

**MINUTES OF THE GENERAL COMMITTEE MEETING
HELD AT THE NIFCA OFFICE
AT 8 ENNERDALE ROAD, BLYTH
ON 28 JULY 2015 AT 2.00 PM**

PRESENT: NIFCA Members:

Mr G R Arckless (Chairman), Mr L Weller (Vice Chairman), Mr M Bould, Mr B Burdis, Mrs C Hedley, Dr M Kitching, Mr S Lowe, Professor N Polunin, Mr A Ritchie, Mr N Robinson, Mr J Stephenson, Mr I Thomas and Mr B Pidcock.

Also in attendance were the NIFCA Chief Executive Officer Mr M H Hardy, Chief IFCO Mr A B Browne, Deputy Chief IFCO Mr J Green, IFCO Mr J Cooke, NIFCA Administrative Officer Ms E Cosimini and Mr D Abbott from the MMO.

3.0 INTRODUCTION OF NEW MEMBERS AND STAFF FOLLOWED BY DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

The Chairman welcomed Mr Pidcock who has recently joined the committee as a Northumberland County Council Member and was attending his first meeting. He also welcomed Ms Cosimini who has recently joined NIFCA as the Administrative Officer. Mr Abbott, Head of Marine Compliance at the MMO, was also welcomed as a guest to the meeting.

The Vice Chairman also gave thanks to Mr Lowe for attending the recent Audit meeting at the last minute, without which there could have been serious delays to progress.

No declarations of interest were raised at this point of the meeting.

3.1 AGENDA

The Chief Executive explained that a new agenda item had been added regarding Occupational Health Checks for Officers and staff. NIFCA have contacted Northumberland County Council about getting a quote for doing these assessments but we may not get a response from them about this. We have however had a quote from a specialist company "Best Practice" who has quoted £575 per day. The Vice Chairman asked whether the blood tests referred to included the cost of the labs and the Chief Executive agreed that he would check this.

The meeting agreed that the Chief Executive could proceed with the above.

3.2 DAVID ABBOTT FROM THE MMO – TO MEET THE MEMBERS

The Chairman started by detailing the position of the MMO members regarding the recent recruitment process. He explained that one problem that was faced by the Authority was that all of the MMO Appointed NIFCA members could have been taken off the committee at the same time leaving NIFCA with a reduction of a third of the members in place, which would have

caused huge problems. He explained that there were problems for the MMO with the technology, causing delays to applications and he felt that overall, the applicants, who are all volunteers to NIFCA, were not treated well. He was pleased however that the Nolan principles had been taken into consideration and that in the end the Membership had remained the same.

The Chairman then explained that MMO Member Reviews that are being introduced need to be "light-touch" and should be considered as a case of exception rather than the rule and he felt that only those members that are not regularly attending meetings or contributing should have to go through review. NIFCA is a small and close committee.

In addition, the issue regarding the Members terms and conditions were raised by the Chairman, explaining that they had not yet received a release date for these and members are concerned about any changes there may be.

The Chairman explained, as requested by the Chief Executive, that there is currently a lot of governmental pressure for further collaboration of IFCAs and the MMO which NIFCA is happy to do. However, the need for the principle of local democratic accountability is present and of high importance. He confirmed that the Local Authorities pay, through precepts, for the majority of this Authority, together with DEFRA New Burdens Funding.

The Vice Chairman confirmed that 70% of this committee is made up of MMO appointees and many do this because of their interest in the local fisheries.

Mr Abbott then detailed the position of the MMO. He explained that the introduction of the Nolan Principles meant that the MMO could not simply reappoint standing members so a new appointment system had to be put in place. He acknowledged that the process has not been a good one for the members nor has it been good for the MMO; this led to the difficulties with the technology.

Mr Abbott explained that the MMO are now in the process of appointing MMO members and are waiting for the completion of the applicant's DBS's and signatures to the new terms and conditions. He confirmed that NEIFCA and NWIFCA were unable to fully appoint, so new members are still required there. Mr Abbott then explained that the MMO had asked for and received feedback about the process and will use the information to improve future appointments. He confirmed that future appointments will now be staggered for each Member so losing large proportions of the committee would no longer be a possibility. Mr Abbott also confirmed that MMO inductions for committee members would continue.

In response to the Chairman's query regarding the member Annual Reviews, Mr Abbott explained that these would need to take place for all members because although the local committee knows which members are regularly contributing, there are currently no measures for the MMO and the Cabinet Office requires some guidance. Mr Abbott showed the criteria form that will be used nationally and noted that it is only a small form that would be completed locally between the Chairman/ Vice Chairman and member.

With regard to the collaborative working between the MMO and IFCAs, Mr Abbott confirmed that there is a history of joint working which differs between the areas. He suggested that we may see the MMO/ IFCAs taking leads on different aspects of work, for example the MMO could lead on

training. The Chief Executive explained that he had been involved in the work with partner organisations regarding training.

