

**MINUTES OF THE GENERAL COMMITTEE MEETING HELD AT
COUNTY HALL MORPETH ON 28th APRIL 2015 AT 2:00PM**

PRESENT: NIFCA Members:

Mr G R Arckless (Chairman), Mr L Weller (Vice Chairman), Mr M Bould, Mrs C Hedley, Mr D Herriott, Mr S Lowe, Mr P Rippon, Mr N Robinson, Mr J Stephenson, Mr I Thomas, Mr D Thompson, Mr D Watkin and Mr J Woodman.

NIFCA Officers Present: M H Hardy (Chief Executive),
Chief IFCO A B Browne Deputy Chief IFCO (Environmental) J Green,
Deputy Chief IFCO (Operations) M Southerton,
Environmental IFCO E McLoughney and IFCO Sally Stewart-Moore.

- 3.0** Election of Chairman and Vice Chairman for the term of office to 26th April 2016 - the Chief Executive took the chair and asked for nominations for Chairman. Mr Watkin nominated Mr Arckless which Mr Herriott seconded. There were no other nominations and the appointment of Mr Arckless as Chairman for the next year was confirmed. Mr Arckless then nominated Mr Weller as Vice Chairman, which Mr Watkin seconded. There were no other nominations and the meeting confirmed the appointment of Mr Weller as Vice Chairman.

The Chairman took the chair and thanked members for his appointment and said he was very proud of what the Authority had achieved, particularly regarding the new patrol vessel, with delivery due soon. He said it was significant that this had been purchased by the IFCA from its own resources and said this is no mean feat in the present age. He commended the foresight of people like Mr Watkin on the Sea Fisheries Committee for establishing the patrol vessel fund. He also gave his thanks to Mr Weller for being such an able Vice Chairman who often covered for the Chairman when required.

The Chief Executive asked if there were any nominations for Watch and Finance Committee vacancies and Mr Stephenson nominated Mr Ritchie. The Chairman said as Mr Ritchie is not present then the Chief Executive should write to Mr Ritchie asking if he wished to take up a position on the Watch and Finance Committees.

3.1 There were no declarations of interest.

Apologies for absence:

Apologies for absence were recorded from Dr Kitching, Mr Ritchie, Dr Scott, Professor Polunin and Ms Grimshaw.

The Chairman said there could be possible Councillor member changes which could follow from the Council AGM on 20th May.

3.2.1 The Minutes of the previous Quarterly Meeting on 27th January 2015

The minutes were agreed as a true record. Regarding matters arising, the Chairman asked if he could receive a copy of Ashling Tinlin's report when this is received.

3.3 Defra and other consultations update

As well as what is in the Epitome of Correspondence (item 16), the Chief Executive confirmed that the Authority's response to the MCZ consultation had been filed with Defra. He also gave thanks to Dr Scott and Professor Polunin for preparation of the Authority's MSFD consultation response and to IFCO Stewart-Moore for formatting this and forwarding to Defra. The Chief Executive said it is a complex document and he would be happy to forward to any interested members and Mrs Hedley, Mr Bould and Mr Weller asked if that could be done in their cases.

3.4 Meetings Attended By Representative of the Authority

The number and range of these meetings was noted by the meeting.

3.5 Chief Executive Officer's Report

Regarding the Defra Four yearly report, the Vice Chairman asked for it to be noted that he felt the officers had done a fantastic job and the role of the members should also be noted. He said this was sterling work and he had heard the recognition which NIFCA had received for this, particularly at the Association of IFCAs. The Chairman endorsed these comments and said it was fortunate that the SFC had lobbied for a Northumberland IFCA and he remained very glad that was the outcome. He confirmed that Northumberland is also fortunate not to have some of the Local Authority and finance issues which there are elsewhere and he stressed the importance of NIFCA's good relations with our constituent Authorities. Mr Watkin also endorsed this and the Chairman continued that arrangements will be undertaken to meet the Northumberland County Council Lead Executive Director and his equivalent/the Treasurer at North Tyneside Council, as well as newly elected local MPs after the election, as well as MEPs. Mr Watkin asked if in view of the Authority's strong reserves position it would be legitimate for the Authority to consider lending money to other Authorities, which can be done at a very attractive rate of interest. The Chairman said this was a good point and referred to the Investment Strategy as discussed at the Finance Committee meeting but he wondered if in fact the IFCA can do this (as "Local Authorities" can). Mr Woodman said he would mention this again at an appropriate point later in the meeting.

