

The North Sea Regional Advisory Council



NSRAC

Executive Committee (ExCom) Record of Meeting June 14-15, 2007, Vienna, Austria

Rapporteur: Tim Daw

Draft Record

Thursday 14th June 2007

1 Welcome and Agenda

- 1.1 The chairman welcomed the participants and thanked the hosts at the Austrian Ministry of Agriculture.
- 1.2 Mr Fritz Huemer welcomed the meeting on behalf of the Austrian Ministry of Agriculture. Austria only has 3.3 tonnes of fisheries production. He is supportive of the direction the CFP is developing.
- 1.3 The chairman thanked Mr Huemer, the minister and Isabelle Hakenberg who had helped to organise the meeting facilities.
- 1.4 In the light of a particularly long agenda, the chair raised the question of whether two ExCom meetings per year were sufficient.

2 Apologies

- 2.1 Hazel Curtis, Constantinos Kalamantis, Pierre Georges Dachicourt, Miriam Garcia-Ferrer, Ehrling Skatoy, Annemiek Bais and Tony Hawkins were unable to attend the meeting.

3 Presentation on the North Sea Commission Inshore Fisheries Seminar

- 3.1 Anders Fasth introduced the initiative which had started as a forum 3-5 years ago to provide a voice for small-scale fishermen to identify upcoming issues and exchange best practices.
- 3.2 Anders Carlberg summarised the conclusions from the seminar which included representatives from Norway, Scotland, England, Netherlands, Sweden and Shetland. Although there are many definitions of 'inshore fisheries' there were some common traits including increasing pressure from the diversity of interests in the coastal zone. For example, Nathalie Steins-Oosterling had reported the impact of nature conservation legislation. These pressures needed an exchange of information, experiences and best practices between inshore fishers on how they achieved constructive relationships with the local economy and nature conservation interests. The network should be issue-based and not political and the seminar recommended close links to the NSRAC for inshore questions which have international aspects.

- 3.3 The chairman gave thanks for the presentation and concluded that there were no actions needed from NSRAC as the marine resources group of the North Sea Commission would take it forward.
- 3.4 The report, and possibly presentations, from the meeting were available on the NSC website.

4 Reports from Development groups

4.1 Spatial Planning

- 4.1.1 Euan Dunn presented the progress on the mapping project. NSRAC was committed to mapping fishing effort in the North Sea but it is elaborate and expensive so they have liaised with CEFAS to include these aims within a €300,000, successful Lot 7 proposal on fishers' knowledge. There will be participants from England, Scotland, Denmark and France who will validate high resolution maps of effort distribution. The first 6 months of the project are a design phase which will be followed by 12 months activity to complete the work. He stressed that the support of RAC will be important ensure that the mapping aims remain a central focus of the project.
- 4.1.2 Euan Dunn presented the results of a meeting in February on fisheries and wind farms which had 37 participants from 5 countries representing fishers, operators, scientists, NGOs and government. The key issue was the need for a focus group for best practices and a protocol for interaction with wind farm operators.
- 4.1.3 He also raised the question of how NSRAC should interact with proposed MPAs.

4.2 Socio-economic

- 4.2.1 Nicki Holmyard presented an update of the Defra-funded project looking at socio-economic data for Amble, Peterhead and Lerwick. This has identified data gaps and produced a framework for quantitative and qualitative socio-economic data in each community with the aim of promoting widespread use of socio-economic data alongside biological data in fisheries management. The final conclusions and recommendations from the project were awaiting approval from Defra before dissemination but represented a large step forward for NSRAC.
- 4.2.2 The next meeting in September will report on the project, map out the way forward and explore the role of the Socio-economic Development Group in the RAC. Anyone wishing to attend the meeting should contact Nicki Holmyard.

4.3 Nephrops

Mike Park reported on a 30th May meeting of the *Nephrops* development group. Ken Patterson attended for the Commission and FRS provided two scientists who gave presentations on camera survey works and analytical stock assessments. The meeting was predominantly attended by UK stakeholders (reflecting interest in the fishery). Some of the science was technical and difficult for lay persons, but it had been a fruitful meeting with the following main discussion points:

- Nephrops stocks are healthy
- There are problems with the analytical frameworks used currently
- ICES and STECF advice has been conflicting

- There should be caveats in management to prevent all effort being directed to one stock
- The need is for a management plan which does not 'import' problems from the cod recovery plan
- That the fishery should probably aim for accreditation in the future
- The science of camera surveys is developing, particularly in Scotland, and could be developed through an international partnership, particularly to investigate the use of image analysis software.

4.3.2 FRS agreed to create biological outlines for a long-term management plan for the next meeting

4.4 Cod, Haddock and Whiting

4.4.1 Barrie Deas reported on the activities of the cod, haddock and whiting group. There is ongoing work with Defra defining and describing fleets but the activities are difficult because the species are so involved in the cod recovery plan.

4.4.2 Ecopath and Ecosim ecological models operated by Steve Mackinson of CEFAS may be very useful for stakeholders to pose 'what if' questions about alternative management scenarios. There will be a meeting in the Autumn to take this forward.

