

Electrofishing for razor clams trial : workshops with fishermen, businesses, and representatives

Note of meeting : 06 June 2017, Cameron House, Albany Street, Oban

Attendees:

Fred Brown, *Orkney Dived Scallops*
Greig Chalmers, *Marine Scotland, Access to Sea Fisheries*
Cameron Douglas, *West Loch Shellfish Ltd*
Clive Fox, *Scottish Association for Marine Science*
John Grafton, *Fisherman*
John Grieve, *Lochleven Shellfish*
Robbie Grieve, *Fisherman*
Douglas Hill, *Easdale Seafoods Ltd*
Ellen Huis, *Marine Scotland, Access to Sea Fisheries*
Bruce Langlands, *Fisherman*
David Leadbetter, *Fisherman*
Duncan MacInnes, *Western Isles Fishermen's Association*
Iain Macnab, *Fisherman*
David MacNeil, *Fisherman*
Don MacPhee, *Fisherman*
Scott McKinlay, *Fisherman*
Jamie McMillan, *Loch Fyne Langoustines*
Alastair McNeill, *West Coast RIFG*
Donald Nicholson, *Outer Hebrides RIFG*
Duncan Rowan, *Diver*
Iain Scott, *Fisherman*
Ally Young, *Marine Scotland Compliance*

Purpose

To discuss the development of the electrofishing for razor clam trial and gather opinions about where the trials should take place.

Design & methodology of the trial

Minimum landing size (MLS) / population dynamics

The general consensus was that the 100mm MLS for the species of razor clams found in Scottish waters is too small. However, due to the main market demand from the Far East, razor clams landed in Scotland are significantly larger than the MLS. There is a lesser market in the UK and Europe for a smaller class of razor clams.

Fishermen reported that different sizes of razor clams tend to be found in different areas, with a correlation between depth of water and size of razors, smaller clams tend to be in shallower water.

Effort and catch limits

There were mixed views on limiting effort during the trial. Some favoured a ban on night and weekend fishing whilst others felt that a more flexible approach should be considered to avoid

risks being taken e.g. during spells of poor weather. Other proposals were for a limit to the number of days per week that vessels can fish or a monthly catch limit.

Attendees recognised that the trial will include a limited number of vessels and that all fishing boats not participating in the trial will be prohibited from harvesting razor clams in Scottish waters. There was general agreement that the trial should seek to include a larger number of boats with an appropriate and workable catch limit rather than have fewer boats with a higher catch limit.

Water classification

There were no disagreements to a suggestion that it would be prudent for the trial to be restricted to Class A waters. It was felt that the current depuration facilities in Scotland would not be able to cope if the trial involved Class B waters. Cost of depuration is in the region of £1/kg.

Value of catch

It tends to be the case that the value of razor clams decreases a bit in the summer months because the market is well supplied. However this year the value has remained steady which many attributed to the recent catch limit introduced by Marine Scotland.

Harvesting sites : proposals from attendees for the trial sites

It was evident that those currently involved in the fishery are quite mobile in that they would be willing to travel/base boats further afield in order to participate in the trial.

The trial areas proposed by attendees are shown on the map:

Area 1 – Broad Bay

Area 2 – Sound of Harris

Area 3 – South Ford

Area 4 – Sound of Barra

Area 5 – Inner Sound to Sound of Arisaig

Area 6 – Coll and Tiree

Area 7 – Colonsay and Tarbert Bank

Area 8 – Gigha and West Kintyre



Next steps

Access to Sea Fisheries team will discuss the workshop findings with other public bodies in order to define the trial sites.