3.6 Annual Plan 2015-16/Annual Report 2014-15

The short paper was noted by members who approved the draft Annual Plan and the Chief Executive confirmed this would now be issued to amongst others the Authority's constituent council Chief Executives, Chief Executives of partner organisations and the

new fisheries Minister following the General Election. He also confirmed that the IFCA Chief Officer Group had been looking at the updating of IFCA Success Criteria and had rationalised their number from 7 to 5, which is now being considered by Defra and should come for finalisation before the Association of IFCAs meeting in June.

3.7 Report on Progress of Projects

Professor Polunin's report to the meeting was noted with thanks. Paper 3.7 itself, giving a brief overview, was also noted by the meeting and then Environmental IFCO Mc Loughney gave a short verbal report upon two project proposals which she had arranged with Newcastle University by master students entitled "Decision to fish – species targeting in the Northumberland Inshore pot fishery" and "Interactions of fishing effort and habitat on the size (and) distribution of the European Lobster in Northumberland". She also referred to an advertisement which the Authority had just issued seeking summer interns, one to assist with analysis of ground truthing video data to help towards the hoped for opening up areas of soft ground in the B&NNC SAC (Byelaw 16) and the other to help with developing a modification of the Authority's V Notching programme and also to undertake lobster tagging and she confirmed that funding for these projects is being looked into.

The Vice Chairman asked IFCO Stewart-Moore about the Sea Angling survey work and she confirmed that approximately 15 survey results have been received so far. The Authority has also distributed the survey to tackle shops and has been tweeting about this. Not many sea anglers follow the Authority so far on twitter, but that will hopefully improve and the Authority will also advertise in Programmes for forthcoming sea angling events. The Chairman said he would speak to IFCO Stewart-Moore about the Authority possibly offering a prize at sea angling events. The Chief Executive also said that he was very pleased with how our social media interaction is developing.

Regarding Project Inshore, Mr Bould asked if it would just be lobsters which would be taken into account in Northumberland, but IFCO McLoughney said in stage 4 of Project Inshore that crab would also be considered, with a project hoped to be developed with Eastern and North Eastern IFCAs. There was also reference to the DEFRA data project for crab and lobster in the North Sea – both projects cover the NIFCA district and well beyond. Mr Bould also said Cefas's presence had become much more in evidence in the last 12 months gathering data locally.

3.8 Revised Approach to Fisheries Management in EMS and MCZs Update

The MCZs update was given under item 3.3 above. Regarding the Revised Approach, paper 3.8 and the report by Deputy Chief IFCO (Operations) Southerton was noted. Mr Bould said he appreciated that other duties and weather dictated progress towards the hoped for opening up of soft grounds in the B&NNC SAC, but he wished to check that delay in this is not because of delay in the national iVMS project and Chief IFCO Browne confirmed that is not causing delay and once the Authority has sufficient data to consider opening up soft grounds then the possibility of managing this on the basis of gear type as well as iVMS will be considered.

3.9 Legacy Byelaw Review Update

The Chief Executive referred to item 6 in the epitome of correspondence and that was noted by the meeting.

