

**MINUTES OF THE GENERAL COMMITTEE MEETING  
HELD AT THE NIFCA OFFICE  
AT 8 ENNERDALE ROAD, BLYTH  
ON 25 JANUARY 2016 AT 2.00 PM**

**PRESENT: NIFCA Members:**

Mr G R Arckless (Chairman), Mr L Weller (Vice Chairman), Mr M Bould, Mrs C Hedley, Mr D Herriott, Dr M Kitching, Mr J Lang, Professor N Polunin, Mr P Rippon, Mr S Ritchie, Mr N Robinson, Dr C Scott, Mr J Stephenson, Mr I Thomas, Mr D Watkin, Mr J Woodman.

Also in attendance were the NIFCA Chief Executive Officer Mr M H Hardy, Chief IFCO Mr A B Browne, IFCO Ms S Stewart Moore, Mr P Stevens (ERIC), Miss E Cosimini, Administrative Officer

**3.1 APOLOGIES**

Mr B Burdis, Mr B Pidcock, DCIFCO (Environmental) Mr J Green, Mr S Lowe

**3.2 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS QUARTERLY MEETING HELD ON 27<sup>TH</sup> OCTOBER 2015 AND MATTERS ARISING**

The meeting minutes of the previous quarter were received by the meeting and accepted as a true record. There were no matters arising.

**3.3 ENVIRONMENTAL RECORDS INFORMATION CENTRE (“ERIC”) PRESENTATION**

Paul Stephens gave a presentation about “ERIC” which is a database to store and share data about local wildlife. ERIC links into multiple organisations across the county including conservation organisations, universities and charities and Paul explained that while most of this data can be accessed by anyone, certain data has no public access. He confirmed that they are looking to gather and share information with more organisations and this is something that NIFCA are considering joining.

Professor Polunin asked whether the database captured information on mostly terrestrial wildlife which Paul confirmed it did but explained that they are trying to improve their information on marine life and so far have entries on around 6,000 species of fish and 1,000 species of crustacean.

John Woodman asked whether there were other “ERICs” around the country to which Paul explained that there are but they are not all called “ERIC”.

The Chairman thanked Mr Stephens for his presentation and it was confirmed NIFCA would be in touch to finalise a data arrangement with ERIC.

**3.4 MEETINGS:**

The CEO confirmed that apart from those listed in the papers, a meeting took place with Urban River to discuss updating the Authority website and database. He explained that in light of the Finance committee’s recommendation to keep a stand still budget, the work from Urban River needs to be considered carefully.

David Herriott said that it is important to make the database and website as user-friendly as possible.

Michael Bould asked if there had been any further word on the Demersal Landing Obligation to which the CEO confirmed that there had not. He explained that Sally and Al took part in a dial in about this but very little additional information came from it.

### **3.5 CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S REPORT FOR QUARTER ENDING 31 DECEMBER 2015:**

This report was received by the meeting.

The CEO explained that from the start of January, the restriction on RSAs fishing for bass was supposed to change from a 3 catch per day bag limit into a catch and release system, but confirmed that this hadn't yet come into force.

### **3.6 SEAFOOD CENTRE EVALUATION/ LOBSTER HATCHERY:**

The CEO explained that he has been asked to carry out an evaluation on the Seafood Centre in Amble and which has been open for almost a year. Being funded by Northumberland County Council they are required to have an evaluation to look at the cost/ socio-economic impact, etc. He explained that he feels that they are providing good value but he will need to investigate further and file an objective report. Michael Bould explained that he has a few concerns about this project. He said that he doesn't think it has been well advertised and explained that there have been a few meetings that were badly attended and they have had little interaction with fishermen in the area. He went on to explain that he had been catching and selling Pollock to the Seafood Centre but after a while they emailed him to ask if he could diversify his catch. He explained that the project is supposed to supply local, sustainable fish and asking him to supply them with a diverse range of fish is not always possible to achieve. The Chairman explained that the Council are interested in getting an open and honest evaluation and the CEO confirmed that he would be keen to get feedback about the project from Michael and any others that have been involved.

