

The North Sea Regional Advisory Council



Executive Committee (ExCom) Record of Meeting 26th & 27th June 2008, Vigo, Spain

Paper EC1

Rapporteur: A D Hawkins

Draft Record

1. Apologies & welcome

- 1.1 The Chair of the ExCom, Hugo Andersson, welcomed participants to the meeting and thanked the Community Fisheries Control Agency (CFCA) and the Port Authority of Vigo for providing the meeting facilities. He welcomed Jean-Claude Cueff and Peter Hopkins from DG Mare to the meeting.
- 1.2 Apologies had been received from Nigel Proctor, Luc Vandeveldel, Hazel Curtis, Bartek Kachniarz, and Niels Wichmann.
- 1.3 The agenda for the meeting was agreed.

2. Action points & general items

- 2.1 The rapporteur, Tony Hawkins, briefly went through the action points from the Peterhead ExCom meeting. One particular issue had been the lack of availability of funding to take forward the Development Groups. Although the NSRAC had pressed the Commission to provide the funds to enable both scientists and stakeholders to take part in the preparation of Long Term Management Plans little progress had been made. Other action points would be discussed during the course of the meeting.
- 2.2 Barrie Deas reported on the topics discussed by the Demersal Working Group since the Peterhead ExCom. The main items for consideration had been:
 - The Commission's proposals for cod recovery
 - The Dutch proposal for a Natura 2000 site in the Voordelta region

- Improvements to the stock assessments and discussions with ICES at the MIRAC meeting, including proposals for the reform of the advisory structure
- The Commission's proposals for dealing with by-catch and discards, which had been discussed in detail earlier in the day
- Revision of the technical measures regulation, on which discussion had been deferred until the next meeting
- Whiting selectivity, which would be discussed in detail at the next meeting, in July
- The work of the Development Groups, which had been hindered by a lack of funding.

3. Changes within the Commission

- 3.1 Jean-Claude Cueff, from DG Mare, described the changes taking place within the Directorate General. In a move to get closer to all stakeholders the DG had been re-organised on a regional basis. His part of the directorate would deal with the North Sea and Baltic, and would liaise closely with both the North Sea and Baltic RACs. It would also carry responsibility for the new CFCA.
- 3.2 On conservation, the new directorate would have to follow the scientific advice, determine policy, liaise with the RACs and develop proposals for presentation to the Council. One grey area, which would need fine tuning, would be the EU/Norway agreement. Negotiations with Norway would be the responsibility of another part of the directorate, but there would be close liaison. TACs and quotas for the North Sea would also be the responsibility of a different group but again there would be close liaison.
- 3.3 During questions, the issue of future co-decision taking with the Parliament was raised. Would this result in large changes? Jean-Claude Cueff remarked that co-decision taking might be postponed until there was unanimity on the Lisbon Treaty. In any event, TACs and quotas would not be subject to co-decision taking, although multi-annual plans would.
- 3.4 Barrie Deas remarked that the RACs had been successful so far, but there had been an absence of proper dialogue with the Commission. To him, dialogue meant discussions going to and fro, with both sides participating. On some items, like the margin of tolerance on weighing fish or the issue of how to handle poor data, there had been a lack of engagement with the Commission. He hoped that dialogue would be more open in the future. Michael Park drew attention to other failings in the system. The RACs spent a lot of their time developing responses to proposals from the Commission. It would be better if the RACs were involved in developing those proposals.
- 3.5 Jean-Claude Cueff said that he expected to attend meetings of the RACs himself and intended to have an open door policy in Brussels. His directorate would be very

open-minded. Discussions with ACFA had reached a point where participants were contributing to new proposals, and he hoped to develop such an approach with the RACs. In relation to wider maritime policy the new regional structure was expected to bring particular benefits, although the competence for maritime policy had still to be decided between directorates.

4. The future functioning of the RACs

- 4.1 Jean-Claude Cueff introduced a paper from the Commission on the functioning of the RACs. He believed the paper was very comprehensive and self explanatory. The only outstanding issue between the RACs concerned responsibility for sand-eels and Norway pout. The NSRAC wished to retain the ability to express views on these fish stocks but was prepared to work with the Pelagic RAC.

