

**MINUTES OF THE GENERAL COMMITTEE MEETING
HELD AT THE AUTHORITY OFFICE AT 8 ENNERDALE
ROAD, BLYTH ON MONDAY 23 JANUARY 2017 AT 2PM**

PRESENT: NIFCA Members:

Mr G R Arckless (Chair), Mr L Weller (LW), Mrs C Hedley (CH), Mr D Herriott (DH), Dr M Kitching (MK), Mr J Lang (JL), Mr B Pidcock (BP), Professor N Polunin (NP), Mr S Ritchie (SR), Mr N Robinson (NR), Mr J Stephenson (JS), Mr I Thomas (IT), Mr D Thompson (DT), Mr D Watkin (DW) & Mr J Woodman (JW).

Also in attendance were Mr Sean Douglas (SD) from the MMO, the NIFCA Chief Executive Officer Mr M H Hardy (CEO), Deputy CIFCO Mr M Southerton (MS), Deputy CIFCO Mr J Green (JG), Environmental IFCO Ms N Wallace (NW) and the NIFCA Administrative Officer Mrs E Stiles (ES).

3.1 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies:

Apologies were received from Mr B Burdis (BB), Mrs J Fearon (JF), Mr S Lowe (SL), Mr M Bould (MB), Mr P Rippon (PR), Dr C Scott (CS) and the Authority Chief IFCO Mr A B Browne (AB).

Declarations of Interest:

There were no declarations of interest given at this meeting.

3.2 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS

3.2.1 Minutes of General Committee meeting held on 31 October 2016 and matters arising therefrom.

These minutes were accepted by the meeting as an accurate record.

3.2.2 Minutes of Technical and Scientific meeting held on 12 December 2016 and matters arising therefrom.

These minutes were accepted by the meeting as an accurate record with amendment to be made to page 1, point 3, beginning "...in the Berwick Advertiser which stated..." – amendment provided by AB as follows:- "DH explained that there was an article in the Berwick Advertiser indicating that in 2016, the River Tweed had lost a reported 16,000 salmon to the Northumberland Drift Net Fishery, whose jurisdiction is in England, about which he said that this seems a very high number for only eight permit holders".

3.3 MEETINGS ATTENDED THROUGHOUT QUARTER

This report was received by the meeting and the Chair commended the Authority for their work with the Dales School who are an outstanding Special Educational Needs School in Blyth. The CEO explained that the school first got involved with NIFCA when they decorated some wooden fish for an event held by Kent and Essex IFCA; students and teachers have since attended talks from NIFCA Officers at the office and at the school and the CEO, following a visit he made to the school before Christmas, will be meeting with the head teacher at the NIFCA office to discuss future opportunities.

The CEO also explained that he and VR gave a presentation about the work of NIFCA at an event held by the Natural History Society on 13th January which was very well received and gave his thanks to Steve Lowe for the invitation to take part.

3.4 CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S REPORT FOR QUARTER ENDING 31 DECEMBER 2016

The CEO congratulated the Chair for the well-deserved award of his MBE which was echoed by the other members.

LW noted that the Authority website has been updated to a nice standard and asked if the Authority meetings could be listed on their own page as they are currently not very easy to find; ES confirmed that this can be done.

3.5 REPORT ON PROGRESS OF PROJECTS DURING 2016-17

This report was received by the meeting. NP explained that the Phd/ Msc students will be starting their projects in April. He confirmed that Fabrice Stephenson's time at the University is now coming to an end and he has had one of his scientific papers accepted. It was also confirmed that Ashleigh Tinling will be doing a presentation regarding hand gathering at a future NIFCA meeting.

JG confirmed that the NIFCA escape gap project will be resuming shortly. He explained that the project is producing both positive and negative results regarding the use of escape gaps and confirmed that a student will soon start gathering the opinions of local fishermen, who have also been trialling the escape gaps, to get a stronger industry opinion. JG explained that the Authority will also be trialling a beam trawl to see if there is still a nursery area near Blyth Beach and confirmed that the Authority continues its involvement in the NE beached birds survey.

3.6 RECREATIONAL ACTIVITY UPDATE AND LOOKING AHEAD

This report was received by the members. NP was asked whether there was any evidence of back-filling being of benefit to which he explained that the main benefits of doing it is for health and safety measures and to reduce the aesthetic impact of bait digging.

3.7 MPAS UPDATE AND LOOKING AHEAD

This report was received by the meeting.

3.8 MEMBERSHIP MATTERS

It was confirmed that the MMO Appointed Member appraisals are due in the next quarter and the Chair said that he would be happy to approach them in the same way as last year. LW told the meeting that some IFCA's have been asking for a more rigorous appraisals system to which the CEO confirmed that this had been discussed at an earlier AIFCA meeting, but it seemed unlikely that the system would change following discussions at the AIFCA meeting in December.

