



Shellfish Centre

Stakeholder Advisory Group Meeting
Thursday 21st November 2019

Conference Room, Marine Centre Wales, Bangor University, Menai Bridge.

In attendance:

Lewis Le Vay (Chair and Project Director) LLV

Esther Howie (Project Manager) EH

Shelagh Malham (Senior Research Fellow) SM

Eunice Pinn (Seafish) (via Skype) EP

John Holmyard (Offshore Shellfish Ltd.) (via Skype) JH

Rowland Sharp (Natural Resources Wales) RS

James Wilson (Deepdock Ltd.) JW

Jim Evans (Welsh Fishermen's Association - Cymdeithas Pysgotwyr Cymru) JE

Ros James (Shellfish Centre) - note-taker

Report of meeting

1. Welcome and Introductions

LLV thanked everyone for attending, and for agreeing to be part of the Stakeholder Advisory Group (SAG). Each member introduced themselves.

2. Terms of Reference, composition of group, Chair and frequency of meetings

LLV talked through the Terms of Reference as set out in the papers for the meeting, and invited discussion and thoughts on the current group. JW asked about the membership and role of the other two groups which come under Operation Governance, i.e. the Project Board and the Steering/Monitoring Group, and suggested that the SAG is different in that it is concerned with stakeholder buy-in rather than compliance and reporting. LLV explained that this group's purpose is to provide oversight and guidance on scope and progress of the operation, including new opportunities and economic impact. Other mechanisms are in place to achieve industry buy-in, via direct engagement, workshops and attendance at external events, with more workshops planned for the New Year. He

emphasised the need to be transparent and open, and in particular the need to reassure the industry that the work of the project is not displacing private sector companies.

The Group was happy for LLV to Chair, although LLV suggested that in a situation where the project was being questioned or challenged it might be less appropriate for him to do so. The SAG agreed that meeting quarterly was necessary to ensure that the group fulfilled its brief.

In terms of the composition of the Stakeholder Advisory Group, members agreed that a further member should be invited to representing both South West Wales and the oyster sector, and that a representative from Welsh Government (WG), either from Policy or the Science team, should also be invited to attend.

It was agreed that for the SAG to be effective, it should meet more frequently than the annual meetings described in the business plan. A proposal for quarterly meetings was adopted, so long as remote attendance could be supported.

Action: LLV to approach WG to invite representation as part of the SAG

3. Project Summary

LLV talked through a PowerPoint presentation, which is available on the project website www.shellfish.wales, which covered the scope of and background to the Operation, and emphasised that all the individual projects are industry-driven and taken forward only if they meet the necessary criteria. There was some sensitivity around publicising detailed project information until all the contract paperwork has been agreed and signed, hence most projects were presented only as one-line topics. JW said that it would be useful to have an understanding of how the in-kind industry contribution is established and calculated, and felt that it was important that we log contributions as we go along. This is in line with current system where companies estimate their contribution to projects at the outset, with an on-going dialogue going to help companies to think about what they are contributing as it is happening, though final records are only evidenced at closure of each project.

4. Financial summary and progress against indicators

A summary of progress against indicators was presented, which showed 16 projects at various stages of development, which is largely on track against an overall target of 20 projects. While this represents a strong position at end of Year 1, LLV stated the importance of compiling the completed contract paperwork and being able to evidence the outputs arising for each project to satisfy WEFO indicator requirements.

5. Review of scope of work undertaken

RS asked if there was scope to have a project which involved and helped a number of end-users at one time, namely an advisory "one-stop shop" that provided information and signposting to potential new businesses and new starters in the industry. LLV confirmed

that the project would not be able to do this, as there are companies who could provide that type of service, and there would consequently be potential for displacement issues.

Hatchery work was identified as an area of interest that is currently not being addressed, despite the scarcity of UK based hatcheries, reflecting the resource requirements for setting up and running a commercial-viable experimental hatchery

JW stressed the importance of completing the current projects, and the risk that in taking on more and more projects some things might not be completed - and suggested scheduling some planned projects into Years 2/3. JH also commented on the scale of commitments by the Shellfish Centre to planned projects, and the need to consolidate progress that has been made. LLV agreed and recognised that the amount of work being undertaken by the project is ambitious, but pointed out that collaborating companies often have current research needs so that it is difficult to delay starts. Also, that there is a need to continually be seeking out new projects to ensure that the Shellfish Centre fulfils its potential over the funding period – though there may need to be some screening against resource/capacity and value for money/impact.

6. Increasing Impact

There was a thorough discussion regarding the need to link the work of the Shellfish Centre with key themes in WG, UK government and global economic and environmental drivers, and to promote all the ways in which the project and the industry as a whole are making a positive contribution. JH referred to the findings of the opening workshop that access to site and space is a key constraint on the sector, and made a strong argument that the impact of the Centre would be magnified if it could help communicate the positive benefits that can come from increase shellfish farming as one of the most sustainable forms of food production. This could be to range of audiences, included broadcasting the alignment between the aims of the Operation and those of Welsh Government (eg for sustainable food production and management of marine natural resources), and sending out a strong message about the food sustainability and ecological benefits of aquaculture. RS said that there is currently an issue with aquaculture being assessed in terms of whether it will have any adverse effect, rather than capturing the positive effects. The Centre's publicity campaign should help address issues around social licence to operate and work towards providing a definition of 'public goods' from a marine perspective.

7. Avoidance of displacement reviews

The strategy for avoiding potential for displacement of the private sector consultants and research providers was reviewed. LLV reiterated that all projects are screened thoroughly via a robust process before they can be taken forward, and avoidance of any displacement was a priority. JH suggested that our project work might in fact facilitate the work of consultants and/or provide them with increased work opportunities. LLV pointed out that often there was scope to work collaboratively.

8. Exit strategy

It was reported that a proposal was submitted to WEFO to extend the project. This has been acknowledged but there are currently no funds in the programme to support any extensions (though this may be reviewed in the New Year). WEFO would also need to be satisfied that the Operation is spending effectively and delivering outputs close to profile. As the Shellfish Centre is a relatively young operation, this is harder to evidence compared to larger, longer-running projects, hence the importance of completing as much of the contract paperwork as possible. JE suggested that there is reference to the Welsh Government "Taking Wales Forward Strategy" and align reporting with that as much as possible.

8. AOB

None

9. Date of next meeting

Date options for next meeting to take place in mid-February will be circulated