5. Specific technical measures for the North Sea.

- 5.1 Peter Hopkins from DG Mare presented the Commission's non-paper on specific technical measures for the North Sea. The Commission had adopted a proposal for a simpler Council Regulation concerning the conservation of fisheries resources through technical measures. That proposal would be providing a new framework for technical measures overall. However, there would also be a new Commission Regulation on specific technical measures for the North Sea. It would be specifying minimum mesh sizes for different target species. The list of species had been reduced from more than 50 to just 10. The Commission regulation also gave more day-to-day flexibility on by-catches and there was simplification of some definitions. Some derogations would be allowed from the one net rule.
- 5.2 There would be a meeting in July to discuss specific technical measures for the North Sea, and the non-paper was the starting point for that. Hugo Andersson thought that the Demersal WG would wish to develop a response to this non-paper at its July meeting.
- 5.3 Michael Andersen asked for clarification on whether it would be possible to fish with any gear for any species not listed in Annexe 1. Peter Hopkins replied that it would be. Bob Casson asked about the circumstances under which there would be derogations from the one net rule and Peter replied that any derogation would need to be justified on a regional basis and it was open for fishers to make a case.
- 5.4 Kostas Kalamantis asked how the Commission intended to deal with Natura 2000 issues under the new technical regulations. We had been told that provisions would be included in these regulations to enable better consultation to take place over the designation of offshore sites. Jean-Claude Cueff replied that currently member states were obliged to consult over the designation of Natura 2000 sites but the consultation period was dealt with under emergency provisions and allowed only 5 days to respond. The Commission was considering how it could provide a longer period for consultation within the technical measures regulation.

- 5.5 Willem de Boer was concerned that the Dutch industry could not live with article 6, as some vessels would need to buy new nets to fish in an area which was quite small. They would also lose a large number of Dover sole from their catches.

6. Position of the eNGOs

- 6.1 At the Demersal WG in December 2007 the environmental NGOs had abstained from decisions on TACs and quotas for North Sea cod. At the last ExCom in Peterhead there had been a further decision by the eNGOs to abstain from all decisions on TACs and quotas. This decision had been communicated in a letter to the RACs. The organisations concerned believed that too much of the RACs' time was taken up with decisions on TACs and quotas and that instead the RACs should be concentrating on developing long term management plans. There was a capacity problem within the RACs with not enough time to focus on long term concerns where the eNGOs could make an important contribution. The eNGOs did not have the necessary knowledge to make a judgement on actual TACs and quotas and they preferred to spend their time on longer-term subjects. The Commission's review of the RACs had underlined the need for the RACs to move away from discussions on short-term issues of immediate economic importance. Moreover, the Commission had emphasised that consensus reaching within the RACs was not of the highest priority.
- 6.2 The chairman pointed out that the ExCom could not take a decision itself on this subject. What we had was a statement from the eNGOs on their own position. All members of the RAC could abstain from any part of the RAC's work, and he was puzzled why the eNGOs wanted to abstain in advance when they had the freedom to abstain at the time. We were still learning from one another and it did not seem sensible to shut doors on the discussion of some subjects. Although the NGOs had not been able to agree on some TAC and quota decisions in the past that did not mean that they could not agree on them in the future. He did not feel that discussion of TACs and quotas took up a large amount of time.
- 6.3 There was generally agreement from fishing industry representatives that the RAC did need to devote more time to discussing long-term issues. However, TACs and quotas were important to the industry, especially during November & December. They could not be ignored. Industry representatives hoped the eNGOs would reconsider their position. Withdrawing from discussion of some topics and not others was not a good way to proceed.
- 6.4 It was pointed out that the RAC either reached consensus or it did not. When there was divided opinion then it could readily be recorded. To abstain is simply not to agree. There had been some good exchanges between the industry and the eNGOs on some short-term issues, including TACs and quotas, and such interactions were valuable. However, a balance had to be struck between long and short-term issues.
- 6.5 In conclusion, the chairman emphasised that anyone could abstain on a particular issue at any time, but they would have to declare on each occasion that they were abstaining, and would need to declare who was abstaining, as this would not always be clear. We should perhaps take the letter from the eNGOs as an expression of concern. He hoped that we could strike a balance between long and short-term

issues. It had been clear from these discussions that the industry wanted the eNGOs to be fully engaged in all subjects considered by the NSRAC.

