

MINUTES OF THE GENERAL COMMITTEE MEETING HELD AT THE AUTHORITY OFFICE AT 8 ENNERDALE ROAD, BLYTH ON MONDAY 24 APRIL 2017 AT 2PM

PRESENT: NIFCA Members:

Mr G R Arckless (Chair/ RA), Mr L Weller (LW), Mr M Bould (MB), Mr B Burdis (BB), Mrs C Hedley (CH), Mr D Herriott (DH), Mr B Pidcock (BP), Professor N Polunin (NP), Mr S Ritchie (SR), Mr N Robinson (NR), Dr C Scott (CS), Mr J Stephenson (JS), Mr I Thomas (IT), Mr D Watkin (DW).

Also in attendance were Aurelie Bohan from the Northumberland Wildlife Trust, Nick Brodin from Northumberland Marine and Nature Partnership and former NSFC member, Ian MacCaulay. NIFCA attendance also included Chief Executive Officer Mr M H Hardy (CEO), Chief IFCO Mr A B Browne (AB), 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).

3.0 ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN AND VICE CHAIRMAN FOR THE TERM OF OFFICE TO 24 APRIL 2018

The CEO confirmed that Les Weller had been nominated for the role of Chairman of the Authority for NIFCA year 2017-18. There were no other nominations. Members voted unanimously voted for LW to take this role.

The CEO confirmed that Dougie Watkin had been nominated for the role of Vice Chairman of the Authority for NIFCA year 2017-18. There were no other nominations. Members voted unanimously voted for DW to take this role.

The CEO explained that RA and John Woodman, as well as Mrs Fearon, will be retiring as Councillors and so will be stepping down from the Authority. He thanked them for their time serving on the committee. He also confirmed that there are currently 10 members on the Watch committee and 9 on the Finance and explained that up to 12 can sit on these sub-committees. No other members requested to sit on these sub-committees, but the CEO said that this may change with new Council members.

It was agreed that RA would Chair this final meeting. He offered his best wishes for the Authority in the future and all the best to LW and DW moving forward.

3.1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Apologies:

Apologies were received from Mrs J Fearon (JF), Mr M Kitching (MK), Mr S Lowe (SL), Mr P Rippon (PR) and Mr J Woodman (JW).

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 23 January 2017 and matters arising therefrom

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

3.3 COMMUNICATION AND STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT ACTION PLAN

The CEO explained that following his last quarterly meeting with Richard Simpson, he has now created a communication and stakeholder Action Plan. He also explained that MK asked him to add 'joint work with North East Cetacean Project' to this Plan. The CEO confirmed that the document is to be used to further communicate, better promote and enhance the Authority.

The report was received by the meeting.

3.4 MEETINGS ATTENDED THROUGHOUT QUARTER

The CEO explained that the Officers have been out in the district a lot this quarter and there are a large number of meetings in London taking place in the next quarter including a Heads of IFCA Services meeting regarding Brexit with DEFRA and the MMO on 12th May, together with a meeting for Heads of Service and Chairs with the MMO to be held on 5th June.

The CEO confirmed that he and VR attended the Farne Islands Committee meeting on 21st April when VR gave a presentation to the group, following which they went on a visit to the Farne Islands.

3.5 CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S REPORT FOR QUARTER ENDING 31 MARCH 2017

This report was received by the meeting which included a copy of the IFCA "Future Management in England" document. MB asked whether the possibility of IFCAs working up to the 12 mile limit will be discussed at the meeting on 12th May to which the CEO confirmed that it most likely will. MB said that if the IFCAs work to the 12 mile limit, they risk losing their identity and may appear to the industry that they are a branch of the MMO. The Chair said that it is important that IFCAs do not lose their identity. He explained that it is also important to Northumberland IFCA that that Association of IFCAs remains intact because having a national perspective is very important. LW said that it needs to be remembered that IFCAs are funded locally and therefore it is important that decisions are made with the district in mind.

3.6 ANNUAL PLAN 2017-18

The CEO confirmed that a final draft of this for NIFCA had been created and sent to Members and is ready to be submitted to Defra. He said that this will act as a point of reference for NIFCA planning in 2017-18. The CEO confirmed that the Chairman's introduction from Robert will be added before it is submitted to Defra and the plan will also then be added to the website. BP commented that the glossary at the start of the document is very useful.

