

**MINUTES OF THE GENERAL COMMITTEE MEETING  
HELD AT THE COUNTY HALL, MORPETH  
ON 25 APRIL 2016 AT 2.00 PM**

**PRESENT: NIFCA Members:**

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

Also in attendance were the NIFCA Chief Executive Officer Mr M H Hardy, Chief IFCO Mr A B Browne, IFCO Mr J Green, NIFCA Administrative Officer Ms E Cosimini and Ms A Bohan and Ms R Lynam from the RSPB.

**3.1 ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN AND VICE CHAIRMAN FOR TERM OF OFFICE TO 24 APRIL 2017**

The CEO began this meeting as the Chairman so that nominations could be given for the new term of Chair and Vice Chair (2016 - 17). It was agreed that Members of the Watch and Finance committees would remain as they are.

David Herriott proposed the re-election of Robert Arckless as Chairman. This was seconded by Les Weller and confirmed by the meeting.

Robert Arckless proposed the re-election of Les Weller as Vice Chairman. This was seconded by David Herriott and confirmed by the meeting.

At this point, Robert Arckless resumed as Chair of the meeting. He then asked to say a few words and explained that he is proud to have served both the SFC and NIFCA, but that he did not intend to seek another full term as Chairman of NIFCA. He continued that he would be prepared to continue as Chair until the July meeting in 2017, subject to his re-election as a County Councillor. That would allow the Membership including appointees by the 2017 council to consider options. He confirmed that he has always found it unfortunate that the NIFCA AGM has to be held in April, which is a problem when Councils are up for election. However, the final decision upon the next Chair should rest with NIFCA Members. After Chairing the Authority since the transitional period from SFC's, he said he felt that it will be right to consider a new Chair and he has to realistic about his workloads. He also said he felt very honoured to have held the position as Chair and looks forward to working with the Members and staff for a further year.

**3.2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST, APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies were received from Mr B Burdis, Dr C Scott, Mr J Stephenson and Mr D Watkin.

The Chairman welcomed Bex Lynam and Aurelie Bohan as guests to the meeting.

The CEO confirmed that Jim Stephenson was taken ill a few weeks ago but is doing much better and is at home in recovery. He confirmed that the Authority had passed on best wishes from all Members and forwarded to Jim emails that had been sent in wishing him well.

### **3.3 MINUTES OF THE QUARTERLY MEETING HELD ON 25 JANUARY 2016 AND MATTERS ARISING THEREFROM**

The CEO confirmed that the minutes should read “2016” not “2015”.

The CEO confirmed that regarding Bass, a catch and release system for RSAs came into effect in January, which will remain until the end of July when it will then be legal to land one bass per recreational fisherman per day. The CEO confirmed that this is of interest to Northumberland but at least regarding other/ commercial bass measurements, much less significant in the North East of England than in the South and West. Ian Thomas confirmed that the signs with the minimum landing sizes will need to be updated for the District to which the Chief IFCO confirmed that this is in the process of being done.

The CEO confirmed that he has completed the Seafood Centre Evaluation as previously advised. He explained that it is also hoped that the Lobster Hatchery will be developed in the Northumberland Seafood Centre, which is something which IFCO Sally Stewart-Moore is working on with the University.

### **3.4 COMMUNICATIONS AND STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT UPDATE:**

The CEO confirmed that he is feeling very positive about the increase in the communication NIFCA has been having with its stakeholders. This includes the Vice Chairman’s appearance on a weekend radio show and the excellent use of Twitter and Facebook. There has also been an increase in visits and meetings with local angling clubs and the CEO confirmed that this communication is developing in a good and positive way. He explained that NIFCA is looking to hold a stakeholder event at the Northumberland Seafood Centre in the summer and gave thanks to all of the Offices and Members for their contribution to this development.

The CEO also explained that the website has been very successful, but over the last weekend it had unfortunately been hacked. He confirmed that Urban River (the company that created the website) are currently looking through the coding on the website to remove any files that have been added by hackers. The CEO confirmed that he will keep members updated on this situation but hopes that it will be resolved very soon.