7. Control & Compliance

7.1 Harm Koster, the Head of the Commission's Control Agency welcomed the NSRAC to his new home town, where he had now been living for two days! A very open and frank discussion had been held on control and compliance in Peterhead at the conference organised by the NSRAC. We now needed to move on from the conclusions of that conference. The rules of the CFP had to be complied with, and we all had to work together to improve control and compliance. We needed to achieve 'a culture of compliance.'

7.2 Tony Hawkins summarised the outcome of the Peterhead conference. Much stress had been placed during the conference on the need for a level playing field; for a greater sense of ownership; and for more dialogue to remove the barriers which were preventing greater compliance from being achieved. It had been emphasised repeatedly that the problems of control and compliance could only be solved through collaboration and engagement of all the interested parties. There had also been strong support for the concept of rewarding behaviour through pilot projects. It was evident that there were many different ways of achieving better compliance, including:

- Clearer, simpler rules, with provision for swiftly dealing with any anomalies.
- More incentives for fishers to comply with the regulations. The use of carrots as well as sticks, and testing through pilot projects.
- More effective use of technology. Greater use of VMS and electronic log-books would make things simpler. Catch comparisons and the use of 'intelligence' would help root out offenders.
- Certification and better traceability could play an important role. Consumers' views were both important and influential.
- Higher quality, more responsive and up-to-date science was crucial. The stock assessments needed to be validated by fishers, and fishers needed to be involved to a much greater extent in the provision of information on the stocks.
- A prosperous and economically sustainable fishing industry, with the right balance between fishing capacity and the size of the resource, was essential if there was to be strong compliance. Fishers and processors must be in a position to make a profit.
- There had to be equity of treatment across Member States and beyond. Any perception that the system was unfair would create problems with compliance.

7.2 One recurring theme of the conference had been the need for stronger dialogue between all the interested parties. For too long, fishers, processors, fishery managers and the enforcers had kept themselves at arms' length from one another. The Regional Advisory Councils had already shown the benefits of working together. The Commission, through its new agency, now had to move forward. It had to turn away from its command and control approach and start engaging with stakeholders.

- 7.3 Hugo Andersson emphasised that the conference was not an end, but a beginning. There had already been a joint campaign in the North Sea where officials from member states had worked together and the reasons for infringements discussed. It was time to hold a meeting of fishers, control officers, legislators and other interested parties to analyse these infringements and develop ways of dealing with them.
- 7.4 Jan Willem Wijnstroom emphasised the urgency of dealing with the problems of misreporting. This was leading directly to bad science and had to be addressed. Harm Koster replied that Commissioner Borg, who had attended the conference, had been heavily influenced by the report of the European Court of Auditors, which had identified misreporting as a continuing problem. The North Sea was one of the better areas, but implementation of the quota system was still a problem. Nathalie Steins emphasised the importance of simpler rules, and thought that the inspectors should be more closely involved in discussions of technical measures. Pim Visser added that inspectors at the ports really see what is going on and should be brought into any discussions held by the CFCA. Hugo Andersson drew attention to the need to distinguish between calculated non-observance of the rules and inadvertent mistakes brought about through lack of understanding of the rules.
- 7.5 Harm Koster said that the CFCA had developed a training programme for inspectors to make sure that they were all working to the same rules. He also was open to working with fishermen and said that it was important that we had legislation which fishermen could understand.
- 7.6 Michael Park thought that one glaring example of the lack of a level playing field was over conversion factors from live to dead weight, where different rules operated at different ports. When would this be dealt with? Harm Koster replied that conversion factors were a problem with some member states who thought that the factors were linked with relative stability. The Commission would like to see common conversion factors.
- 7.7 During discussion on the 8% margin of tolerance for the weighing fish it was evident that there was a lack of understanding of one another's positions. The industry representatives emphasised the real difficulties fishers had in complying with the 8% margin. It was too tight. The Commission was being stubborn about relaxing the margin. The Commission thought that fishers should have no problems in complying and that there was consistent and repeated disrespect of the 8% margin. We could not go back to the former 20% margin. Traceability was important, and weighing on board vessels was an encouraging development which would encourage observance.
- 7.8 Jean-Claude Cueff remarked that he was not surprised that the lack of a level playing field had been the focus of attention at the conference. Misreporting was a major problem. There must be fair and equitable treatment of all fishermen. Under the restructuring of the DG control would be a priority. He would certainly be interested in a meeting aimed at improving the control rules. Hugo Andersson concluded the discussion by emphasising the need for further dialogue.