4.5 Flatfish

4.5.1 Nathalie Steins-Oosterling informed the meeting that the flatfish development group was in a different position to the other groups because of the long-term management plan, which had recently been adopted by the Council and had had been based to a significant degree on the approach advocated by NSRAC. The development group had not met yet and will engage with STECF on a socio-economic assessment to determine target F levels for the fishery.

4.5.2 The Council regulation for an assessment of the impact of flatfish fisheries on ecosystems was also relevant to the group. The group wished to give the Commission comments for the terms of reference for this and the STECF socio-economic assessment.

4.6 Monkfish

4.6.1 Barrie Deas reported on a meeting of the joint NSRAC/NWWRAC Monkfish development group on 8th June, chaired by Jacques Pichon and attended by Ken Patterson, representatives of IFREMER and Chevonne Laurenson.

4.6.2 There is a good body of knowledge building up about monkfish, especially from Scottish fisheries science partnerships but there are still large knowledge gaps and the status of the stock is unclear.

4.6.3 The stock appears to be stable but they don't want to risk over-exploitation.

4.6.4 The monk fishery overlaps with the cod recovery zone which creates problems with management.

4.6.5 Objectives are now to:

- Address need for better data on the fishery, including socio-economics.
- Engage in a dialogue about how best to move towards MSY

4.7 Saithe

4.7.1 Patrice Leduc summarised a meeting of the joint NSRAC/NWWRAC Saithe development Group on 10th April. Ken Patterson attended as well as Dr Raetz from Germany who presented the status of the saithe stocks.

- The stock is in good shape at full reproductive capacity and with F well under target
- There is a single stock exploited by two fisheries. German, French and English trawlers have a directed saithe fishery while the Scots and Danes exploit the stock as part of a mixed fishery
- Saithe is managed under a joint agreement with Norway aiming to keep F at 0.3
- The saithe fishery is affected by the cod recovery plan although the directed fishery does not take a cod bycatch
- The fishery should be managed with an economic approach with the aim of stable TAC
- No changes in technical measures are required
- The aim is to develop work with ICES and STECF to investigate levels of fishing for MSY and differences between cod and saithe responses to environmental conditions
- Next actions are to question the industry to describe the fishery and to restore the image of saithe as a marketable fish

5 Report from the Demersal Working Group

Barrie Deas summarised the activities of the DWG which had met that same morning.

5.1 The DWG recommended that the NSRAC accepted the position paper on cod recovery with minor amendments:

- Change the word 'low' for describing advisable mortality levels
- Mention the impacts of habitat
- Elaborate the discussion on effort management through kW days

5.2 The commission non-paper on cod recovery had provoked a discussion on the choice it presents between decoupling fisheries from cod or global suppression of effort. This needs more discussion and DWG will hold a meeting to draft a response.

5.3 A NSRAC position paper in response to the Commission communication on reducing discards has been drafted stating:

- NSRAC shares the desire to reduce discarding
- NSRAC welcomes the Commission signalling a move towards incentive-based solutions
- Iceland and Norway are not similar enough to the North Sea to simply transfer approaches
- Approaches should be developed on a fishery-by-fishery basis
- An outright discard ban is not justified and would need massive enforcements
- The problems of perverse incentives need to be addressed.

5.4 There will be a pro-forma prepared for development groups to present their proposals for long-term management

- 5.5 NSRAC should investigate resources from EFF for fisheries which have a long way to develop towards MSY
- 5.6 There is a problem of funding within all development groups to properly engage with stakeholders.

6 Mike Park reported that he had attended the STECF subgroup on effort regime reviews on behalf of SFF.

The meeting was mostly spent formatting information from member states and there would be a more important meeting in November. He is likely to go and is willing to report back to NSRAC.

7 Chris Darby reported on the Lot 7-funded project on fishers' knowledge.

- 7.1 The bid was developed by a consortium of 5 scientific institutes and 5 industry organisations and focuses on involving fishers in the collection and analysis of data from the North Sea.
- 7.2 There were five terms of reference:
- Obtain information from fishers on fishing operations and distribution
 - Self-sampling for length-frequency distribution and discards (learning from the Dutch F project)
 - Fisher participation in scientific surveys (commercial vessels will be coordinated to collect data across the North Sea)
 - Better use of logbook data
 - Quality assurance of stakeholder data and interpretation
- 7.3 There is a 6 month planning phase followed by 12 months to do the planned work
- 7.4 At the end of the project there will be a workshop with the RAC, fishers and the Commission which could provide a framework for an annual summary of work in this area
- 7.5 The chair drew attention to the activities of the NSCFP/ICES study group on the incorporation of industry information into stock assessment which met recently in Bergen and suggested there should be connections with this group.
- 7.6 Euan Dunn again emphasised that the RAC members must be proactive in supporting the spatial mapping work. Chris explained that data will be extracted from the 5 organisations in the consortium and others would need to give their permission before their data were also available to the project. The project was still very open and mapping was one aspect.
- 7.7 There will be a formal output from the planning phase for the next ExCom meeting.