The CEO also explained that the lobster hatchery is still planned to go ahead in the Seafood centre and led by the Amble Development Trust. A meeting had been held with the University to discuss their involvement, including how and where the hatchery would get their stocks – many of these decisions come down to cost and funding and the Amble Development Trust hope a bid can be made to EMFF. The CEO confirmed that the lobster hatchery has the full support of himself and the Officers. Sally Stewart-Moore explained that to succeed, the lobster hatchery will also need to get local industry support as they hope to get berried hens from local fishermen. Michael Bould explained that fishermen will want to know that the hatchery is run differently to the Seafood Centre, which they do not feel has been a huge success, because the point of the lobster hatchery is to improve and support the local community.

### **3.7 BYELAWS UPDATE**

The CEO explained that in December the new Byelaw package came into force and in general has been as well received as possible. The main change is the introduction of a charge for permits and the CEO confirmed that out of 118 existing shellfish permit holders, 81 had renewed to date and paid the £180 charge. He reminded the Members that Northumberland is the first of the IFCAs to revise a complete set of Byelaws which is something that he and the whole team are very proud of. David Herriott said well done to all of the Officers and

staff for making this a success. The Vice Chairman confirmed that there has been some really positive feedback about the use of edible crab as bait and gave thanks to NIFCA for getting the word out.

### **3.8 VESSELS UPDATE**

The Vice chairman asked that the Rib accounts be taken out of the Patrol Vessel budget and listed as a separate entry.

### **3.9 MPA REPORT**

This report was received by the meeting.

The CEO explained that the Authority is still waiting to hear about regulations/management measures from Defra regarding the new designation of the Coquet to St Mary's MCZ. NIFCA do not have any plans to bring in any additional management measures at the moment but Catherine Scott will be having a meeting with the Environmental team for initial discussions regarding this.

Claire Hedley gave a presentation about her involvement with the B&NNCC SAC. Claire explained that there are many activities which take place within this area (fishing being one) and each activity is managed by a different team – Claire works to co-ordinate a management scheme for this. Claire handed out some information to the Members to explain her involvement and the changes in management over these areas. This was received by the meeting.

The Chief Executive explained that the MCZ of Coquet to St Mary's could be the most significant addition which there has been to the Authority remit, at least based on the number of queries from the public. He confirmed that it could be challenging when discussing management measures for this area, to try and balance the needs of the fishing industry and the measures which may be required for conservation. Michael Bould commented that he would like to see NIFCA be quite firm with those seeking additional management measures – he explained that this idea was introduced to fishermen 4 years ago and new measures won't necessarily be required. The Chairman confirmed that this is likely to be a lot more work for NIFCA as there will be tensions and conflicting ideas from different groups in the community that NIFCA will have to deal with.

### **3.10 MMO APPOINTED MEMBER TERMS AND APPRAISALS UPDATE**

The CEO explained that the new terms and conditions for MMO Appointed Members had been sent out and asked whether Members had received them to which it was reported that only the Vice Chairman had received them. The CEO will look into this and get back to the Members.

The CEO also reminded Members that reviews had to be carried out for MMO Appointed Members and could take place over the phone or in person at either County Hall or 8 Ennerdale Road. He confirmed that this process can be light touch and could take around 10 minutes, or longer if required. The Vice Chairman commented that there should be some sort of review for Council Members and their attendance at these meetings to which the Chairman explained that there is a code of conduct that Council Members are expected to follow. He confirmed that he wrote to the Council last year to give feedback about attendance at these meetings. The Chairman also confirmed that the Council writes to NIFCA annually for feedback about Council Member input.

### **3.11 UPDATE ON PROJECTS**

The Chairman explained that keeping in mind the audience that the CEFAS report was intended for, it worried him that it said that the Northumberland stock status is “low” and exploitation “high” and asked whether the Authority disagree with CEFAS’s findings. Sally Stewart-Moore confirmed that she gave a presentation to TAG about NIFCA’s work and statistics about local lobster stocks. CEFAS were at TAG and agreed that there are limitations to their stock survey and have asked for NIFCA’s data which will hopefully be used by them in the near future. Nick Polunin acknowledged that these issues will be cropping up in other areas around the UK and while it is great that NIFCA are collecting data, it is important to remember that our research is also limited and there is a need to be cautious. Inshore fishing has increased and it is possible that at this rate, the inshore fishery may be unsustainable but further out to sea may be sustainable.