8. Marine Protected Areas

- 8.1 Euan Dunn gave a presentation on the outcome of the Edinburgh Conference on Natura 2000 and fisheries, organised by the RACs. The meeting had been organised at the Scottish Parliament, in Edinburgh, on 5-6 Mar 2008, and had involved Over 70 participants from the NSRAC, NWWRAC, SWWRAC, Pelagic RAC, representatives of other RACs, the Commission (DG Mare, DG Environment), Member States and their agencies, NGOs and invited experts. The purpose of meeting had been to explore how best the fisheries sector and other RAC stakeholders should engage with the designation and management issues arising from the emerging offshore marine Natura 2000 network. The more informed the understanding of the RACs, the better their dialogue with decision-makers, and the greater the likelihood of fishing activities in and around Natura 2000 sites being managed so as to protect sites with least possible disruption to fishing.
- 8.2 To meet the commitment to create an offshore marine Natura 2000 network, member states were required to submit their initial list of offshore Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) by 1 September 2008. Member states had the responsibility to designate sites and to consult with stakeholders. However, sites could only be selected, and their boundaries set and designated, on scientific – not socio-economic – evidence. The Commission had the responsibility (and exclusive competence) to introduce management measures through the CFP in order to maintain sites in ‘favourable conservation status’. Presentations at the conference had included;
- The Rockall Bank closure under NEAFC
 - The ICES EMPAS study to develop proposals for managing fisheries in Natura 2000 sites in the German EEZ
 - The Atlantic Region Trans-national MPA Project
- 8.3 Fishers had been concerned that consultation inadequate and too late; that socio-economic issues had not been factored into site selection and designation; that there was a lack of equity and coherence across Member States in
1. interpretation of the Directives;
 2. designation of sites and management proposals
- and that member states favoured larger areas closed to all fisheries to facilitate control.
- 8.4 The Commission was looking for a coherent approach and would hold bio-geographical seminars with the RACs and others to assess coherence at a regional level. Site proposals would be examined in batches for given areas to assist an integrated approach. Control experts would also examine regional networks before implementation. Up until the end of 2008 (but not after), DG Mare could propose temporary protection measures through amendments to the TAC & Quota Regulation. It now intended to revise the Technical Measures Regulation to enable it to adopt permanent measures. The Commission thought the RACs could play an important role in suggesting technical improvements (e.g. changes in boundaries of buffer zones), providing data on fleet activity (mapping etc), ensuring a level playing field by removing discrimination and avoiding side effects by engaging on the issue of effort displacement. The RACs could also be proactive by urging their Governments to consult at an early stage on proposed sites, putting MPAs on own

agenda and urging the Commission to provide more resources for translating knowledge into policy.

8.5 Kostas Kalamantis summarised points which had emerged from the European Parliament Committee on Sustainable Development, which had also considered this subject:

- Member states should be encouraged to engage in proper consultation on Natura 2000 and other proposals
- The objective of N2000 sites is to preserve biodiversity, not manage fisheries.
- MPAs were a key aspect of the ecosystem approach
- A comprehensive approach was required to marine spatial planning
- Simple guidelines were required for implementing measures on sites
- Flexibility of management measures was required. N2000 may be too rigid.

The Commission had now produced a paper on fisheries measures for marine Natura 2000 sites. This document aims at facilitating the task of member states' authorities and stakeholders when requesting fisheries management measures under the Common Fisheries Policy for Natura 2000 marine sites.

