocol to deal with conflicts with contracts. **Action: Brian** to continue leading with help from Chris and Stephen.

6. Commercial

6.1 Commercial Developments in the Netherlands

Alex reported that the sector didn't contract in Holland in 2014, unlike a 5 – 10% contraction in 2013. He also described the more productive partnership between all parties in the sector to move towards a sustainable market. Alex presented mass-balance figures to show that there is sufficient supply, from current quotas, to sustainably provide twice the consumption demand of Europe in 2008.

Alex also identified a new NGO - 'Good Fish Foundation' - which is against eel consumption.

His prediction is that as we progress, the Standard could become the battle-ground – ie. prone to more scrutiny.

6.4 Bridgwater College Aquaculture facility

Iain Turner of Bridgwater College described how they had been successful in seeking funds to develop a sustainable aquaculture facility including eels at its site near the Parret and close to Hinkley Power

station. They are looking to develop it as a training facility and to seek expertise from SEG members. IFM and Peter Neusinger are assisting.

7. ISEAL 3rd party Accreditation for the SEG Standard.

David Bunt introduced the Group to the concept of achieving independent accreditation of the Sustainable Eel Standard under ISEAL. **Action:** the Board agreed for **Andrew and David** to continue with the accreditation process.

Strengthen SEG and making plans to repay the £45k start up bank loan. **Action:** The Board agreed to split it by country allocations and each country to develop its funding mechanisms to support that outcome. **Country leads** to progress this.

8. Key Diary Dates:

- 16 March ISEAL training Workshop for David and Andrew
- Spring SEG Newsletter 5 years of SEG, what has been achieved?
- 29 April SEG AGM and Meeting
- 21 – 23 April Seafood Fare Brussels
- 22 – 24 June Fish Passage Conference Holland SEG has a stand
- 16 September SEG Meeting

Correction / addition

Andrew, in the minutes of the 28th. I would like to have mentioned and noted the following. The Netherlands remind other countries to act in forming funds for SEG. If any country would like to use the Dutch eel fund system the format is free available.

Holland contribution to date 117k