Mr Abbott explained that the biggest change to the terms and conditions is that the Annual Review has been added. When questioned if the review of the terms and conditions was to “iron out the wrinkles”, Mr Abbott confirmed that to some extent this is the case, but it should be noted that members will have to agree and sign up to these changes including the Annual Review.

Mr Lowe explained that when applying to become a member, he was initially rejected and his rejection letter was sent to his referee instead of to himself. Mr Abbott apologised for this breach of confidentiality. The Chairman also commented that the fact that members had to cover the cost of the DBS was not well received by the committee and is perhaps something the MMO should reconsider, which Mr Abbott noted. Mrs Hedley explained that the MMO could have saved the expense of a new DBS as she had had one issued the week she applied to become a member and which could have been used but was rejected by the MMO.

Finally, the Chief Executive asked Mr Abbott whether NIFCA could continue chartering Patrol Vessels to the MMO even though they are one of the IFCA's who do not have a contract for this and Mr Abbott confirmed that this could continue.

3.3 RICHARD BLACKHURST FROM SEAFISH REGARDING ST AIDAN

Unfortunately, Mr Blackhurst was unable to attend the meeting but a presentation had been sent to the Chief IFCA which could be watched at the end of the meeting.

3.4 MINUTES FROM PREVIOUS MEETINGS AND MATTERS ARISING THEREFROM

3.4.1 Minutes of quarterly meeting held on 28 April 2015 and matters arising therefrom

The Minutes of the previous general Committee meeting held on 28 April 2015 were approved as a true record.

The Chief Executive confirmed that there are still ongoing IFCA discussions nationally with DEFRA and Richard Inman in particular and with a view to approval in September at the next AIFCA Meeting regarding updating of the IFCA Success Criteria.

He also confirmed that the summer interns were getting on well and hopefully improving the timescale of the ground truthing project.

The Chief Executive also noted that the quarterly meeting in October could be held at North Tyneside Council offices, if possible and Mr Burdis confirmed he would check upon this.

3.5 MEETINGS ATTENDED BY REPRESENTITIVES OF THE AUTHORITY

The document was noted and received by the meeting.

3.6 CHIEF EXECUTIVE REPORT FOR QUARTER ENDING 30 JUNE 2015

The Chief Executive commented on the changes to the v-notching, noting that although he has not yet seen the information received from commercial shell fishermen, the overall feedback has been very good. Mr Bould asked whether the Authority were asking for a total number of lobsters caught and the number or percentage of them which were hens; without this distinction, it is hard to ensure accurate numbers. The Chief IFCO confirmed that this can be added to the form.

The Chief Executive fed-back to the meeting that overall the Authority continues to thrive and achieve as an organisation. He also confirmed that IFCO McLoughney left NIFCA on 10th July and was sent off by the team with presents and thanks. She sent an email to confirm that she will be back, as she has fallen for the area and also hopes she might see visitors from these parts in Ireland.

3.7 MPAs UPDATE – EMS REVISED APPROACH AND MCZs (oral)

Mr Green explained that the Revised Approach and Amber risks continue to develop and should be completed by December 2015. He confirmed that it seems likely that Coquet to St Mary's will become an MCZ.

The Chief Executive confirmed that Jean-Luc Solandt from the Marine Conservation Authority will be visiting NIFCA in August.

Dr Polunin questioned whether there was a management regime for Coquet to St Mary's regarding it becoming an MCZ to which Mrs Hedley replied that it would be shared between different regulators. She also confirmed that a document confirming any restrictions on the area would be released following questions about possible disruption to commercial and recreational fishing and bait digging. Mr Green commented that it looks as though there will be no likely disruption to regular fishing.

3.8 REPORT ON PROGRESS OF PROJECTS

Dr Polunin confirmed that Dan Skerrit had left the University. Other than that, there have been no significant changes. He explained that there are currently 3 MSC students doing projects in the district which includes monitoring fish abundances at European Marine Sites. The Chief Executive confirmed that there has been a lot of positive feedback about the hoped for Lobster Hatchery in Amble and that the Lobster Hatchery Report has now been published. He also commented that NIFCA have had a lot of good students coming to us from the University.

Dr Polunin also confirmed that a bid had been won by the University which will invite the public to get involved in gathering data around the coast.

3.9 LEGACY BYELAWS REVIEW UPDATE

The Chief Executive confirmed that this is continuing to progress and his understanding remains that Northumberland are currently the only IFCA still intending to bring in a complete replacement Byelaw package. The MMO have indicated that they have approved the Byelaw package, which will be sent

(with finalised Impact Assessments) to DEFRA to be signed off and it is hoped the new Byelaws package may be approved by October 2015, ready to begin implementation of new Byelaw measures in January 2016. We are also beginning the process of developing a system of payment for permits from both commercial and recreational fishermen. The Chief Executive gave thanks to the MMO for their support.

3.10 AMBLE LOBSTER HATCHERY PROJECT

The document was noted and received by the meeting.