The Chair explained that he will not be continuing as a Councillor following the elections in May and therefore his seat on the committee will come to an end. He reminded the members that the Standing Orders requires there to be one MMO appointed member and one councillor to act as the Chair and Vice Chair of the committee and suggested that it seems appropriate for LW to be considered for Chair for at least the next year in the interests of continuity while the new

committee settles in. IT asked whether the decision regarding elections will come before the whole committee to which the Chair confirmed it would and that members would decide who the Chair and Vice Chair should be from the Councillor(s) and MMO Member(s) who were nominated or put themselves forward for election.

3.9 RISK ASSESSMENT

It was confirmed by the CEO that the Risk Assessment Matrix is reviewed once a year by the Risk Assessment working group which includes the CEO, AB, MS, JS and ES. Once changes have been approved, the document is then added to the website. He explained that this is a live document and is next due to be reviewed in March 2017. This report was received and accepted by the meeting.

3.10 CORRESPONDENCE

This report was received by the meeting.

3.11 SUMMARY OF WATCH AND FINANCE COMMITTEE MEETINGS

Watch:

The CEO confirmed that the minutes of the previous Watch Committee were approved and that the Patrol Vessel, health and safety and Chief IFCO reports were received by the meeting. He also explained that the Authority currently has the chance of receiving 70% funding from EMFF towards the cost of a new RIB if the members agree to submit a bid. He explained that a long discussion followed and in principle it was approved by the members with a new vessel sub-committee being agreed. The initial thought is to get a cabin RIB which includes on-board facilities to enable the vessel to be used for longer periods of time and to allow the Officers to go further afield. The CEO confirmed that the pot of money available is up to £150,000 but it is likely that a NIFCA bid would be for something smaller than this. The Chair confirmed that the Watch committee delegated the final decision to the sub-committee and NIFCA management team. JW asked if a new cabin RIB may lead to the Authority no longer needing St Aidan, in which case going for a higher spec RIB now would be advantageous to which the Chair said that this is unlikely. The Chair continued to say that it is not likely that the Authority will get another chance like this in the near future so although the RIB does not need to be replaced now, there is currently an opportunity to acquire a high-spec RIB at a fraction of the price we could pay if we waited until the current RIB does need to be replaced.

The CEO confirmed that the infringements report was received by the meeting and explained that there is one significant case which will be heard in court on 24th January which includes 5 breaches of byelaw 7. It was confirmed that a press release will be sent out to the local media following conclusion of the case. The CEO concluded this summary by confirming that the Range Rover has been running well and 4x4 training for the IFCOs is pending.

Finance:

The CEO explained that the 2017-18 budget was discussed and confirmed that the Chair recommends that the committee accepts a 2% increase in the precept. The Finance Officers were thanked for their hard work in managing the accounts and the Chair had also suggested an informal meeting with Allison Elsdon (NCC Finance Officer) to discuss a longer term plan for the Authority's finances. The Chair confirmed his recommendation of budget B which includes a 2% precept

increase which would only be the Authority's second increase in 6 years and is a relatively small figure and aims to help NIFCA move away from a deficit budget. The Chair confirmed that the budget must be approved by the majority of the whole membership and the majority of the council membership.

At this point the membership unanimously voted in favour of the precept increase.

The CEO confirmed that the incremental salary increases and potential 1% cost of living increases have both been built into the budget. At this point IT left the meeting.

BP asked if there is an appeals process if a member of staff does not meet the appraisal requirements to get an incremental increase to which the CEO confirmed that there is.

The CEO continued to summarise that the Finance committee accepted the minutes of previous meetings, explained that amendments continue to be made based on the results of the audit and confirmed that the agreed precepts will be signed by himself, the Chair and Vice Chair after the meeting.

3.12 IFCO REPORTS

3.12.1 Chief IFCO Report on areas 1 & 2 for quarter ending 31 December 2016

This report was received by the meeting.

3.12.2 Environmental IFCOs Report for quarter ending 31 December 2016

This report was received by the meeting. MK asked if the increase in crabs and lobsters being landed is significant for the whole district to which JG confirmed that this will be examined by the student who is joining the team to speak with local fishermen; it is too early to say at this point in time but JG also confirmed that the members will be kept up to date as the escape gap project progresses.

3.12.3 Maintenance Report/ Engineering Log for quarter ending 31 December 2016

This report was accepted by the meeting. The CEO explained that the cracks found in the hull are just superficial and only affected the gel coating on the fibreglass but confirmed that this will still be looked into.

3.13 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The CEO confirmed that the topic of opening soft grounds will hopefully be an agenda item for the next quarterly meeting with a view to a decision on byelaw 7 amendment. He also gave thanks to JW for contacting Anne-Marie Trevelyan to discuss fisheries post-Brexit.

There being no further business, the Chair closed the meeting at 15:25 pm.