8 Barrie Deas reported on a recent meeting on Gillnetting in London

- 8.1 Many issues were identified including expanding gear conflicts. There was obviously much more to be discussed so a letter was prepared requesting funding for a further meeting. Discussions need to decide if the meeting focuses on conflict resolution (e.g. with anglers) or gill net development.
- 8.2 The meeting supported the request in principle and Ann Bell would be in a better position to consider funding after the inter-RAC meeting the following day.

9 Nathalie Steins-Oosterling briefed the ExCom on the Flatfish Management Plan.

- 9.1 The plan, which had been adopted by the commission on 11th June, is for plaice and sole and comprises a first phase to bring stocks within safe biological limits and a second phase to move towards target fishing mortalities.
- 9.2 Phase one is characterised by a 10% reduction in fishing mortality each year until stocks reach safe biological limits. TACs would be set appropriately but not fluctuate more than 15% each year. This phase is defined as a recovery plan to provide access to the EFF for measures like decommissioning.
- 9.3 For phase two target mortality rates will be developed following a socioeconomic assessment of the fishery by STECF. This phase is defined as a management plan. An effort management scheme will be developed by STECF and sufficient quota will be given to make use of allocated effort.
- 9.4 Ken Patterson added that phase two is aimed at approaching MSY and that the commission will call for tenders to research selectivity issues as part of a Council Declaration accompanying the regulation.
- 9.5 Nathalie reported that the flatfish industry is unhappy about the very difficult targets which will have severe consequences for the industry. But at least there is now clarity. As the flatfish working group chair she is happy that many elements of the NSRAC advice on the issue have been incorporated in the plan. It will be important to set targets with reference to bioeconomic modelling.
- 9.6 Ken Patterson thought that the plan was a good success and thanked the cooperation of the NSRAC and Nathalie.
- 9.7 Fishers were sceptical about the plan. They will struggle on to survive but are unhappy with effort cuts and concerned that the Commission is applying a standard approach everywhere (e.g. with Baltic cod). They emphasised the need to decouple the flatfish plan from the cod recovery plan and be flexible in case the results are not as the Commission expects. Ken Patterson agreed with the need for flexibility and stated that the plan had clauses for revision each 3 years, and for more drastic action if the stock continues to decline.
- 9.8 The meeting discussed whether it was appropriate to make a press release to publicise the plan as a good-news story from the NSRAC. The moment had passed for a specific press release but it would be included in the PR after this ExCom meeting.

10 Barrie Deas introduced the discussion of the 8% tolerance rule and the draft letter to the Commission

- 10.1 The tolerance for discrepancies in logbook figures at sea has been reduced from 20 to 8%. While conceding that the 20% level had been abused in the past, there was no rationale for 8% and it was thought to be an artefact of negotiation strategies at the Council of Ministers. The rule is practically impossible to comply with as demonstrated by a project in the UK which confirmed it was not possible to estimate catches with 8% accuracy. The rule fails the principles of good governance and creates a serious and urgent problem of criminalising fishers. The introduction of electronic logbooks will flag up the problem daily. Enforcement agencies have generally been sympathetic in applying this rule but the problem remains.

- 10.2 Fishers strongly supported the draft letter, pointing out that 8% under- or *overestimates* would result in a fine and that the Council also approved 8% for the Baltic.
- 10.3 The Commission is apparently politically open to revising the 8% but the rule remains so there should be a meeting with them to find a solution.
- 10.4 NGOs expressed a concern that the NSRAC was getting involved with issues outside their remit but they were persuaded to support the letter due to the strength of feeling and the lack of any disagreement on the issue. It was also pointed out that the NSRAC should give a voice to stakeholders and identify such poor management policies.
- 10.5 The wording of the letter was agreed and it was decided to distribute it to other RACs so they could become involved in the issue and member states so that enforcement agencies knew that it was under discussion.

11 Response to revision of technical regulations

- 11.1 NSRAC had taken a low-key approach and recommended that this should be dealt with by member states. NWWRAC, however produced a position paper and have organised a workshop hosted by Killybegs Fishermen's Association in September in Dublin to bring together fishers, scientists and gear technologists.
- 11.2 The meeting agreed to support people to attend for NSRAC. Ann Bell suggested the Secretariat may be able to fund 10 people.
- 11.3 A group from the Commission and Norway on technical measures has produced a report following its meeting, which Ken Patterson will forward.

12 NSRAC Response to the Commission communication on discard reduction

- 12.1 ExCom adopted the draft response with minor amendments as discussed in the DWG and subject to review by the NGOs overnight.

