

CYNGOR GWYNEDD GWYNEDD COUNCIL

Draft minutes of the 13th Pen Llŷn a'r Sarnau SAC Liaison Group meeting held on the 29th January 2007 (starting 7pm) at Plas Tan y Bwlch, Maentwrog.

Present:

Bill Bracewell	Aberdyfi Partnership
Mike Bowyer	Archaeology
Lucy Kay	Countryside Council for Wales (CCW)
Rod Gritten	Snowdonia National Park Authority (SNPA)
David Archer	Snowdonia National Park Authority (SNPA)
Rhys Jones	Gwynedd Council (GC)
Huw Davies	Gwynedd Council (GC)
Rowland Sharp	Personal Interest
Alison Hargrave	SAC Officer
Barry Davies	Gwynedd Council (GC)
Cllr Caerwyn Roberts	Snowdonia National Park Authority (chairman)
Ceri Morris	Living Coasts-Living Seas Project Co-ordinator
Cllr Ray Quant	Councillor
Bill Miller-Jones	Diver and boat owner
Iwan Edgar	Personal Interest
Mike Parry	Llyn Fisherman's Association
Greta Hughes	Community Council and North Western and North Wales Sea Fisheries Committee (NW&NWSFC)
Tim Jones	Countryside Council for Wales (CCW)
Ben Fothergill	
Jeremy Percy	
Glynne Roberts	Scallop Fisherman
Peter Wight	Gwynedd Council (GC)
Vitoria Hickin	
Annalisa Bianchassi	Cardigan Bay SAC Officer
Stephen Atkins	Community Council and North Western and North Wales Sea Fisheries Committee (NW&NWSFC)
Harry Frost	Community Council and North Western and North Wales Sea Fisheries Committee (NW&NWSFC)

Introduction

Caerwyn Roberts welcomed everyone to the meeting. As there were a number of new faces everyone introduced themselves.

1. Apologies:

Andy Hall	Arthog Outdoors Centre
Liz Allen	Ceredigion County Council (CCC)
Liz Jones	Environment Agency (EA)
Alf Bowen	Aberdyfi Partnership
Tony Andrews	Welsh Water (WW)
Robbie Gorman	Fishing

Alika Jones Scallop Fisherman
Eddie Davies Scallop Fisherman
Mike Thrussell

2. Minutes of the last meeting

- 2.1 The minutes were accepted as an accurate record of the meeting.

3. Matters arising

- 3.1 Item 3.2 (Alison to keep the group updated on the progress with the Interreg IIIA raising awareness project): Ceri Morris the project co-ordinator was at the meeting and gave an update on the Interreg project. Please see update attached.

ACTION: Alison to keep the group updated on the Interreg IIIA raising awareness project

- 3.3 Item 6.1 (Alison to discuss lobbying the Assembly regarding SFC at the Wales SAC Officers meeting): Alison discussed this issue at the Welsh GEMS meeting. It was decided to wait until the Welsh Assembly bring out a consultation document, then to tackle it from an all Wales perspective.

Action completed.

- 3.4 Item 6.2 (Alison to organise a meeting to discuss the issue of scallop dredging in the SAC for January 2007 & Iwan Edgar to send a copy of Natur Anghyfreithlon (the episode featuring scallop dredging) to Alison): Iwan Edgar had sent Alison a copy of the programme. Alison mentioned that she had copies if anyone wished to see it.

Actions completed.

4 Presentation by Dr Greta Hughes from the North Western and North Wales Sea Fisheries Committee to be followed by questions – ‘Managing the Scallop Fishery’

- 4.1 Cllr Roberts reminded the group that the purpose of the meeting was to receive a balanced view of scallop dredging. No decisions would be taken based on the meeting. One of the purposes of the Liaison group is to share information; therefore this meeting would be in that capacity only.

- 4.2 Iwan Edgar said that Greta Hughes had hinted during her presentation that there were problems with the statement that there is no history of scallop dredging in Pwllheli. He said that there were.

- 4.3 Glynne Roberts asked how many boats are allowed. Greta Hughes replied that there are eight. She said that if they give permission to one boat, they have to give it to all, there is no regulation on numbers of boats. Glynne Roberts asked whether the SFC could regulate the times at which they fish. Greta Hughes replied that it wouldn't make any difference to the impact of the fishery. Glynne Roberts asked whether the scallop dredgers did cause damage. Greta Hughes replied that it was up to the people fishing to prove that it doesn't.