8.6 It seemed to members of the ExCom, however, that the Commission had not yet developed clear ideas and advice on how to implement its responsibilities under Natura 2000. It was not evident, for example, how the new Technical Measures Regulation would handle site applications. Would there be a bio-geographical seminar for the NE Atlantic? How did the Commission intend to deal with the position that within 12 miles member states could only apply restrictions to their own vessels? The NSRAC had already written to the Commission expressing its surprise over the very short time period available for consultation on the Dutch Voordelta proposal, but the Commission had not expressed any regrets or apologies. Indeed, it was evident that they did not intend to extend the consultation period of only five days. This consultation period was intended only for emergency measures. It should not be applied to measures which were intended to be permanent. Moreover, several member states were now proposing Natura 2000 sites on the Dogger Bank, without any coherence or coordination. Yet this was an area which had been fished for centuries and yielded a very clean fishery. What was being protected in this case? There was also concern that the areas being designated were larger than they needed to be in relation to the features being protected. Why were very limited features, like sand banks being designated? Overall, there was considerable concern over the application of the Habitats & Species Directive to offshore sites. The closure of parts of Rockall Bank by NEAFC had been conducted in a much more sensible and coherent way and had involved consultation with fishers. Why couldn't Natura 2000 proposals be handled in a similar way?

9.7 The current position on the Voordelta proposal was that the designation of the site had been accepted by the Commission as a temporary measure, but concern had been expressed over the system of licensing fishing in the zone between 3 and 12 miles. It was agreed that there was a need for further discussion of this controversial proposal.

10. Presentation to Nathalie Steins Oosterling

- 10.1 The chairman, Hugo Andersson, presented a gift to Nathalie Steins on behalf of the ExCom. Nathalie had been a member of the ExCom from its very beginning and had been chair of the Flatfish Working Group. Nathalie had made an excellent contribution to the work of the NSRAC and we would miss her.
- 10.2 Nathalie said that she had enjoyed working with the NSRAC and was pleased that it was bringing fishers and other interests closer together. She wished the NSRAC well with its future work.

11. Inter-RAC Deep Sea Species Meeting

- 11.1 Michael Park reported on the Inter-RAC meeting he had attended on deep sea species. The meeting had looked at the fisheries for blue ling and for black scabbard-fish and had also discussed deep sea sharks, round-nosed grenadier and other species. The meeting had agreed that measures were necessary to protect blue ling. It was proposed that a bathymetric exclusion corridor, extending from 700m depth to 1,100m should be closed over the spawning period of April to June. Other measures had also been discussed.

12. Report of the Spatial Planning Working Group

- 12.1 Euan Dunn had already given a report on the conference organised by this WG on Marine Protected Areas. The next step would be for representatives of the NSRAC to attend the bio-geographic seminar which would discuss the proposals coming forward from member states. The NSRAC might need to hold a pre-meeting, but at the moment we did not have a map showing all the proposals for the North Sea and adjacent waters.
- 12.2 A subgroup of the WG had drafted a protocol on interactions between fisheries and wind-farms. This had been presented at the Peterhead ExCom and we now needed to sign it off. The protocol included a set of key recommendations. The fishing industry was often the last to be consulted about wind-farm proposals and yet it was necessary for the industry to be involved at an early stage – before a location was agreed.
- 12.3 Euan Dunn was congratulated on the protocol. The protocol was not only important for fisheries but also for the conservation of marine habitats and the protection of marine mammals. The protocol was adopted by the NSRAC by consensus. It would be sent to the Commission, the European Parliament, member states and the other RACs.

13. Report of the Socio-Economic Development Group

- 13.1 The group had met on the 15th May and the report of the meeting was presented by Nicki Holmyard. The group had requested changes to the Data Collection

Regulation. The group wished to see amendment to the regulation for the inclusion of quantitative socio-economic data. It had also recommended that the Commission should establish data-gathering (both quantitative and qualitative) mechanisms for these data and had recommended that the Commission should develop the technical structure of the data-frame and its user interface.

- 13.2 The North Sea Women's Network had held a very successful seminar in May on how to manage change in coastal communities. The network was helping other women's groups to become members of other RACs. Nicki Holmyard asked whether the ExCom approved the NSWN's application to the Scottish Government for EFF Axis 4 funding for a project to raise the profile of fishing communities. The ExCom gave their support to the application.

