



**MINUTES OF THE  
MEETING OF THE GENERAL COMMITTEE HELD AT  
COUNTY HALL, MORPETH ON 22 OCTOBER AT 2.30 PM**

**PRESENT: NIFCA Members:**

Mr R Arckless (Chairman), Mr L Weller (Vice Chairman), Dr C Scott, Mrs C Hedley, Mrs J Fearon, Mrs J Lee, Mrs E Simpson, Mr R J D Watkin, Mr D Herriott, Mr J Stephenson, Mr J Walton, Mr B Burdis, Mr M D Bould, Mr D Herriott, Mr M Kitching, Mr A B Ritchie, Mr N Robinson, Mr I Thomas, Mr J Woodman

**From NIFCA:**

Mr M H Hardy (Chief Executive), Ms P Richards (to minute the proceedings), Chief IFCO A B Browne, Deputy Chief IFCO (Operations) M Southerton, Deputy Chief IFCO (Environmental) J Green, IFCO/Engineer J Cooke, Environmental IFCO S Aftergood

In attendance as an observer was Ms L Corrigan of Natural England who had been invited by Mrs J Lee.

*The Chairman introduced two new members Dr M Kitching who replaced previous member Mr N Joliffe; and Mr N Robinson of the MMO in place of Mr S Douglas who had taken up a different position within the MMO.*

*The Chairman referred to the 2 presentations listed under items 3.2 and 3.3 of the Agenda saying there was insufficient time for two presentations today and in line with other IFCAs it was necessary to have the CFP presentation today and thus postpone Dr Kitching's presentation to another day and apologised to Dr Kitching. The Chairman also said it was not really ideal to have 2 presentations at quarterly general committee meetings.*

**3.1 Apologies for absence and declarations of interest**

**Apologies for absence** were received from Messrs D Ledger and G W O'Connell. There were no declarations of interest.

**3.2 Presentation on CFP Reform by MMO**

Mr Robinson gave the presentation on CFP Reform, giving apologies for Mr Douglas, and saying that there was a package of reforms coming into effect on 1 January 2014. He then outlined the proposed reforms:

- There are proposals for a new Maritime and Fisheries Fund and it was hoped there would possibly be funding for new patrol vessels in the future and should this go ahead, when timescales were announced, this could be something for IFCAs to tap into but would not be before 2016.

- Reform of basic CFP regulations.
- A commitment to catching sustainable fish by 2015 – 2020 with access to all waters but some 0 – 12 limits will remain. There will also be fish stock recovery areas if required.
- **Aquaculture** - there would be a new Advisory Council for this.

Re options for discards – decisions will be made at regional and RACs level. Quotas will control what is caught rather than what is landed. Quotas will go up where there is a scientific upgrade to which large quotas will be added. Discards will run with quotas for the stocks with the most value but it may be necessary to return to sea prohibited species although exceptions which are scientifically based will be applied. This is potentially because of the need to grade stocks.

When deducting by – catch from targets species which has exhausted, not more than 9% of by-catch can be used from another target species where the quota is not exhausted.

Re control – options of CCTV cameras is appropriate in some fisheries, also observation and self auditing. There will also be conservation where appropriate below a minimum which can only be used for non-human consumption which will count against quota.

New conservation reference sizes will replace minimum landing sizes. Where appropriate fish below these can only be used for non-human consumption (will count against quota).

Mr Robinson said he would forward a summary of his presentation after the meeting.

Mrs Fearon spoke saying it would be recalled she had always been very concerned about discards and had written to the Fisheries Minister and British fisheries managers. She was however pleased to hear of the importance attributed to discards which were immoral in the sense of wastage of food.

It was commented that there would be a lot of work for the industry and Mr Ritchie said that stocks are basically on the increase but that quotas will still run out too early in the year. There was also reference to selective gear. Mr Bould said it was problematic in Northumberland as there is a mixed fishery all year round and fishermen have to catch what they can when that is allowed. Regarding discards he said they have fed sea gulls but there is a massive market for shellfish bait and also fish meal. Prohibiting discards will be difficult for coastal communities and there is no incentive to fish if what is caught and landed is classed as not fit for human consumption.

At this point Mr Woodman left the meeting.

The Chairman said that everybody agreed that the Common Fisheries Policy is not fit for purpose. He also expressed admiration for the work of Richard Benyon and his understanding of the issues and his departure is regretted. Mr Ritchie endorsed those comments.

In response to a question regarding CCTV on vessels Mr Robinson said there had been some headway but this was not going to happen immediately and there could maybe be alternatives from the industry.

The Vice Chairman said that for the first time recreational fishermen had been mentioned in the CFP. Arising from Sea Angling 2012, recreational captures could also be seen as relevant re-quotas.

Mr Robinson was thanked for his presentation.

### **3.3 Presentation by Dr Martin Kitching – North East Cetacean Project**

Please see preliminary note above and the decision to postpone this presentation.