13 Henrik Svenberg reported on the proposed Skagerrak effort regime

- 13.1 The Commission is keen to work towards an effort regime for Skagerrak and the suggestion is to have a plan by the Autumn so that the Council can agree in December
- 13.2 A Swedish pilot study in 2006 found vessels fishing under effort rather than catch limitations had a higher catchability. At the catchability measured during the trial, the whole assessed biomass would be caught in only 9 days! Fishers emphasised that it supported their arguments that catch-based estimates of abundance are problematic because of the restrictive quota regime. Effort management is needed to obtain good data on the stock.
- 13.3 A working group has been discussing several points which were detailed in the paper. Questions about relative stability will be difficult to address but other examples (e.g. Bay of Biscay) may offer solutions. Gear types were discussed and a one-net rule will prevail. A discard ban could not be implemented. Real-time monitoring and closures would be applied. There are complications about how to separate the quota allocations for Skagerrak and Kattegat
- 13.4 The next step will be a proposal on effort levels by 31 July.
- 13.5 The Commission is continually briefing Norway on developments to avoid obstacles from poor communication later.

- 13.6 Fishers expressed a frustration with the lack of progress on this initiative since it was agreed in 2005. There was a feeling the Commission should just get on and implement the regime.

14 Commission update by Ken Patterson

Ken Patterson listed a number of recent Commission documents, some of which had been discussed earlier:

- The non-paper on cod recovery would be followed up by a proposal by the end of the year.
 - The non-paper on front loading
 - The policy statement on TAC and quotas for 2008, comments were requested by the end of July.
 - Consultation on the review of technical measures is to finish by the end of the year with a Commission proposal by the end of Autumn
- 14.2 The Commission is looking for the RACs for ideas on how TAC and quota issues can be addressed and wanted to know when they would receive comments on MSY.
- 14.3 It was pointed out that the species development groups were making good progress on MSY plans. Some outputs were already available and there would be reports from all groups by the next ExCom in October.
- 14.4 The Commission is keen to see progress made towards the Johannesburg commitments to manage at MSY by 2015. Even if targets were not identified there should be movement in the right direction as it would one full generation for biomass to recover to B_{msy} .
- 14.5 Fishers were sceptical of hurrying towards meeting a deadline. Developing sustainable systems of management take time and resources especially if done in a correct participatory way. They expressed concerns that the Commission might rush through ill-advised biologically-focussed legislation, which fails to take account of environmental, social, economic and governance aspects which the Cod Symposium highlighted as being crucial.

15 Michael Topping reported on European Parliament Fisheries Committee discussions on MSY

- 15.1 Parliament members were not consulted on MSY so a report was drawn up and hearing was held on the 11th June to explain and debate MSY approaches.
- 15.2 The discussion was limited by translations but some members were wary of MSY approaches especially for mixed fisheries and in terms of socioeconomic consequences. 'Near MSY' was seen as perhaps a more appropriate aim rather than firm targets. The conclusions highlighted potential problems with the Commission approach.
- 15.3 The response will be amended on 21st June and on the 17th July providing an opinion from the committee before summer. A plenary discussion will be held in September.

16 Continued discussions on MSY

- 16.1 Fishers' representatives perceived an acceptance of fixed MSY targets on the part of the Commission which underlies the issues raised in their communications. NSRAC, however has previously stated that while lower

fishing mortalities are generally desirable, it may not be possible to define MSY for each fishery.

- 16.2 An NGO representative then stated that managing MSY had been legally binding since the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea came into force and suggested that managing at MSY was fishing on the edge and that targets should be more precautionary than MSY. Lachlan Stuart strongly refuted the claim that to have stocks below MSY reference points breached international law as taking UNCLOS out of context. Fishers' representatives responded to the suggestion of reference points beyond MSY with two points. Firstly, they were apprehensive that targets seemed to be continually shifted upwards whenever one was reached. This creates a perception amongst the public that fisheries are consistently overexploited and perpetuates a negative stereotype of fishers as pirates, especially if it is stated that there is a 'legal obligation'. Secondly, they pointed out that established MSY reference points were more precautionary than precautionary reference points so aiming for MSY was not 'fishing at the edge'.
- 16.3 The summary of the Nephrops WG in Edinburgh will contribute to the debate and will be available next week.

17 Discussion on the Cod Symposium follow-up

- 17.1 The chair stated that the symposium had generated a lot of useful knowledge and was summarised in a good report which was useful for most WGs. The question was how to continue the discussion with the Commission.
- 17.2 There was some confusion over whether the Commission had responded to the letter sent about ad-hoc groups. Barrie Deas had seen a letter which welcomed the symposium, accepted the need for a regional approach and indicated that the Commission would participate, but declined to lead setting up the groups because of lack of funding and human resources.
- 17.3 NSRAC apparently needs to set up the ad-hoc groups but again there is a question of funds and a need to coordinate with NWWRAC.

18 Commission Non-Paper on Cod Recovery and STECF Subgroup on effort regime

- 18.1 Fishers had strong reservations about the effort figures being used by STECF as they contradict their own experiences. A deeper and longer engagement with the Commission was needed.
- 18.2 It was proposed to have a workshop with NSRAC, the Commission, STECF and national administrators who provide the figures to try to understand the discrepancy. Ken Patterson questioned whether an extra meeting is necessary when industry observers already attend the STECF group. Fishers responded that this did not resolve the fact that fishers questioned the data being used. Ken suggested that if data are disputed, the first step should be to approach the national administrators who were responsible for it. Each sector should review the STECF report and forward corrected data to their national administrators so it can be incorporated into the STECF Autumn report.
- 18.3 A response to the non-paper is requested by the end of September. This was suggested as a job for the ad-hoc groups. The meeting decided that the DWG had a suitable size and scope for an ad-hoc group. DWG, the Skaggerak and Kattegat WG need to meet with the Commission, STECF and DG Environment in early August to prepare a response for ExCom in September.