14. Long Term Management Development Groups

- 14.1 Barrie Deas reported on progress with the cod/haddock/whiting development group. The group had made a good start in responding to the move towards Maximum Sustainable Yield (MSY). A well-attended workshop had provided a template for producing long term management plans for the fisheries. Work had now stalled because of lack of resources to fulfil two requirements;

- scientific advice to underpin the plan and
- the need to involve stakeholders in the preparation of the plan.

There was no Community funding available for either of these two important tasks. At the MIRAC meeting in January the Commission had emphasised that it could not contemplate paying twice for scientific advice. The new MOU between the Commission and ICES encouraged the RACs to put questions through the Commission to ICES. We needed to make use of this facility. However, we had to define for each fishery what advice was needed. That, in itself, needed the help of scientists. The RACs and ICES will meet in September, with the SWWRAC taking the lead, and every effort will be made to remove the impasse. We would also need to address the problem of funding meetings at fishing ports to discuss the developing plans.

- 14.2 Nathalie Steins reported that the flatfish development group was waiting for the autumn STECF meeting to take place, where a working group would carry out an economic assessment of the impact of the developing management plan. It was anticipated that the NSRAC would be invited to send an observer.
- 14.3 There had been an empty programme for the *Nephrops* development group. The group had been awaiting acceptance by ICES of the camera survey technique for stock assessment. Now that the method had been accepted the group could move forward. It planned to hold a meeting shortly.
- 14.4 Chris Darby had given a report on the science underlying a long term management plan for saithe at the previous Demersal WG.
- 14.5 With monkfish, there was a lack of data for the development of a long term management plan. A meeting last year in Paris had identified a need for more data.

Work was going on at the NAFC Marine Centre in Shetland to obtain more data from the fishery.

- 14.6 Ann Bell concluded the discussion of long term management by informing the ExCom that the Interreg 4 funding group would be attending the York General Assembly and would be able to give advice on the funding of projects. It was remarked that the current problems with the price of fuel would have a large impact on the drawing up of management plans

15. Skagerrak and Kattegat Working Group

- 15.1 The Skagerrak and Kattegat Working Group had met in May. It had discussed the ICES assessments for cod in the Kattegat and had discussed proposals for a closed area in the Kattegat and also measures for the protection of cod in the area. There had been some discussion of the construction of a pipeline from Norway.
- 15.2 In reviewing cod recovery it had been decided that there was a need for greater flexibility between the Skagerrak and Kattegat. Michael Andersen thought the Swedish proposals for area closures in the Kattegat were too extensive. However, a description of the fisheries in the Kattegat had been produced and plans were being developed for the future of those fisheries. Cod protection measures now needed to be inserted into those plans, relating both to juvenile and adult fish. It was hoped that a regime for real-time area closures could be introduced. There had been a good response from member states to these emerging proposals.
- 15.3 Christien Absil was concerned that no NGOs had been present at the meeting of the WG. If she was notified of the meetings she would arrange for a representative of the NGOs to attend.

16. ICES Advice for 2009

- 16.1 Michael Andersen had received the latest ICES advice, published today, and took the ExCom through its main elements. For cod, ICES considered that the North Sea stock was suffering reduced reproductive capacity but was being harvested sustainably. The Spawning Stock Biomass was still below B_{lim} but the Fishing Mortality was below F_{pa} . The EU–Norway agreement management plan had the main objective of keeping SSB above 70 000 tonnes (B_{lim}), and reducing fishing mortality to 0.4. In addition the EU had adopted a recovery plan for this stock with the aim of increasing the SSB by 30% per year to B_{pa} . ICES had previously concluded that a recovery plan, in order to be precautionary, must include an adaptive element, implying that fisheries for cod remain closed until an initial recovery of the cod SSB had been proven. Such an element was not included in the existing plan. ICES therefore considered the EU recovery plan was not consistent with the precautionary approach. ICES continued to recommend that the fisheries for cod be closed, with a zero TAC, until an initial recovery of the cod SSB had been proven. However, if the management plan agreed with Norway was applied then it would lead to an increase in the TAC of 15% above last year. After some discussion it was agreed that the ICES advice anticipated that the Spawning Stock Biomass in 2009 would be just above B_{lim} , and that in 2010 it would be 30% above B_{lim} .