### **3.5 MEETINGS ATTENDED BY REPRESENTATIVES OF THE COMMITTEE**

This report was received by the meeting.

The CEO explained that Sally Stewart-Moore also attended an Environmental Training event, which was run by the MMO. In addition, the MMO and IFCA Officers met on St Aidan for a joint liaison event. He confirmed that this shows great joint working for the MMO/ IFCA partnership, which is seen as an exemplar by Defra.

**3.6 CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S REPORT ON FOURTH QUARTER OF NIFCA 2015-16 (members only)**

This report was received by the meeting  
Steve Lowe asked whether it would be beneficial to have some members at the Tall Ships event to which the CEO confirmed that attendance by some of the members would be very beneficial and much appreciated. The CEO explained that he would speak to Steve and any other members wishing to attend.

**3.7 ANNUAL PLAN 2016-17**

The CEO confirmed that in addition to the Annual Plan there is the Authority Research Plan which he confirmed is renewed on an annual basis and mention of this had not been in the original Draft Annual Plan sent to Members. The CEO then read the proposed addition to the members, which was approved. The CEO also explained that there was to be an addition to number 13 "Local Priorities" as suggested by Martin Kitching which was read also out by the CEO to the members and was also approved by the meeting.

**3.8 REPORT ON PROGRESS OF PROJECTS DURING 2015-16 INCLUDING**

a) Newcastle University Projects in NIFCA district

Professor Polunin confirmed that the MSC students would be starting their projects very soon. He also confirmed that there would be on-going work with EDF Energy on acoustic monitoring of marine mammals. In addition, Nick explained that the University are always interested to hear any ideas that people may have for future projects. He confirmed that the decision to run these projects would always depend on student availability and interest in the project itself.

b) Lobster Survey, Escape Gaps and NIFCA/ MAST Joint Projects

The CEO confirmed that a report on eIFCO Sally Stewart-Moore's Lobster Project is due to be prepared by the summer. He explained that a letter will be going to all of the shellfish permit holders regarding the new permits, which will include information about escapes gaps and the NIFCA study. Sandy Ritchie explained that he believed that it was agreed at the last Technical and Scientific meeting that work for this study would be better done using the commercial fishing vessels already in use in the industry. The CEO explained that it was believed to be a good idea to do this both on Commercial boats and also on St Aidan, where Officers can better conduct the study from a scientific view point. The Chief IFCO confirmed that it was felt by Officers to be best to do this both on Commercial vessels and internally, but said that if it was preferred by members, this could be reconsidered and asked if this is the case, why would this be preferred?; to which Sandy Ritchie said "horses for courses". Michael Bould explained that from a fishing point of view, people are very happy to lend their vessels for these studies and suggested that it would be fine for an internal study to be run by NIFCA at the same time as on commercial vessels and explained it should be a study which uses the experience of the fishing industry. Nick Polunin explained that if NIFCA chose to approach the study in two different ways, the Officers could end up with two sets of results, which could complicate the study for the Authority. He also suggested that commercial fishermen have a strong knowledge of where and when to target species which the Officers won't have to the same extent. The Chief IFCO agreed and explained that the Officers intend to look to Commercial fisherman for advice about where and when to target. The Vice Chairman asked whether, from a scientific point of view, it would be beneficial to test different sized escape gaps to which Jon Green confirmed that it

is unlikely that we would see a huge difference if the sizes were changed so it is better to test pots with and without escape gaps.

The Chairman explained that it seems there were some concerns about running a commercial study alongside an internal study but asked whether members would be happy to do both together, which the meeting agreed that they would.

### c) NIFCA Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)

The CEO gave thanks to Natalie Wallace for her work with this project and also to Natural England who provided the majority of the funding for it.

Claire Hedley suggested that if NIFCA needed to know more about the Archaeological and Heritage assets within the district then it can get a GIS layer (shape file) from NCC and there was also a large survey of all the Heritage on the coast in 2008 which Claire was involved in – between those sources, NIFCA should be able to get anything regarding Heritage in the district which it requires, meaning there should be no need to carry out its own survey/ research.