### **3.4 Minutes of previous meetings**

3.4.1 Minutes of the quarterly meeting held on 23 July 2013 at County Hall, Morpeth and matters arising therefrom.

3.4.2 Minutes of meeting held at Unit 60B, Cramlington on 8 August 2013 Regarding Revised Approach to B&NNCSAC/EMS.

3.4.3 Minutes of Extraordinary General Committee meeting on 28 August 2013 regarding proposed byelaws arising from the Revised Approach to B&NNCSAC/EMS held at County Hall, Morpeth.

It was moved by Mr Watkin and seconded by Mr Herriott that all the minutes be received and adopted as a true record and this was unanimously agreed.

### **3.5 Other meetings attended during the last quarter**

The Chairman said that all the meetings had already been dealt with earlier today. Particularly under item 3.4 and that they should be adopted unless there were any queries or issues to be raised. The following matters were arising:

#### **Item 3.9 Recreational Sea Angling**

After discussion it was agreed that this data would be put on the website.

Discussion followed on putting general committee meeting minutes onto the NIFCA website and the Chief Executive said it would be attempted to put the draft minutes of this meeting onto the website by mid November.

#### **EMS Revised Approach and the Annual Report**

The Chief Executive said it was hoped that these would be completed as required in each case by the end of November. Both the Annual Report and Annual Plan were massive tasks and took a great deal of preparation and, together with the proposed move to the new premises and all the extra work that entailed, could mean a slight delay but he realised the importance of the Annual Report and would hope to get this out to members as soon as he could and certainly he was hopeful to have this done by the end of November.

Regarding the EMS Revised Approach, he reported there was only one IFCA which he knew had produced their byelaws so far and this too was a big task but in respect of NIFCA we are on course with the statutory consultation period ending on 5 November 2013. So far there had been no responses to the proposed mobile gear byelaw but there had been some 30 odd responses to date for the proposed seagrass byelaw which largely comprised sea anglers. The Chief Executive said a date should be fixed for all responses received after the deadline of 5 November to be considered with members before all of the paperwork is sent to the MMO.

Also regarding the Revised Approach, work has commenced on Amber and Green risks. IFCO Aftergood together with Deputy Chief IFCO Jon Green would also be attending the IFCAs Technical Advisory Group (TAG) meeting in November in Scarborough. The Chief Executive also said Sarah Aftergood was due to meet with Professor Polunin to discuss the Authorities approach to and work with the University on Marine Science matters.

The Chief Executive also said it was hoped to have in the next quarter a Budget Planning meeting like last year, a Scientific and Technical sub-committee meeting particularly to look at Legacy Byelaw Review and a Patrol Vessel sub-committee meeting.

It was moved by Mr Watkin and seconded by Mr Arckless that these actions be approved and adopted, particularly with regard to the proposed sub-committee meeting.

**3.6 Chief Executive's report for quarter ending 30 September 2013 (for members only)**

**3.7 Update on NIFCA Projects** which the Chairman suggested should be discussed along with item **3.10 Projects Update**

The Chief Executive confirmed that the Authority continues to have a number of ongoing projects which would benefit stakeholders. These were outlined including "Project Inshore" and projects with Newcastle University –

Dan Skerritt continues with his lobster work and Andrew Spencer with his Crab Assessment project. Of more immediate interest perhaps is the Assessment of Potting Intensity within the EMS, which commenced before the EMS Revised Approach.

Professor Polunin outlined his department's efforts to get extra funding for project work re Finfish including re "age rings", (which are not found in shellfish) but he also planned to apply for EFF funding for ageing work re shellfish. He also referred to the above mentioned assessment of pot intensity in the EMS Project by Fabrice Stephenson, with thanks to Natural England for their funding and support. He confirmed this is also important work for the University and they hoped to establish programmes in future using sea bed data including that gathered by others including Cefas. Professor Polunin indicated he would be very interested to hear of any projects being undertaken in this field.

The Chief Executive said, regarding potting intensity, he had held a meeting with Claire Fitzsimmons and further funding is needed which the University

will be seeking from the European Fisheries Fund. He also understood from Claire that Cefas had indicated support for this work.

### **3.8 EMS Revised Approach**

This was discussed at 3.5 above.

### **3.9 Byelaws Review Update**

The Chief Executive outlined that the current byelaws are a legacy from the former Northumberland Sea Fisheries Committee and the required review should be completed by the end of the Authority's fourth year. This is on course for NIFCA. As previously recorded, NIFCA has decided to carry out an overall review of all byelaws. More dedicated time could now be given to this and the plan is for officers to meet again with the MMO, then put a draft to members and discuss at a Technical and Scientific sub-committee meeting. The Authority could then go to informal public consultation and aim to make the byelaws by the April quarterly meeting followed by public consultation with a view to the byelaws being sent to the MMO/Defra for signing off by August/September 2014. That would be ideal, especially because IFCAs have previously understood the 4 year report on IFCAs to Parliament by Defra would be in about March 2015 but in fact would now be in the autumn of 2014 i.e. 4 years from the commencement of shadow IFCAs.