18.4 The disputed effort trends are important but other issues like responses to the Commission's specific questions also need to be covered.

19 The Commission Policy statement on TAC and quota proposals for 2008

19.1 Commission figures show only a 76% uptake of effort allocations and infer that this means the effort regime was not restricting fleet activities. Fishers disputed this inference and thought that 76% was about what would be expected given the friction in the system and the lack of a distribution system like exists for quotas.

19.2 A response is requested by 31st July but this was impossible. The DWG workshop proposed above should also prepare a response to this document. It was suggested that they meet in Dublin on 12th September to back up to the Killybegs Fishermen's Association workshop on technical measures.

20 Proposal to set up Brown Shrimp NSRAC ad-hoc group

20.1 This was discussed but it was decided that the trans-national PO with informal links with Danish fishers could meet current needs. NSRAC has previously decided that although supportive of MSC certification it does not fall into its remit as it is a marketing issue.

21 Online Meeting Calendar

21.1 Michel Goujon presented an online calendar system he had developed which allows individuals to register and see all their relevant meetings on one page. The calendar is currently in English and French and meetings can be publicly visible or restricted to relevant individuals. Meeting documents can also be added to the calendar to avoid the need to email them. The calendar can be accessed from www.halios.net. Ann Bell said she would pass this information on at the Inter-RAC meeting on Friday.

Friday 15th June 2007

22 Matters arising from previous day

22.1 A compromise was found on the wording of the draft letter to the commission clarifying the NSRAC position on front loading. The reference to North Sea whiting had been removed. The emphasis was that ICES and STECF should listen to the practical knowledge of those familiar with the fisheries.

23 Presentation from Martin Pastoors, ICES

23.1 Martin Pastoors presented planned changes to the scientific advice institutions. In order to meet requests from the commission for earlier advice, North Sea stocks will be assessed in a May meeting of ACFM instead of in October. New recruitment data is available in the autumn but assessments would only be revised if they would have a significant impact on the assessment.

23.2 The existing structure of 3 separate committees and a sequence of groups from expert groups to review groups to drafting subgroups to ACFM will be simplified to be more flexible and appropriate to needs. One advisory council will oversee the whole process, an expert group will conduct assessments *and* draft advice and a single review group will check the work.

- 23.3 He then presented a summary of the status of all quantitatively assessed North Sea stocks according to ICES assessments in terms of spawning biomass, fishing mortality and recruitment. Generally fishing mortality was falling in all stocks but several were still well below reference points for biomass.
- 23.4 Martin was asked what the advice for flatfish would look like if the recently adopted plan was taken account of. He responded that the Commission observers at the meeting instructed them not to use the new management plan as it was not negotiated. Some fishers saw this as evidence that Commission politically interfered with scientific advice rather than being passive observers.
- 23.5 A 67% reduction in whiting catch has been advised on account of low recruitment over several years. This is one of the stocks where industry and scientific perceptions were most contradictory. ICES scientists are quite certain about the consistent low recruitment signal but Martin pointed out that the distribution of whiting is complicated and there are unresolved stock structure issues which may account for some of the discrepancy.
- 23.6 One fisherman pointed out that a 67% cut was very high considering the low baseline for whiting under the cod recovery plan. Martin stated that the baseline was not the relevant issue as the basis for the advice was 5 years of low recruitment which was consistently reflected in survey data. Low recruitment of whiting did correspond to the fisherman's experience but he thought the level of the cut was unjustified.
- 23.7 Martin was questioned on how significant the additional recruitment data in the autumn would have to be to adjust the assessment. There were only four stocks where R could be important, cod, haddock, sole and plaice. Cod advice would not change so only the other three species were a possibility. There has been no decision on what constitutes a "substantial change" so it is open for discussion at the October meeting.
- 23.8 Fishers asked how the forecast tables could be interpreted as last year they attempted to argue that the advice allowed a catch of 76,000 tonnes and the stock would still reach B_{lim} . The commission objected to the use of the tables in that way. Martin said that the advice would remain the same but that the RAC could make advice based on the forecast tables.
- 23.9 Fishers drew attention to the presentation showing that no assessed stocks had an F over F_{lim} limits but several stocks had lower than precautionary spawning biomass. Martin explained this to be due to historically high F. Recovery of biomass was expected but further cuts in F are recommended. Managing the fishery at F_{pa} is an option but advice would fluctuate annually to take account of variability in recruitment and the assessment. Lower F would allow the stocks to mature so that the stocks had more ages and were more stable. The fish can live 20-25 years but they are currently exploited at 2.5 years. If the cod stock was mature Martin thought it could sustain yields comparable with the past but from a lower fishing mortality.
- 23.10 Fishers asked if the new system wasn't leading to work having to be done twice. This was not the case. Assessments would only have to be redone if recruitment was very different from forecasts. With a move towards older stocks recruitment will also become less significant for the advice.
- 23.11 The question of opportunities for peer review of the science was raised. Martin stated that he favoured stakeholder review as had been organised by NSCFP

in past but that opinions in ICES were divide as to whether stakeholders should have access to the scientific review process. The chair pointed out that also review by outside experts gave stakeholders a good idea of the quality of the work.