3.10 Epitome of Correspondence

The Chairman checked through the epitome page by page and the following specific items were considered –

- 3 RSPB Legal Challenge to offshore wind farms – it was noted that a successful legal challenge in this case could possibly be significant in other areas.
- 15 Thank you from Amble Development Trust – The Chairman said he had been at the event for part of the day on 28th March (and not 28th May as incorrectly stated in the Epitome of Correspondence) and he had been extremely impressed and pleased with the work of the IFCOs there.
- 13 Simplifying vessel licensing in England – Mr Bould asked if this could simply raise B & C (shellfish) entitlement to class A (catch everything) but Mr Robinson said the same limitations/restrictions would still apply and be written into licenses.
- 18 Scallop Fishing (England) Order 2012 - North East IFCA's difficulties as reported on the previous Friday's Look North were noted and although there is not a similar problem in Northumberland where there is nothing like the same scallop grounds, Mr. Bould said that only last Thursday some potting gear had been towed away just outside the EMS (South East corner) inside the 6 mile limit and Mr Stephenson said there had been a similar case further north. This was noted by the meeting and Chief IFCO.

The patrol the previous week by the North East IFCA patrol vessel in the district was also noted (and thanks expressed), as well as the general danger from excessive scallop dredging where this occurs, both to the seabed and the livelihood of other fishermen.

3.11 Reports of Watch and Finance Committee

The reports were delivered by the Chief Executive and the Minutes thereof will record the details of those meetings. Arising from the report of the meetings it was noted that MMO members terms and conditions of appointment were to be changed and there will be a future requirement for appraisals of MMO appointees. It was also noted that other Organisations whose members are volunteers and also undergo appraisals include School Governors and Charity Commissioners. The Vice Chairman expressed surprise that the MMO had been unable to resolve this issue before the new round of appointments and Mr Bould said members had already fulfilled if not exceeded their terms and conditions and the Chairman said Defra had realised the need to address this very late in the day. He continued that IFCA's could not function without their members and the problem is now what the new terms and conditions should be and how to implement these. The Chairman still felt there had been no need for a process

to reappoint existing members and he and others had made representations accordingly, but hopefully lessons have been learned. The Chairman asked if any reappointed members had received their DPS certificates and all who were present said that they had, but after forwarding them to the MMO, as requested, they had not

received the return of their DPS certificates or reimbursement of the £25 fee payable for the certificates to Disclosure Scotland.

The position regarding St Aidan now being due for delivery by mid May was also noted.

The meeting also noted the Chief Executive's report upon the review and updating of the Authority's Risk Assessment Matrix and that was approved by the General Committee.

Referring to earlier discussion regarding the Authority reserves, Mr Woodman asked if it could be checked whether monies could be lent to another Authority and Mr Watkin said if that was possible an interest rate of about 3.6% can be obtained.

3.12 IFCO Reports

The Chairman said these made interesting reading as always and gave thanks to the officers for the reports and their work. He also said it is particularly interesting to see the range of issues which are being addressed and the changing balance of the Authority's work. There were no questions regarding the reports, which were noted by the meeting.

3.13 Any Other Business

The Chairman asked for discussion and decisions on the venue for future meetings. A preference was generally expressed for Ennerdale Road, with the Vice Chairman saying it provides a more engaging and convivial atmosphere. The Chairman however said that 8 Ennerdale Road is very good for Subcommittees, but space can be limited for General Meetings, with Mr Browne also saying that if the Authority had a quarterly meeting at 8 Ennerdale Road and there was a lot of interest from, for example, fishermen then there would probably be insufficient room. The Chief Executive said that if the Authority knew that there was likely to be such a situation then it should be possible to switch the venue to somewhere larger. The possibility of holding a meeting in the district of North Tyneside was also mentioned and the Chief Executive said he would check that with Mr Burdis. Mr Bould also said that apart from finding it easier to get to Blyth for meetings, parking is better and he feels that it is generally a better venue.

Following the above debate, it was agreed that the Authority AGM in April should be held again next year in County Hall and that one meeting if possible should be held this year in the district of North Tyneside Council. The meeting also felt a meeting in 2016-17 could be held in the north of the district and Mr Woodman said there are suitable venues in Bamburgh and Seahouses.

In conclusion, for the remainder of 2015/16 it was agreed as follows:-

July meeting at 8 Ennerdale Road

October meeting if possible in North Tyneside but if not then at 8 Ennerdale Road

January Meeting 8 Ennerdale Road.

There being no further business the Chairman closed the meeting at 3:12 pm.