The Chairman then referred to the meeting a few weeks ago with Defra at the Authority office which the Chairman said had been positive. The departure of Richard Benyon and his replacement by a new Fisheries Minister meant however, inevitably, that there would be delay in confirmation of the position re continuation of New Burdens Funding for IFCAs beyond 2015. The Chairman repeated his thanks to Mr Benyon and Mr Watkin supported that.

### **3.10 Report on Progress of Projects**

This has already been covered previously at this meeting.

### **3.11 Recreational Sea Angling and Bait Digging Update**

The Chief Executive confirmed the importance of Sea Angling in Northumberland, that the Authority was now engaging with Sea Anglers and of course had also participated very actively in last year's Sea Angling Project. The Authority also has IFCO Docherty leading in terms of continuing to gather data and engaging with the NESAs website. The formal presentation in London of the Sea Angling 2012 report was due to take place soon and the Authority would be represented there.

The Vice Chairman spoke about the Angling Trust and its recent launch of a Northumberland region which he viewed positively. He also confirmed his attendance at the bait digging conference with IFCO Docherty and our member Mrs Hedley, EMS Implementation Officer. He referred to scientific work in respect of bait digging, but that it is also an emotive subject. There continued to be concerns, not just in Northumberland, about regulation for seagrass.

Mr Watkin spoke regarding the reaction from recreational fishers to the Authority's interest in sea angling. The Chief Executive also stressed that

NIFCA had continued to prioritise work on recreational sea angling despite the pressures particularly of the EMS Revised Approach.

### **3.12 Epitome of Correspondence**

It was moved by the Chairman, seconded by Mr Herriott that this be approved and this was agreed by the meeting.

### **3.13 Summary Reports of Watch and Finance Committees by Chief Executive**

#### **Watch Committee**

The Chief Executive started his report saying that there was also in attendance at the Watch and Finance meetings new members Mr Burdis and Mr Woodman in attendance as observers.

Mr Arckless asked if the Committee could adopt the Chief Executive's report in terms of the various committees and that was agreed.

The Chief Executive had referred the Watch Committee to infringements re matters completed in the last quarter and possible forthcoming cases.

Regarding the patrol vessel report the Chief Executive particularly mentioned the visit by officers and Mr Herriott to Southampton regarding patrol vessel procurement. Mr Cooke was also thanked for his maintenance work and report to the Watch Committee. The Chief Executive also summarised the current procurement situation as reported on particularly by Chief IFCO Browne. The Chief Executive also stressed the importance of following procurement procedures and that all of procurement had to continue for the time being through the procurement team at the County – he gave thanks for the Head of Procurement team at the County having given a presentation to the Watch Committee.

It was moved by Mr Watkin and seconded by the Chairman that the report on the meeting of the Watch Committee be received and adopted and the meeting so resolved.

#### **Finance Committee**

The Chief Executive reported that the Finance Committee had agreed that due to the EMS Revised Approach the "Fishing for Litter" project would be put to one side for the time being as we simply do not have the resources for the extra work entailed.

The Finance Committee had accepted the quarterly accounts and the budget document giving Estimates for and Actual Expenditure for the year to date and that overall the Authority continued to operate within forecasts although there had been more expenditure to contend with than envisaged for the change of premises. At this point the Chairman expressed sympathy with the position of the officers and staff and also regarding the fact that as an IFCA we try to develop a structure to move from an ad hoc basis for salaries to something more structured. However, the Finance Committee have deferred action on that until the next General Committee meeting for consideration and hopefully that will also help as part of the budget process. The Chairman went on that the Finance Committee was concerned that the staff should

know where they stand as much as possible. It is taking a while but the Finance Committee indicated to the Chief Executive that they would wish this to be prioritised.

The Chief Executive continued with his report- the 2012 – 2013 audit had been subject to minor queries but has now been completed satisfactorily for another year.

Re update on **Strategic Environmental Assessment** from the financial point of view, through the good offices of Mott MacDonald hopefully a meeting of stakeholders will be arranged in the next quarter. Out of the total cost for the project, £15,000 has been contributed by Natural England to date and this will hopefully be followed by a further £5,000.

**Lobster V-Notching Scheme 2013** – the Chief Executive reported that once again this was proceeding satisfactorily and to date £1,545 had been donated mainly by commercial fishermen.

**Risk Assessment** – the Risk Assessment will be further reviewed as it is six months or so since the last review and it is an important requirement of the Auditors that we get the Risk Assessment matrix approved both from financial and other risks point of view and the meeting for this would be held at the end of October and reported for approval at the January meeting of the Finance Committee. This was approved and the Chief Executives report was received and adopted by the meeting.

### **3.14 Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Officers Reports**

#### **3.14.1 Combined IFCO Report for quarter ending 30 September 2013**

#### **3.14.2 Quarterly Environmental Report by Chief IFCO (Environmental) J Green for quarter ending 30 September 2013**

The two reports were received and adopted following a motion by the Chairman, seconded by Mr Watkin and with thanks to the officers.

### **3.15 Any Other Business**

The Chief Executive said the sub-committee meetings referred to at this meeting would be held at Blyth. There being no further business the meeting closed at 4.10 pm.