- 23.12 Fishers were frustrated that their experiences and results of fisheries science partnerships made some of the assessment results seem ridiculous. They asked what it would take for ICES to listen to them. Martin stated that the expert group collects all the available data including from FSPs and he would expect them to take it on board but is interested in any proposals to get all the data including fishers' information on the table in a transparent manner.
- 23.13 Chris Darby pointed out that the growth in cod biomass as a result of recent recruitment was not yet contributing to spawning stock because the fish are still immature. The ICES report agreed with the suggestion that plaice status is different in the north and south North Sea, largely as a result of FSP work. The new Lot 7 project would allow fishers to collect their own data.
- 23.14 Other fishers did agree with the ICES figures but thought the problem was how to utilise them in a sensible management framework. The figures were good but fed into a flawed management system. Danish fishers asked how there can be advice for cuts in plaice TAC, in Skagerrak when all indicators show the stock is increasing. Martin countered that the plaice stock shows conflicting signals so it was appropriate to be cautious.
- 23.15 There was general agreement that it would be advantageous to protect the recent recruits to allow them to contribute to spawning stock biomass.
- 23.16 Martin was asked his opinion on the 10% reductions of F in the recently adopted flatfish plan. He was unable to answer as they have not evaluated the management plan but pointed out that there may well be more than 10% variability in the assessment so TACs could potentially increase under the plan.
- 23.17 Referring to current wastage of cod discards, fishers pointed out that the advice for a 0 TAC was not useful as it was impractical and therefore had to be ignored. Could scientific advice not be more pragmatic and applied to rebuilding stocks? Martin appreciated this comment and conceded that the advice doesn't help to safeguard the 2005 year class. ICES does not believe the current cod plan is working nor workable and so cannot give practical advice like for other stocks (e.g. Haddock). However they want to avoid political negotiation within ICES. The NSRAC is the correct forum for that based on bottom-line advice from ICES.
- 23.18 Finally, industry representatives reflected on a slide in the presentation showing plenty of green (positive) assessments. The information typically coming out of ICES is unnecessarily gloomy and is affects public perception.

24 Presentation by Alan Campbell, Chief Executive, on Aberdeenshire Council's support for NSRAC

- 24.1 Aberdeenshire is the most fisheries involved region of the UK although oil and gas were the main industries.
- 24.2 Ann Bell presented budget figures. 129,730 euros had been spent up till the end of May 2007 and there was not much left, but with the recent Council regulation defining RACs as bodies pursuing a Community interest the budget should improve. They hope to have a new budget by September. Alan Campbell informed the meeting that Aberdeenshire council had contributed

€134,000 of support to NSRAC and the council have decided to continue support including €128000 until 2010. There might be a need for better support for policy preparation and administration. Alan stated that attending the meeting had been extremely useful to understand the needs of NSRAC and that they hoped to improve on some aspects of the Secretariat. Financial support from Defra is a possibility and the Secretariat is looking to have the support of a communications person, from the Chief Executive's Corporate Team, to assist with press and media coverage and to help develop a communications strategy.

- 24.3** The meeting gave a vote of thanks to Aberdeenshire Council for the past support to NSRAC and for their future commitment.

25 Feedback from the Community Fisheries Control Agency (CFCA)

- 25.1 Hugo Andersson had represented the NSRAC alongside representatives from the other RACs on the advisory board. Most discussion had been on operational programs and how to make contact with stakeholders. He then represented the Advisory Board on the Administration Board. The meeting had been dominated by discussion about the logistics of moving the headquarters to Vigo.
- 25.2 A round table discussion with CFCA scheduled for today was cancelled so he will discuss a new opportunity before the general assembly.
- 25.3 The fact that Hugo Andersson was the only stakeholder representative on the Administration board of the CFCA was seen by the meeting as indicating poor governance. However it was pointed out that RACs have an opportunity to comment on the operational program and budget before they go to the committees.

