



Advisory Group Meeting

Thursday 27th February 2020

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

James Wilson (Deepdock Ltd.) JW

Karen Tuson (Project Support Officer) KT

Via Skype/phone:

Eunice Pinn (Seafish) EP

Karen Robinson (Natural Resources Wales) KR

Bekah Cioffi – (Welsh Government) BC

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

Apologies:

John Holmyard (Offshore Shellfish Ltd.)

Ros James (Shellfish Centre)

Report of meeting

1. Welcome and introductions

LLV thanked everyone for attending. A few changes to the group since the last meeting. Thanks given to BC also to KR for attending in the interim until Sean Evans is able to join. Each member introduced themselves for the benefit of the new members.

2. Actions from last meeting

LLV confirmed that the group had suggested quarterly meetings but added that this could possibly be too frequent, depending on the progress to date and can be discussed during the meeting.

Welsh government has joined the Advisory group and LLV thanked BC.

Andy Woolmer has been approached to join the group and awaiting confirmation. LLV recognises that Advisory group does need a representative from South Wales and the oyster sector.

3. Terms of reference and documents

For the new members LLV briefly summarised the Terms of Reference and all members of the group confirmed they had received previous meetings notes and associated papers in advance of meeting.

LLV also summarised the project funding stream and remit of the Shellfish Centre.

4. Project progress summary

LLV presented an update on progress with a summary of the 20 collaborative projects to date. Currently have 14 companies collaborating and the project is ahead of schedule. LLV explained, for new members, the 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.

Currently, six collaborations which are at the stage where collaboration agreements are being prepared with central contracts team at Bangor University and once signed details will be up on the website [example of project PDF was shown to the group]. To date, all RD&I projects are therefore operating under no state aid basis and all outputs will be in the public domain.

The number of companies and organisations that want to collaborate is encouraging and the Shellfish centre is balancing the requests with the workload of the team. There is scope to employ one additional staff member and this will regularly be reviewed. Since last meeting the team have been consolidating projects on the advice of the Advisory Group.

Future plans include workshops and to hold a conference in the summer of 2021. The intended oyster workshop has not progressed further and will now be postponed until summer 2020. One objective is to engage more within the South West of Wales.

The Shellfish Centre has responded to the request from last meeting, to promote further shellfish aquaculture in Wales both to the public and to regulatory bodies and government, inside and outside Wales. The project team have promoted research at workshops and conferences and are currently working on overview perspective papers with international partners which will be used in public facing media outputs.

A new international network has been set up the North Atlantic European Mussel Organisation (NAEMO) with membership from across Europe, Turkey, USA and Canada, in which the Shellfish Centre has had a lead role in the development and organisation (thanks to Julie Webb's active participation). In addition, NAEMO's web presence will initially be supported on the Shellfish Centre website, which should help attract European and worldwide traffic.

In May 2020 the Shellfish Centre is coordinating a workshop in Brussels focussing on the issue of norovirus in shellfish which will be a significant outreach event for this project.

The project currently has a small amount of underspend and from recent discussions with WEFO they are open to the project reprofiling and extending the end of the project. By extending for a 6-12 months this could give the staff flexibility to take on additional contracts within this time

frame is good for the exit strategy. Regarding the exit strategy the management team are looking at current opportunities to continue the Shellfish Centre and other related funding opportunities

LLV presented a summary of progress against indicators. Detailing all projects at various stages of development. Progress is largely on track against an overall target of 20 projects. There is the scope to complete more projects

5. Open discussion

There was a thorough discussion regarding the need to link research and evidence together and for it to fit inside the regulatory framework. This mirrored comments from the previous meeting.

It was agreed that there needed to be a constructive approach to novel fisheries with the regulators taking a holistic approach when carrying out HRAs with a move away from considering negative impacts to one which also considers positive impacts for balance.

The Welsh Government Fisheries Evidence Plan is to include chapters on aquaculture, with Welsh Government working in conjunction with NRW. More emphasis is to be placed on how both organisations can ensure scientific evidence is in place to support aquaculture management and policy. It was also suggested that funding gaps could be supported directly by the WG. This was welcomed by all and a request was made to ensure when novel activities were put forward, a structured time frame be put in place for decision process.

LLV reiterated that the Shellfish Centre projects remit is to help the aquaculture sector in Wales to grow. From the first workshop held it was clear that lead time for new site approval for existing culture or diversification is too long, a bottle neck that not easily fixed by this project but it can provide evidence.

It was agreed by all that another workshop should be held to build on the evidence gathered at the first one, to help facilitate further discussion between industry, research and government and to review the current network and identify where there are limitations and gaps for improvement; in sustainable use of marine resource around Wales well. A request was noted that such a workshop should not contain lengthy presentations.

Further discussions on additional evidence gathering currently being undertaken by other WG departments, such as identification of potential Strategic Resource Areas that may be included in the Welsh National Marine Plan. However, evidence gathering for aquaculture has not progressed as far as other fisheries.

LLV suggested potential for the project to undertake a systematic review of evidence on interactions between shellfish aquaculture and the environment, to help inform an impact matrix. (this arose from discussions with Andy Woolmer). This was well received and the Marine Scotland tool [FEAST](#), Feature Activity Sensor Tool, was highlighted for reference.

6. AOB

None

7. Date of next meeting and actions

In light of the technical difficulties experienced with Skype during the meeting it was agreed to meet again in 3 months. Date options for next meeting will be circulated

Action – LLV to speak to Andy Woolmer regarding joining the group.

Action – LLV to plan an additional workshop for summer 2020

END