3.7 REPORT ON PROGRESS OF PROJECTS DURING 2016-17

3.7.i University Projects

The CEO explained that NP's report clearly shows the amount and range of projects that are being carried out by the University and said that he is

pleased that NIFCA are able to get involved and hold a strong relationship with them. He commented that it is great to be able to have students come in to work with NIFCA who make a great contribution to the work of the Authority as developing marine scientists. NP explained that there are new MSc projects due to begin in the next quarter including one which is exploring the historical changes of the Northumberland food web with a comparison of "then and now". The CEO asked whether the student may wish to view some of the old SFC meeting minutes to which NP said that this may be helpful. He explained that the student has been having difficulty in recreating the same historical fishing conditions and is looking to find a 22ft beam trawl and asked if anyone had any suggestions. LW suggested the Ancient coble Association, DW suggested the Tweed Commission and the CEO mentioned the possibility of the Maritime Museum in Hull. NP thanked the members for their suggestions. He also said that if any members have any projects that they would like to see undertaken by a student then please feel free to make suggestions. LW asked when Ashleigh Tinling's report is likely to be complete to which VR confirmed that it is planned for completion in September.

3.7.ii NIFCA Projects

The CEO thanked NW for her work in creating an abstract for the full lobster project report. He confirmed that a student will be coming to work with NIFCA on this over the summer. LW said that the CEFAS data opposes the information in this report to which MB commented that the industry supports the project and its data. MB also commented that some of the wording should be changed as it appears to have been written to justify the size change of berried hens to which NW said that it was not intended to read in that way and that the final report will be adjusted.

3.7.iii IVMS

The CEO confirmed that a national Statutory Instrument requiring all commercial vessels to be fitted with IVMS is being considered. LW asked if this included charter boats to which AB confirmed that it does not, unless they are licensed.

3.8 RECREATIONAL ACTIVITY

The CEO gave thanks to AB for putting this report together, which was received by the meeting. He asked for thoughts from members. LW asked whether the Authority could also consider permits for cleekers which could include shore gathering to which AB explained that this would be difficult because this would mean that anyone on the shore would have to have a permit, including for rock pooling. DH commented that he agreed with the stance on recreational potters and the Chair asked if this would be moved to a consultation to which the CEO said that he believed plans should be released for feedback from the industry. MB said that he supports the plans for recreational permits to have to use escape gaps and sees no harm in introducing them which was also agreed by DH and IT. DW asked if there would be an addition charge to recreational permit holders to introduce escape gaps to which AB said that this should not be the case as they are already charged £10 annually for these permits. MB asked if the consultation regarding pot limitation is also planned to take place. He said that he feels that now would be the wrong time to do this when taking into account the current bass restrictions, size changes and berried hen consultation and added that it may not go down well in the industry. The CEO asked whether doing this in 9-12 months would be better accepted than in the next 6 months to which MB said it would. AB

said that this was a good suggestion and he would support leaving this until a later date. The CEO summarised that the Authority would move forward with the consultation regarding recreational escape gaps as soon as possible but will put a hold on the pot limitation review until a later date. This was agreed by the meeting.

3.9 MPAS UPDATE

VR confirmed that the Appropriate Assessments have now all been completed with no further management requirements. She confirmed that a 1KM maintenance area has been designated around the Farnes to which JS commented that he found this a little worrying. VR also explained that it was agreed that no commercial fishing activity occurs within the AIn Estuary (a tranche 1 site) so the assessment of this site would take place alongside assessments of bait collection/ hand gathering and with Tranche 2 sites. VR confirmed that the Tweed SAC should be in place by September 2017 and the MCZ conservation advice will be released this year. DW asked if the Tweed SAC includes the Tweed Box to which CS said that this is separate. IT asked if there are likely to be any restrictions to which VR said that it is unlikely as the rangers have no concerns but she will inform members if there are any put in place.