26 Representation of NSRAC at meetings and communication issues

- 26.1 CFCA discussions raised the issue of how NSRAC members attending outside meetings can properly represent NSRAC.
- 26.2 NGOs had highlighted this concern in a letter to the Commission reviewing the entire RAC process. Sometimes the 1/3 group does not feel fully consulted. This was a general comment about all RACs from a meeting of 20 NGOs and not directly targeted at NSRAC.
- 26.3 There was a consensus for the need for a transparent process to give mandates to RAC representatives including reporting back. Some trips and meetings were not well known to members. It needed to be made clearer who was representing NSRAC at meetings to allow input and feedback. Sometimes it is unclear if NSRAC members are representing NSRAC or their own constituency. This should be cleared up by a protocol.
- 26.4 A report from the study tour to North America from the Commission has been delayed. It was felt that the RAC representatives on the study tour should not wait for the Commission report but should report back to the NSRAC directly. Barrie Deas agreed to report back on the forthcoming study tour to Iceland and Norway at the next ExCom meeting.
- 26.5 The volume of communications demands a structured process for consulting with the ExCom between meetings and highlighting the nature of circulated materials (whether for reference or review etc). The website could be a tool for disseminating material as well as identifying NSRAC representatives. NSRAC documents should also be clearly labelled and formatted as advice, position

papers etc. The chairman agreed to discuss these points with the Secretariat and report back.

27 NSRAC involvement with MPAs

- 27.1 Euan Dunn gave a presentation highlighting the potential impact of the spatial conservation legislation on fisheries and the need to engage with the process, constructively utilising fishers' knowledge as was done for the protection of Rockall Bank hard corals.
- 27.2 Natura 2000 sites are currently being proposed by member states in the North Sea. Boundaries are not supposed to be influenced by socioeconomic concerns. Once a site is proposed there is an immediate legal obligation on the Commission to take action under the CFP so they need to engage with RACs and are starting to think how.
- 27.3 He proposed that NSRAC should be proactive not reactive to this development by contacting the Commission and requesting to be consulted, knowing proposed sites and identifying management measures for MPAs.
- 27.4 The subsequent discussion highlighted many views, concerns and experiences shared. In some nations politicians had assured fishers that designations would not affect existing activities. This should not be seen as a safeguard as a few recent examples like a cockle fishery in the Wadden Sea had been excluded as a result of new designations. Even if a fishery is not harming habitats, the burden of proof to demonstrate no effect, is on the fishery and science to prove this is expensive.
- 27.5 There was a risk that measures could be used to or seen as excluding other fleets. One role of NSRAC could be to maintain a level playing field in the case of multi-national sites like Dogger bank.
- 27.6 NSRAC should discuss this issue with NWWRAC. The chair will be contacted to suggest a meeting in Autumn on MPAs
- 27.7 The approach taken in Germany was seen as being sensible in which the government has requested fisheries and fleet data from ICES. A letter should be drawn up supporting this approach.

28 Requests for membership of NSRAC

Two letters were received from organisations wishing to join the NSRAC. They could apply to join the General Assembly and this would be presented at the GA in October. Membership of ExCom is then decided by the General Assembly by vote if there is a relevant space.

29 Upcoming Directors' Meeting

There will be a meeting on 10th July, in Aberdeen. The chair will forward the agenda for comments or amendments by ExCom.

30 Funding allocation for NSRAC activities

There was a short discussion on how funding is allocated to activities. Currently money is made available as activities arise but there was agreement on the need to prioritise competing demands (e.g. having more meetings, sending representatives to Killybegs meeting or running drafting groups). These matters should be considered over summer to be decided at next ExCom.

31 Niels Wichmann reported on plans for the next General Assembly

31.1 This is planned for 15/16th October in Aalborg in N. Denmark to precede the 3-day Danish fishing exhibition.

32 Any other business

32.1 Nominations for NSRAC chairs are open till 15th October to be decided at General Assembly

32.2 Brown shrimp discussion would be continued bilaterally and reported back to NSRAC

32.3 Dutch fishers raised differences in how member states' navies deal with the discovery of ordinance by fishers. This was thought to be a solely national issue.

33 Action points

NSRAC needs to input to and support spatial mapping aspect of CEFAS Lot 7 project (4.1.1)	NSRAC members
Need to decide how NSRAC interacts with proposed MPAs (4.1.3)	Euan Dunn
Next meeting of socio-economic development group. People who want to attend contact Nicki Holmyard (4.2.2)	Members take note
Cod, Haddock and Whiting development group in Autumn (4.4)	Members take note
Make minor amendments to the NSRAC position paper on the review of the cod recovery plan (5.1).	DWG chair
Adopt and distribute the NSRAC position paper on the review of the cod recovery plan (5.1)	NSRAC Secretariat
DWG will hold drafting group to draft response to Commission non-paper on cod recovery (5.2)	DWG chair
Create pro-forma for long-term management plans from development groups (5.4)	DWG chair
Investigate EFF funding for fisheries to move towards MSY (5.5)	InterRAC to meet with Commission
The STECF subgroup on effort regime reviews will meet in November, Mike Park will be there and can report back to (6)	Mike Park
Make contact with ICES/NSCFP study group on incorporation of information from industry (7.5)	Chris Darby
Formal output from planning phase of Lot 7 fishers' knowledge project to be presented at next ExCom meeting (7.7)	Chris Darby
Seek funding to support follow up gill net meeting (8)	Ann Bell
Include news of successful agreement on flatfish in PR follow up (9.8)	Ann Bell, Nathalie Steins
Send letter on 8% tolerance to Commission. Copy to other RACs and to member states (10.5)	NSRAC Secretariat
Meet the Commission to seek a solution to the problems of the 8% tolerance rule (10.3)	Chair and Chair DWG
10 members of NSRAC to be funded to attend Killybegs	Ann Bell