The CEO explained that the CEFAS stock assessment covers “Northumberland and Durham lobster stock” and goes well beyond the 6 mile limit and is therefore a much bigger area than the NIFCA district. CEFAS have said a 70-80% reduction in lobster mortality is required for the Northumberland and Durham lobster stock (ie. “red risk”), but in fact, using their own data, North Eastern IFCA have calculated that it is a 10% reduction that is required. The Vice Chairman asked if we know how many recreational pot tag holders there are in the area, to which Sally confirmed we are unsure as we have not been asking for recreational fishermen to reapply for tags every year but this is being implemented this year and we should have a clearer understanding of this soon. Sandy Ritchie suggested that perhaps there should be a statement from NIFCA to say that we don’t accept CEFAS’s findings to which the Chairman said that the important thing is that NIFCA have started to do our own research and will be able to improve upon CEFAS’s information.

### **3.12 CORRESPONDENCE**

This report was received by the meeting.

### **3.13 RISK ASSESSMENT UPDATE**

The CEO confirmed that the Risk Assessment Matrix will be reviewed very soon by the Risk Assessment working group of officers. He confirmed that the Members will need to check and accept the updated document at the next quarterly meeting for it to then be uploaded to the website.

### **3.14 SUMMARY OF WATCH AND FINANCE COMMITTEES BY THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE**

#### Watch:

The CEO confirmed that all meeting minutes were accepted as accurate and all reports received by the meeting. He explained that 2 infringement cases were heard in court on 22<sup>nd</sup> January. The first was a diver, Mr Patterson who had landed 18 lobsters. He pleaded guilty and received a fine of £240, plus court costs and a victims surcharge, totalling £894. The second was fisherman Mr Todd who was caught with 60 undersized lobsters. He was fined £2,000 plus court costs and victims surcharge, totalling £912. A press release will be given to local media as soon as possible and added to the Authority website.

The CEO confirmed that the Occupational Health tests had been carried out on Officers and staff with good results and is something that will be continued annually for Officers and every 2 years for office staff.

### Finance:

The CEO confirmed that all meeting minutes were accepted as accurate and all reports received by the meeting. He confirmed that there has been a change in the audit process and NIFCA no longer need to have an annual external audit but will however continue with the internal audit from NCC. He explained that the Finance committee agreed for the CEO to assist Claire Hedley with a bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund.

The CEO and Chair explained that the precepts were discussed and that the Council Members were struggling to justify an increase to the budget due to the large cuts that both Councils are currently facing. The Chair continued that it was agreed to keep a stand still budget but to also accept the earlier recommendations of the staffing sub-committee in regards to staff salaries. The CEO went on to explain that NIFCA will need to look closely at how money is spent and will probably have to use some of the reserves in the next financial year. It was also agreed by the meeting that a 1% salary increase would be considered for all staff at the AGM in April. The Chairman moved to accept this proposal, which was seconded by Councillor Dougie Watkin, and following a vote by all Members the decision to keep a stand still budget for 2016-17 was accepted by the Authority.

## **3.15 IFCO REPORTS**

### **3.15.1 Chief IFCO Report**

This report was received and accepted by the meeting with thanks

### **3.15.2 Environmental IFCOs Report**

This report was received and accepted by the meeting with thanks

### **3.15.3 Maintenance Report/ Engineering Log**

This report was received and accepted by the meeting with thanks

## **3.16 POT LIMITATION**

The CEO explained that during the Seahouses stakeholder meeting some fishermen raised concerns about the pot limitation byelaw – they told the team that they believed that the number of pot tags allocated to fishing vessels should be determined by the size of the vessel rather than each being allocated 800 tags. He explained that he was unsure whether many fishermen held this opinion and the Chief IFCO confirmed that a stakeholder survey would be a useful tool to determine whether the majority of fishermen wish for this to be reviewed. It was agreed by the meeting that this should be added to the Technical and Scientific meeting agenda to discuss in more detail.

There being no further business the meeting was closed at 16:35