- 4.4 Mike Parry commented that he had seen more information about this issue tonight than was given to the members. He asked how the SFC made decisions when they hadn't seen all the information.

Cllr Roberts pointed out that his showed why the group were having this meeting – people needed more information.

Mike Parry asked for a copy of Greta Hughes' presentation, to which she agreed.

5 Presentation by Lucy Kay from the Countryside Council for Wales to be followed by questions – ‘Possible Impacts of Scallop Dredging on SAC Conservation Features’

5.1 Lucy Kay handed out a reference list.

5.2 Mike Parry said that he knew of a lobster fisherman who also dredged for scallops. The fisherman was of the opinion that his lobster fishery improved after the scallop season. He also knows of another lobster fisherman who dredges for scallops. He can't see why they would do that if scallop dredging was harmful to the lobster fishery.

Lucy Kay replied that she could only answer based on previous studies in other areas. In Tremadog Bay, there has only been a small scallop fishery. The general finding is that scallop dredging doesn't increase productivity, but may cause a temporary increase in scavenging species in the area.

Mike Parry said that scallop fishermen took advice but there can be a conflict of views on the same fishery. Scientists can give different views.

Lucy Kay replied that the marine environment is a very complex place and there is still a lot that scientists don't understand, and they can only hypothesise. The advice given to the SFC was assumed by some people to be based on the results of the SAC monitoring programme. This was not the case as they had used the results of other scientific studies on which to base their advice. She believes that there had been some misunderstanding regarding this issue.

Mike Parry commented that it was advice that CCW gave, not instruction. Lucy Kay replied that the SFC have a legal duty and must give a proper assessment to any possibly adverse activities. CCW's role is in an advisory capacity.

Mike Parry asked whether Lucy Kay would concede that the fishing around the Welsh coastline as a base level is among the lowest in the UK. There are the lowest activity rates around Wales compared to the rest of the UK. Lucy Kay replied that there are certainly other fisheries that occur in other areas that don't occur in Wales, but this does not affect the impact that may or may not occur in this site.

6 Presentation by Glyn Roberts a Scallop Fisherman to be followed by questions – ‘Fishing for Scallops’

6.1 Glynne Roberts explained that fishermen are for conservation. They do want the scallops to be there next year and in good numbers.

- 6.2 Glynne Roberts pointed out that one dredge cost over £350, so fishermen won't tow them with disregard over large rocks etc for fear of breaking them.
- 6.3 Fishermen's only worry about the SAC is the way it is handled. They worry about what will be next on the line, where will they stop. He commented that trawling does as much damage as scallop dredging.
- 6.4 Glynne Roberts said that they had taken advice from a Dr Miles Hoskins, who said that stormy weather would do more damage to the sea bed than scallop dredging does. He showed some pictures of scallops washed on shore after a storm event.
- 6.5 Lucy Kay asked how do fishermen judge when to go back to an area and carry on fishing it. Glynne Roberts replied that you can go back to an area year after year. The scallop beds might have moved slightly. They have a certain limit that they work to so that it is cost effective.
- 6.6 Greta Hughes said that in view of the fact that scallops are broadcast breeders, wouldn't it be beneficial to have an area where they are left alone to recover. Glynne Roberts agreed with this and cited an Irish example but said that more research needed to be done.

Greta Hughes said that many of the scallop beds in Tremadog Bay are open, but asked wouldn't it be beneficial to keep one sensitive area closed. In Hell's Mouth there aren't any scallops, so from a fisheries point of view wouldn't it be beneficial to keep it closed?

Glynne Roberts said that if they had any evidence that the larvae from a closed area were spreading elsewhere, then they would agree to that.