3.11 A FISHERIES LOCAL ACTION GROUP FOR NORTHUMBERLAND

The Chief Executive confirmed that most IFCA districts have a local FLAG which is a group for the benefit of the community involved in the local fishing industry. With EMFF due, there could be a possibility of developing a FLAG, with collaboration from other organisations, although the Local Authority (Council) would need to lead on this. The Chief Executive would like to propose contacting the MMO about funding availability and commented that if this could happen, the benefits could be great. Feedback from members was then requested.

The Chairman said this sounded like a good idea and commented that the County Council had seemed interested in setting this up last time it was discussed. Mrs Hedley questioned that if the funding for this came from the EMFF, how long would the funding last? It would be useful to consider how the FLAG could continue once the funding from EMFF was over. Mrs Hedley suggested the Chief Executive spoke to Ivan Hewitt at NCC. Mr Lowe commented that it would be good to also find out thoughts from North Tyneside Council and the Chief Executive confirmed that he would research this further.

3.12 RECREATIONAL SEA ANGLING STRATEGY UPDATE

The document was noted and received by the meeting. The Vice Chair noted that the "Guidelines for Recreational Sea Angling" document was not entirely up to date. The Chief Executive will look at this and feedback to the Officers.

The Vice Chair reminded everyone that the minimum landing size for Bass of 42cm will be coming into force from 1st September as well as the 3 fish bag limit. He also explained that he would like to see a push on bait collection. Mr Thomas explained that the best way to push out any new information is to visit the Angling Clubs.

3.13 RISK ASSESSMENT REPORT (oral)

The Chief Executive confirmed that the Risk Assessment Matrix is being updated and will soon be uploaded to the website; members were invited to check this document and give any necessary feedback. The next review will take place in February 2016.

The Chief Executive explained that another risk regarding insufficient members attending an authority meeting, preventing time limited or other urgent business from being approved, is being considered for addition to the

document. The control measures for this risk needed to be discussed, for example giving sufficient notice time for the meetings and the Chief Executive explained that some IFCA's also ask for a reason for non-attendance at meetings.

As discussed in the Watch meeting, the Chairman confirmed that NIFCA will look into dates in the Council Diary to try to prevent meeting clashes but also explained that where members have a fixed NIFCA meeting date in their diary (such as the quarterly meetings) they should do everything possible to attend. Mrs Hedley suggested that all council members should have access to the Outlook calendars which could be used more for scheduling meetings.

The meeting approved the addition of the discussed new risk to the Risk Matrix.

3.14 CORRESPONDENCE

The Epitome was noted and received by the meeting. The Chief Executive flagged up that the press releases and publications mentioned in this document are of interest to NIFCA but are not intended to represent the views and opinions of the Authority.

3.15 SUMMARY REPORT OF WATCH AND FINANCE COMMITTEES BY CHIEF EXECUTIVE

The summary was delivered by the Chief Executive and the minutes will record the details of those meetings. All presented minutes, accounts and reports were received and approved by both meetings. The Chairman commended the NIFCA finance team for all of their hard work in creating the paperwork required for the Finance Committee and noted a small surplus of around £500 for the quarter whilst discussing the Estimates and Actuals.

The precepts for the budget were signed by the Chairman, the Vice Chairman and the Chief Executive, were stamped and will soon be sent to the Councils.

The Chief Executive explained to the members that it was also agreed that Staff Matters, Reviews, Appraisals and Merit Payments would be discussed at a later sub-committee as there was not sufficient time to allocate to this at the Finance meeting. A date has been arranged for 20th August at County Hall at 9:30am and any members wishing to attend are welcome.

3.16 IFCO REPORTS

3.16.1 Chief IFCO Report of activities for quarter ending 30 June 2015

The document was noted and received by the meeting. The Chairman thanked the Chief IFCO for the work that went into the document. The Vice chairman noted that IFCO McLoughney attended a Side-scan course in May and questioned whether another IFCO would be attending in the future to which Mr Green confirmed that IFCO Stewart-Moore would do so. When asked about the Lobster Hatchery work continuing the Chief Executive confirmed that was the case and with valuable input now from IFCO Stewart-Moore.

The Chief Executive explained that interviews had been arranged for later this week for the Environmental IFCO position for which he, Mr Green and Mr Herriott would sit on the panel. He also confirmed that NIFCA had received over 50 applications for this position with the majority of applicants being female. It was also noted that applicants for the part-time Operations and Enforcement IFCO position are to be interviewed on 4th August 2015.

3.16.2 Environmental IFCO Report for quarter ending 30 June 2015

The document was noted and received by the meeting.

3.16.3 Maintenance Report and Engineering Log for quarter ending 30 June 2015

The document was noted and received by the meeting.

3.17 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Mr Ritchie explained the extra item regarding certification of skippers from the STCW-F; Simon Potten has written to NIFCA asking for support about making the Seafish Under 16.5m Skipper's Certificate a mandatory requirement. Mr Ritchie proposed sending a letter/ email back to Simon Potten confirming NIFCA's agreement and support. This was agreed by all members.

Finally, a presentation regarding the planning and building of St Aidan, as prepared by Richard Backhurst of Seafish, was played to the meeting.

There being no further business the Chairman closed the meeting at 4:25pm.