Steve Lowe said that there is no key to the SEA document, so at a quick glance it is hard to work out exactly what different points are referring to and asked if this could be added to, which the CEO confirmed.

The above papers were received by the meeting

## **3.9 RECREATIONAL ACTIVITY**

The paper was received by the meeting.

The CEO confirmed that the NSFC had very little communication with recreational stakeholders and the community, so gave thanks to those who have helped to raise the profile of the Authority particularly over the last year.

## **3.10 MPAs REPORT**

The CEO explained that the Authority is looking for a new date for the Technical and Scientific meeting which was due to be held on the 23<sup>rd</sup> June but has had to be rearranged. He confirmed that there will be a presentation at this meeting regarding MPAs from Officers, with help from Claire Hedley and Catherine Scott.

## **3.11 BYELAWS UPDATE**

The CEO explained that Mark Southerton now has the video evidence to help the Authority determine which areas in the SAC need protection. He confirmed that once this has been analysed, NIFCA will be able to begin consultation and planning regarding updating byelaw 7. The CEO also explained that he has been advised by IFCO Southerton that there are four sites which should be able to be opened, three of which he would propose to roll out with the new byelaw. The 4th would need to remain closed until a further comparative study could be done. The CEO explained that a map of the area with polygons to show where fishing activity can take place can be created and confirmed that more details about this will follow at the Technical and Scientific meeting. Michael Bould suggested that this could bring problems to the fishing industry because this is an already small area and would need a buffer zone adding which would then reduce the area further. The CEO explained that NIFCA are trying to help the industry without

damaging the environment and confirmed that the Authority does not want to do work that is not necessary but would like to have the chance to show how areas can be opened to fishing. The Chairman explained that the Authority's aspiration is to find the balance between conservation and a thriving industry and confirmed that the CEO is suggesting that a paper can be produced and then considered by the members. The Chairman suggested that this may be best to be reviewed within a sub-committee. The CEO explained that he would like to discuss alternative ideas with Michael Bould to get some insight about this from the fishing industry perspective, which is essential.

The CEO also explained that slight discrepancies had been found in January in the coordinates of byelaws 7 and 8. He confirmed that this was raised immediately with Defra, the MMO then suggested that NIFCA should get the correct coordinates from Natural England and amend the byelaw, ensuring to inform everyone involved and affected. The CEO confirmed that NIFCA is now in the process of doing this. Steve Lowe asked if there was any cost to doing this to which the CEO confirmed his understanding from Defra is that the byelaw does not need to be re-advertised and only the cost of in-house printing should be incurred.

### **3.12 RISK ASSESSMENT UPDATE**

The CEO explained that this was considered at the finance meeting and confirmed that the Risk Assessment Matrix needs to be reviewed bi-annually for the purpose of the Authority audit. He confirmed that the latest Risk Matrix review took place in February 2016 by the working group made up of the CEO, Julian Sutton, Emma Cosimini, Al Browne and Mark Southerton. He explained that one new risk has been added regarding the Intelligence Project and confirmed that the Matrix has now been added to the website. The Vice Chairman asked whether risk surrounding the database and website should also be reviewed to which the CEO confirmed that it should be considered at the next review. The Chairman asked for approval of this document, which was given by the meeting.

### **3.13 CORRESPONDENCE**

The Epitome was received and the following items were discussed:

The Vice Chairman asked about the reduction in gillnetting as stated in item 2 in the Epitome of Correspondence to which the Chief IFCO confirmed that only 3 or 4 are used in the district. He explained that occasionally illegal nets are used in the summer but confirmed that most boats do not use them anymore. Michael Bould explained that you cannot buy long lasting Gill nets for £7.

Martin Kitching questioned the statement regarding grey seals and the reduction in the use of Gill nets in the District and asked whether NIFCA are saying that the use of gill nets has severely reduced because of grey seals, as it sounds anecdotal. The CEO confirmed that he would be happy to amend the sentence so that it reads more accurately.