3.10 BYELAW 7 UPDATE

The CEO confirmed that this byelaw was drafted and forwarded to the MMO for comments which the Authority have received and amended the draft as requested. The CEO explained that the Marine Conservation Society (MCS) have raised a formal objection to this byelaw regarding the protection of fin fish. He confirmed that he would like to have a recommendation from the Technical and Scientific meeting from which to base a discussion with the MCS. CH said that byelaw 7 was initially brought in to protect reefs (from the Revised Approach article 6) not fin fish and if fin fish need to be protected this will need to be done separately. MB commented that we cannot retrospectively “move the goalposts” and the Authority should not allow the MCS influence this decision as it will be “bad press” and will set an unfortunate precedent. He believes that NIFCA have a robust rationale to continue. JS asked for further details of the MCS to which LW explained that they are a charity. He commented that the Authority should not allow their objection to influence this decision by threat and NIFCA should stand by their principles. The Chair confirmed that a full discussion should follow at the Technical and Scientific meeting and said that when he first saw this objection from the MCS he was nervous. He continued to explain that although they are just a charity, they can have a powerful influence and this matter needs to be handled with care. He commented that any work which has been done so far has been done properly and said that the Authority made a promise to the local industry about this which should be upheld. NP asked if members could see a copy of the MCS’s evidence to which the CEO confirmed that he will send it out. CH said that she did not believe that this byelaw could be open to challenge and offered to write this out in context of the byelaw which the CEO thanked her for.

3.11 DEFRA CONSULTATION ON PROHIBITION ON THE LANDING OF BERRIED LOBSTERS AND CRAWFISH

The Chair explained the proposed consultation and the need for a NIFCA response. He said that the views of fishers and professionals need to be captured and considered and reminded the members of the 2005 consultation on berried hens which was rejected on the basis of cross-border difficulties. The CEO explained that the plan for himself and the environmental IFCOs, in light also of information from the industry, will be to prepare a response to send to

members before the Technical and Scientific meeting. He said that the election could affect the date of the decision on the consultation, but the way in which it is worded suggests a likelihood of a national prohibition, with NIFCA being only 1 of 3 IFCA's that do not already have this prohibition in place in their district.

AB explained that if this SI is put in place nationally, byelaw 4 (crustacea) could be rewritten to say that anyone with berried lobsters on their vessel in Northumberland would be committing an offence – this should help to level the playing field for cross-border fishers. MH explained that the only potential problem with amending the byelaw in this way is that this is known as a deeming clause (someone is deemed to have committed an offence) which Defra are seemingly not keen on accepting. MB commented that at some times of the year, berried hens make up 50% of a fishers catch which shows that Northumberland does not have a failing fishery. He explained that this is now a 12 month of the year fishery and by introducing a prohibition, Defra is asking for these fishers to support close to a 20% cut in their profits. DW added that it would be very easy for someone to “scrub” a berried hen to appear that it is not carrying eggs. The Chair said that the CEO can put a response together ready for the deadline and members can put their thoughts forward at the Technical and Scientific meeting. One of our themes has been to create a sustainable fishery, something that is not reflected in the CEFAS data which seems to have been from many years ago. MB added that CEFAS have acknowledged that their data is limited and flawed. He explained that NIFCA's lobster survey has recorded catch of several undersized lobsters per day being returned to the sea which suggests a thriving fishery. MB continued to say that this is a stock-led industry and without the stocks, there would be nothing to catch. He said that the stocks will reduce one day in the future at which point so will its exploitation. JS commented that if this prohibition is introduced nationally, the lobster v-notch project will have to cease which will be a great shame because each hen currently gets up to 5 years of egg-bearing but with the prohibition, they may only get 1 year. The Chair commented that the various points from members had given the CEO plenty to include in his draft response which will be produced in time for the Technical and Scientific meeting.

3.12 BERWICKSHIRE AND NORTH NORTHUMBERLAND MARINE NATURE PARTNERSHIP UPDATE

Nick Brodin (NB) introduced himself to the meeting as the new Project Officer for the Berwickshire and Northumberland Marine Nature Partnership. He confirmed that his main aim in the next few months is to meet with the partners to discuss their future work together and said that that he will soon be in touch to arrange a meeting with NIFCA. NB confirmed that he has been in post for 5 weeks now on a part-time basis of 3 - 3.5 days per week. He also explained that the letters regarding partner contributions were not sent out in December as planned but will be coming out soon. RA welcomed NB to the partnership.