- 6.7 Ben Fothergill asked what was the history of scallop dredging in Tremadog Bay. Glynne Roberts replied that it was always known that there were scallops there because divers used to bring them ashore. There was no dredging in great density in the past, because large boats couldn't go inshore. To his knowledge there was one boat that fished there in 2004.
- 6.8 Steven Atkins asked how would the scallop fisheries take to a diver-supported fishery. It could be possible in Tremadog Bay, would they take it up? Glynne Roberts replied that in shallow water that could be an option. Ben Fothergill said that scallop diving was a good form of fishing but had huge running costs and that during the scallop season, Cardigan Bay isn't sheltered enough.
- 6.9 Mike Parry said that due to the Welsh Scallop Order they lost a month of the scallop fishing season. This was accepted at the time. They also suggested technical measures to stop others from exploiting the area (i.e. bar limits). He said they have had problems with big boats making incursions locally.

Greta Hughes said that south of the line drawn West from Braich y Pwll is closed from July to December 31 so the Welsh Scallop Order did not affect this part of the fishery.

- 6.10 Mike Parry said that indirectly part of this exclusion is that it endangers the lives of fishermen. People couldn't see that sending fishermen further out to sea would be endangering their lives and should be a concern to everyone present at the meeting.
- 6.11 Iwan Edgar said that this is irrelevant. It is the fishermen's choice to do it, it is irrelevant to conservation. Local fishermen should get a living if they can, but the scientific evidence shows that if they don't protect the fishery there will be no livelihood. Science shows that they should diversify and take other species, but if we don't slow over-fishing, there will be no fish to take. As an SAC monitoring body, the group needs to see that they have obligations to make sure the place isn't empty of fish. From hearing the scientific evidence, we have a responsibility to conserve. We have a responsibility to make sure the fishermen continue to make a living, but if the area is over-fished, there will be no living to be made. We have the same situation with arguing over global warming – should we wait until there is more of a mess before we agree?
- 6.12 Cllr Roberts commented that we share one thing on land and sea – there is a line, and if we cross it we are in trouble. We need to co-work.
- 6.13 Mike Parry said that the way forward is a managed fishery like in the Isle of Man. He doesn't believe the Welsh fishery is that severe.
- 6.14 Glynne Roberts commented that all the species that Lucy Kay mentioned in her presentation were lovely. He's been scalloping since the 1980s and there were 18 boats in those days. The marine life appears to have survived all of that. There is a horse mussel bed that appears to have survived despite the scalloping.
- 6.15 Cllr Roberts said that the Isle of Man and Ireland have been mentioned with regards to collating information. He asked how much do CCW work with these areas? Lucy Kay replied that CCW worked with them quite a bit, and the Isle of Man have led the way. Ireland is relevant in terms of Strangford Loch where a Horse mussel reef was lost due to mobile fishing. There was a reasonable amount of communication between relevant bodies on these matters, but it could be better.
- 6.16 Bill Miller-Jones said that one of the biggest threats to local fishermen and the SAC is the threat of big boats coming in to fish the area. Greta Hughes replied that the SFC's concern is that if an area was opened to scallop dredging, they couldn't regulate the number of boats coming in to fish the area. If the area was not closed, they wouldn't be able to regulate it.

Greta Hughes continued to say that prior to 2004 there was no scallop dredging documented in Tremadog Bay at all. Then one fisherman discovered a scallop bed, but it hasn't ever sustained dredging. We are talking about a whole new type of vessel [to be used in scallop dredging]. In 2005 the area was opened and two vessels exploited it. Now there are two purpose built scallop dredging vessels. Before that, there weren't any.

Mike Parry said that it is possible to have up to 28 dredges per side on the larger boats. What they should try and do for the indigenous artisan fleet is to limit the time allowed on the scallop beds so that it is not economical for the larger fleets to come to the area.

Greta Hughes replied that a time limit has no effect, the destruction done to the area is the same. Lucy Kay agreed with this. Mike Parry said that he would have expected that comment from Lucy Kay, but not from Greta Hughes.

- 6.17 Greta Hughes replied that the SFC are not against fishing in the SAC in general, they were only talking about a small closed area. Lucy Kay said that the issue of bottom trawling and its impact on nursery areas is something that needs to be looked at and is a serious consideration for fisheries managers.

7 Discussion

Discussion took place after each presentation.

8 Time and date of next meeting

Cllr Caerwyn Roberts drew the meeting to a close by thanking everyone who took part. He also explained that David Archer would be retiring in a couple of months and this would be his last meeting. On behalf of the group he wished David well and thanked him for all the hard work he had put into the Pen Llŷn a'r Sarnau SAC.

There will be a meeting in April – date and time to be arranged.