- 16.2 Although fishing mortality was low ICES had remarked that there had been an increased rate of discarding. F was the lowest since 1969 but the stock was recovering more slowly than had been thought last year.
- 16.3 Pim Visser asked whether ICES had issued a press release this year. In previous years they had got the message wrong. Perhaps the NSRAC should issue its own press release. It was agreed that the Secretariat would prepare a press release which referred back to the cod symposium and pointed out that cod was recovering as predicted. There was a positive message to send out.
- 16.4 There was a query about how the Fishing Mortality could move from 0.58 this year to 0.33 next year? This projection assumed that actual fishing pressure would remain similar but because the stock would be larger this would give a reduced F , even with an increased TAC. The F of 0.33 was split into 0.2 for landings and 0.13 for discards. The estimated TAC would include discards.

17. Response to the Commission's Proposals on Cod Recovery

- 17.1 The Demersal WG had met in Gothenburg in April and a preliminary discussion of cod recovery had taken place. A Focus Group had subsequently met in London in May to draft a response and yesterday the paper produced by the rapporteur had been further refined. If it was approved by the ExCom the position paper could go straight to the Commission.
- 17.2 It was agreed that there was nothing in the ICES advice which would change the opinions expressed in the paper. The general thrust of the paper was that we were now in a phase of cod recovery, but that recovery would have to be managed. The paper was adopted by the ExCom.
- 17.3 Fishermen pointed out that in this phase of cod recovering it was extremely difficult to avoid catching cod. There were fears that there would be a large discrepancy between the actual removals of fish and the recorded landings. It was evident that there needed to be more concerted efforts to reduce discards of cod.

18. Response to the Commission's Proposals on Discards

- 18.1 Barrie Deas summarised discussions of the previous day on discards. The Demersal WG had broadly welcomed the Commission's approach and we had gone through it paragraph by paragraph and set our own opinions down on paper. The rapporteur would produce a summary of those views for approval by written procedure next week. There had been a general consensus on the NSRAC's approach which was pleasing.
- 18.2 Willem de Boer wondered whether a fishing fund could be set up to use, in a constructive way, the income to be derived from landing discards. Such a fund could be used to pay for research into the monitoring and reduction of discards. Barrie Deas thought this was a good idea and that the Demersal WG should consider this question at its meeting on 30th July. Ann Bell hoped that someone from the

Commission could be present to take part in that discussion. Ole Tougaard remarked that the CFCA might have views on that issue too.

19. Report from the Secretariat

- 19.1 Ann Bell went through the accounts for the current year and concluded that we were on track for balancing the NSRAC's expenditure. We had, however, held more meetings than originally planned and she asked that the chairs of the various groups should ensure that the plans for meetings to take place next year were forwarded to her, so that she could anticipate their costs.
- 19.2 There were problems with the web-site. These were being addressed by the team in Aberdeenshire. We would look again at the format of the website and would ensure that financial details were posted on the private section. The web-site would be regularly updated.
- 19.3 Ann reported that the GAP proposal prepared by CEFAS to promote links between scientists and fishers had been funded and a meeting was being held early in July in London to develop proposals. An update of the Lot 7 project would be provided when we met in York.
- 19.4 The date of the York meeting would need to be amended to avoid overlap with the Fisheries Council in Luxembourg.
- 19.5 Nathalie Steins had been the Vice-chair of the General Assembly. With her resignation it would be necessary to appoint a new Vice-chair. Nominations would have to be received ten days before the General Assembly.