The Chairman asked about displacement of fishing vessels from Scotland, following on from the proposed changes north of the border in item 3, to which the Chief IFCO explained that he does not think this is likely. Michael Bould explained however that the district needs to be careful that it doesn't end up with indigenous fleets being unable to keep up with those coming also from other areas, as we could see a knock on effect in the industry. Sandy Ritchie also explained that it is not too late to add a voice to the consultation about this. The Chairman confirmed

that there is an offer from the CEO to work on a letter to MPs regarding this situation.

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

#### Watch:

The CEO confirmed that the minutes of the previous Watch committee meeting were approved and all reports for the quarter were received by the meeting. He confirmed that there was a discussion regarding vehicles to explain that the Landrover had become submerged in seawater and has since been written off with an offer from Zurich Insurance of £12,000 which was accepted by the meeting. He confirmed that the meeting agreed that decisions regarding a new vehicle could be progressed by the CEO, Chief IFCO, Chairman and Vice Chairman, with advice from the Finance Team. The CEO explained that the Watch Committee discussed the possibility of introducing pool vehicles and removing the current system of Officers using their own cars for business and claiming expenses for mileage. He confirmed that the Watch meeting decided that there is not enough of a financial benefit to warrant this change at this point in time so the policy will remain as it stands for at least the time being. The CEO also confirmed that the Health and Safety report was received, as was the infringements report, from which the meeting agreed to proceed with one FAP. He also confirmed that the majority of the MMO appointed Members appraisals have now been completed with thanks to all Members and the Chairman for their efforts with this. The CEO explained that the revised Terms and Conditions from the MMO are still awaited. It was also confirmed by the CEO that there was also mention of the National Marine Review, for which he was taking part in a Working group as a representative of the IFCAs. Finally, the CEO confirmed that the Watch Committee agreed for the next quarterly meeting to be held at Bamburgh Pavilion.

The report was received by the meeting.

#### Finance:

The CEO confirmed that the previous Finance meeting minutes were received and approved by the meeting, as were Estimates and Actuals, which proved to be very accurate. He also confirmed that the Audit will be starting in May and explained that there will be meeting open to all members on 27<sup>th</sup> June regarding the Audit followed by a meeting for financial planning - this will be held at 8 Ennerdale Road, Blyth. The CEO explained that Secretary Carole Blair has been off work since January following problems with her eyes. It was confirmed by the CEO that Sage is now being used by the finance team who are now no longer running 2 systems. Bernard Pidcock asked whether it would be possible for the finance planning meeting to take place at the next General meeting to which the Chairman explained that there is discussion of some confidential information and the General Meeting is public. The CEO confirmed that this could be reported on at the Finance meeting, or as a report that can go out to all members. It was agreed that this should be considered.

### **3.15 IFCO REPORTS**

#### **3.15.1 Chief IFCO Report**

This report was received and accepted by the meeting

#### **3.15.2 Environmental IFCOs Report**

This report was received and accepted by the meeting

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

This report was received and accepted by the meeting

Les Weller asked about the vessel's oil consumption of zero and asked if the Vessel did not go out to which the Chief IFCO confirmed that it did go out but consumption would be referred to in a later report and it is very efficient.

### **3.16 ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

Bernard Pidcock said that he would like to have a report of the possible ramifications for the IFCA of leaving the EU. The CEO said that he and the Chairman and Vice Chairman had had a meeting with MEP Paul Brannen who explained that it would take a long time/ about two years for changes to take place but the CEO confirmed that if there is a Brexit a report can be produced thereafter.

The CEO asked the Members whether they would like NIFCA to comment in any way to the North Sea Commission Discard Ban to which Sandy Ritchie confirmed that he would like to see NIFCA support what they are saying.

The meeting also confirmed approval for the Sewage Free Seas petition which had been received from the SAGB.

There being no further business the meeting was closed at 15:50