Fishing Association (sp?) workshop in Dublin in September on technical regulations. Email to be sent to members (11.2).	
Forward report of Commission-Norway group on technical measures to NSRAC members (11.3)	Ken Patterson
Adopt and forward the NSRAC response to the Commission communication on reducing discards (12)	NSRAC Secretariat
Species development groups to have comments on MSY by next ExCom meeting in September (14.3)	Development group chairs
Circulate summary of Edinburgh WG (16.3)	NSRAC Secretariat
Come to agreement with NWWRAC on how to organise regional cod recovery focus groups (17.3)	Chairs and Secretariats
Each sector to examine STECF effort report and contact national administrators to improve data being used for the STECF autumn report (18.2)	National and sector industry leaders
Workshop with DWG, the Skaggerak and Kattegat WG, DG Fish, DG Environment and STECF in Dublin on 12 th September to prepare responses to following documents by next ExCom meeting: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commission non-paper on cod recovery • STECF effort analysis (18.3) • Commission policy statement on TAC and quota proposals for 2008 (19.2). 	DWG chair
Adopt and send letter to Mr Fotiadis on the Commission's proposal for TACs and Quotas in 2007 (22.1)	NSRAC Secretariat
Arrange discussion with Community Fisheries Control Agency before the General Assembly and report back to NSRAC (25.2).	Hugo Andersson
Report back on Norway/Iceland study tour to next ExCom meeting (26.4)	Barrie Deas
Reflect on overall structure of NSRAC to take decisions at next General Assembly (26)	All members
Discuss protocols for disseminating and identifying materials with NSRAC participants (26.5)	NSRAC Secretariat
Contact chair of NWWRAC to arrange discussion on spatial legislation for Autumn (27.6)	Euan Dunn, NSRAC Secretariat
Prepare letter supporting the approach to spatial legislation in Germany (27.7)	Euan Dunn
Circulate agenda for directors meeting for amendment and comment by ExCom members (29)	NSRAC chair
Consider funding priorities for NSRAC (WGs, number of ExCom meetings, attending meetings, drafting documents). Make decision at next meeting (1.4, 30)	NSRAC members and secretariat
General Assembly on 15/16 th October in Aalborg. Book flights and accommodation early (31)	NSRAC members

Nominations for NSRAC chairs are open until General Assembly. Circulate email asking for nominations (32.1).	NSRAC secretariat and members
Brown shrimp discussions will continue under the trans-national PO and be reported back to NSRAC (32.2)	Pim Visser

34. In attendance

Hugo Andersson	Chair
Patrice Leduc	UAPF
Michel Goujon	CNPMEM
Hubert Carre	CNPMEM
Francis Foulon	French Ministry of Agriculture
Michael Topping	European Parliament
Jan Willem Wijnstroom	European Anglers' Association
Nathalie Steins-Oosterling	Dutch Fishing Organisation
Willem De Boer	Dutch Fishing Federation
Morten Imer Moller	Danish Ministry of Food Agriculture & Fisheries
Niels Wichmann	Danmarks Fiskeriforening
Flemming Kristensen	Danmarks Fiskeriforening
Michael Andersen	Danmarks Fiskeriforening
Hansen Black	Scottish Fishermen's Federation
Michael Park	Scottish Fishermen's Federation
Chris Darby	CEFAS
Anders Carlberg	VG Region Sweden
Anders Fasth	VG Region Sweden
Lachlan Stewart	Scottish Executive
J. Manuel Liria	FEOPE (Spain)
Pim Visser	EAFPA
Dennis Clark	NFFO
Henrik Svenberg	Swedish Fishermen's Federation
Fredrik Lindberg	Swedish Fishermen's Federation
Bengt-Olof Eliasson	Swedish Fishermen's Federation
Luc Mellaerts	SDVO
Luc Corbisier	Rederscentrale
Peter Breckling	Deutscher Fischerei Verband
Tomasz Jadowski	North Atlantic Producers' Organisation
Barrie Deas	NFFO
Jenny Hatchard	North Sea Women's Network
Nicki Holmyard	North Sea Women's Network
Mark Dougal	NESFO
James Thain	NESFO
Christine Absil	NSF/SAR
Euan Dunn	Birdlife International
Matthew Gianni	EUCC – The Coastal Union
Tom Pickerell	WWF
Alan Campbell	Aberdeenshire Council
Bruno Hoffstadt	German Ministry of Agriculture
Maria-Jesus Ruiz	European Commission
Tobias Kern-Jespersen	BSRAC
Karen Dykstra	Dutch Department of Fisheries
Barbara Schoute	ICES

Karin Linderholm
Benoit Guerin
Ann Kristin Westberg
Martin Pastoors

Ann Bell
Joyce Walker
Tim Daw

Swedish Board of Fisheries
SwwRAC
Norwegian Ministry of Fisheries
ICES

NSRAC Secretariat
NSRAC Secretariat
NSRAC Rapporteur