20. Presentation by the Director of Fisheries for Galicia

- 20.1 Hugo Andersson was pleased to introduce the Director of Fisheries for the Xunta of Galicia. The Director, Antonio Rodriguez, presented his views on the current problems facing the fishing industry. There were particular concerns over the current fuel crisis. There was also the issue of imports of fish products from outside the EU and especially the sale of products from illegal and unrecorded fisheries. The fuel crisis had drawn attention to the wider problems facing the fishing industry. It was now almost too expensive for the fishing fleet to put to sea. The Xunta was seeking alternative solutions to the fuel crisis by testing new fuels and especially gas-oil and LPG as alternatives to gasoline.
- 20.2 Others also expressed their fears about the outcome of ever-increasing prices for fuel. It was important to increase the income of fishermen by various means. In Galicia fish were regarded as a high quality product and there was a move to label those fish as coming from Galicia, with a guarantee that they were fresh. The market was sovereign and consumers must be given full information on fish products so that they could decide whether they wished to pay more for much better products. National and regional funds would be used to augment money available under the European Fisheries Fund to promote such schemes. Galicia would like to see

greater flexibility in the deployment of EFF funds to enable the fishing industry to prepare viable business plans for the future.

20.3 Hugo Andersson thanked Sr Rodriguez for his stimulating presentation.

21. Next Meeting

21.1 The next meeting of the ExCom would be in York in October and would be held in the Merchant Adventurers Hall - one of the best preserved medieval guild halls in the world.

21.2 There being no other business the interpreters were thanked for their services and the CFCA and the Port of Vigo thanked for their work in preparing for the meeting.

22. Action Points

1. The Demersal WG will meet at the end of July to discuss specific technical measures for the North Sea, with the non-paper from the Commission as its starting point (5.2).	Chair of Demersal WG & Secretariat
2. A press release will be issued on the latest ICES advice on cod. This will refer back to the cod symposium and point out that cod is now recovering as predicted (16.3).	Secretariat
3. The NSRAC's position paper in response to the Commission's Proposals on Cod Recovery was approved by the ExCom and will be forwarded to the Commission (17.2).	Secretariat
4. A summary of the views expressed by the Demersal WG and ExCom on the Commission's discard proposals will be circulated for approval by written procedure and then sent to the Commission (18.1).	Rapporteur & Secretariat
5. At its July meeting the Demersal WG will consider the question of establishing a research fund from the sale of fish which would otherwise be discarded (18.2).	Chair of Demersal WG
6. The Chairs of the various groups established by the NSRAC will ensure that their plans for meetings to take place next year are forwarded to the Secretary, so that she can anticipate their costs (19.1)	Chairs of WGs and Focus Groups
7. Nominations for the post of Vice-chair of the General Assembly must be forwarded to the Secretariat at least ten days before the General Assembly(19.5).	Members of NSRAC
8. The next meeting of the ExCom will be in York in October at a date to be confirmed.	Secretariat

17. In Attendance

ExCom Members

Ate Oostra	EU Coastal Union
Konstantinos Kalamantis	EBCD
Flemming Kristensen	Danish Fishermen's Association
Michael Andersen	Danish Fishermen's Association
Antoine Le Garrec	UAPF / Euronor
Caroline Gamblin	CNPMEM
Luc Corbisier	Redescentrale
Jan Willem Wijnstroom	European Anglers' Association
Giles Bartlett	WWF – UK
Christine Absil	Seas at Risk / North Sea Foundation
Nathalie Steins	Dutch Fishing Organisation
Willem de Boer	Dutch Fishing Organisation
Pim Visser	EAFPA
Nicki Holmyard	NSWM
Mike Park	SFF
Guus Pastoor	AIPCE
Barrie Deas	NFFO
Fredrik Lindberg	Swedish Fishermen's Federation
Euan Dunn	Birdlife International
Peter Breckling	Deutscher Fischerei Verband
Hugo Andersson	NSRAC Chair
Ann Bell	NSRAC Executive Secretary
Tony Hawkins	NSRAC Rapporteur
Joyce Walker	NSRAC Secretariat

Observers

Peter Hopkins	European Commission
Jean-Claude Cueff	European Commission
Clara Fernandez	Long Distance RAC
Birgitte Riber Rasmussen	Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Fisheries, Denmark
Francis Foulon	Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries, France
Dominique Thomas	OP CME
Ole Tougaard	CFCA
Mark Dougal	NESFO
James Thain	NESFO
Dale Rodmell	NFFO
Bob Casson	NFFO
Bengt-Olof Eliasson	Swedish Fishermen's Federation
Elisabeth Vallet	Seafood Choices Alliance
Harm Koster	CFCA
Pedro Galache	CFCA