3.13 RISK ASSESSMENT MATRIX

The CEO confirmed that the above can now be found in the Annual Plan. He explained that the format of Risk Matrix was originally introduced with assistance from NCC a few years ago and is used to record possible risks and their effect on the Authority. The CEO confirmed that the Matrix is updated every 6 months with the latest review taking place on 24th March 2017, which will be added onto the website after approval from the members. This document was received and approved by the members.

3.14 CORRESPONDENCE

This report was received by the meeting with thanks from the Chair.

3.15 SUMMARY OF WATCH AND FINANCE COMMITTEES BY CEO

Watch:

The CEO confirmed that both sets of minutes in the Agenda were accepted as true records by the members of the Watch committee. He explained that procurement of the new vessel (RIB) is in hand and confirmed that there will be a team of Officers and members attending the Southampton Boat show in June, following which interested parties should be able to bid for the tender of the vessel. The CEO confirmed that the Vessels, Health and Safety and prosecutions reports were accepted, with some discussion about the positive outcome of the Authority's latest prosecution, which received good publicity. He also explained that the Intel project has been continuing well.

The CEO told members about the discussion regarding a light touch approach to the MMO Appointed Member appraisals and reminded that there were still 7 responses outstanding from members. He confirmed that some memberships will be coming up for renewal shortly and reminded the meeting that members are able to serve on the Authority for up to 10 years. The CEO also confirmed that the Authority will be allocated 3 new council members from 24th May and explained that a training day will be held which current members will also be able to attend for a refresher and the chance to meet the new members. Finally, the CEO confirmed that all other Watch reports were received.

Finance:

The CEO confirmed that the minutes of the last Finance meeting were received and accepted by the meeting. He confirmed that the accounts were approved and the level of reserves was noted to be in good shape, some of which will be used towards the intended purchase of the new RIB. The CEO confirmed that the Annual Audit meeting is planned for 26th June, open to all members for approval of the 2016-17 Audit and explained that the staff Declaration of Interests have been signed and returned by all staff. He also added that the 1% increase in cost of living and incremental rises for all eligible staff following reviews had been approved, as had the £4,000 contribution to the Northumberland Marine Nature Partnership, which will be reviewed annually.

The CEO explained that there have been some issues with the Council's switch from Microsoft to Google Chrome and as such the Authority has decided to look at alternative options for IT systems and support, for which the final decision has been delegated to the CEO with a report to the Chair and Vice Chair. Finally, the CEO confirmed that the members Allowance Policy was approved and also the contribution towards the purchase of glasses which are needed for work for NIFCA employees has been raised from £75 to £100.

3.16 IFCO REPORTS

3.16.1 Chief IFCO Report including on areas 1 & 2 for quarter ending 31 March 2017

This report was received by the meeting. LW congratulated NW upon becoming a warranted Officer and the Chair gave thanks to all Officers for their work and he has been particularly pleased with the level of commitment to the work with the Amble Lobster Hatchery.

3.16.2 Environmental IFCOs Report for quarter ending 31 March 2017

This report was received by the meeting.

3.16.3 Maintenance Report/ Engineering Log for quarter ending 31 March 2017

This report was accepted by the meeting.

3.13 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The CEO confirmed that the Technical and Scientific meeting will be held on 11th May and apologised that this was organised on a date which CS, who regularly sits as the Chair for this meeting, is unable to attend. He also confirmed that the next quarterly meeting is to be held on Monday 24th July at the Newbiggin Maritime centre and confirmed that it would be good to have stakeholders attend.

A toast was given to The Chair Councillor Robert Arckless, MBE for his long standing membership with the Authority and his outstanding contribution to NIFCA. The CEO and LW both gave thanks to him for all of his time, work and dedication to the Authority and the great job he has done as Chair over the years. All members offered Robert a long and happy retirement and it was agreed that he would be sorely missed. Robert gave his thanks to all members and staff for their support during his time as a member and Chair and offered his best wishes to everyone and regards to LW and DW as the new Chair and Vice Chair.

There being no further business, the Chair closed the meeting at 16:00 pm.