

MINUTES OF THE GENERAL COMMITTEE MEETING
HELD AT THE NEWBIGGIN MARITIME CENTRE
ON MONDAY 24 JULY 2017 AT 2PM

PRESENT: NIFCA Members:

Mr L Weller (Chair), Ms E Cartie (EC), Ms E Dunn (ED), Mrs C Hedley (CH), Mr D Herriott (DH), Dr M Kitching (MK), Ms W Pattison (WP), Professor N Polunin (NP), Mr G Renner-Thompson (GRT), Mr P Rippon (PR), Mr S Ritchie (SR), Mr N Robinson (NR), Mr J Stephenson (JS) and Mr I Thomas (IT).

Also in attendance were Aurelie Bohan from the Northumberland Wildlife Trust, and former member Dougie Watkin. NIFCA attendance also included Chief Executive Officer Mr M H Hardy (CEO), Chief IFCO Mr A B Browne (AB), Environmental IFCO Ms V Rae (VR) and the NIFCA Administrative Officer Mrs E Stiles (ES).

3.0 AGENDA, APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Apologies

Apologies were received from Mr B Burdis (BB), Mr S Lowe (SL), Mr M Bould (MB), Mr G Roughead (GR) and Mr D Thompson (DT).

Declarations of Interest:

None

3.1 VICE CHAIR POSITION

The CEO confirmed that WP has been nominated for the position of Vice Chair. Members were asked to vote for the new Vice Chair and WP was elected unanimously. The Chair confirmed that WP will be on all NIFCA committees. He added that NCC council members have a veto for the Authority's budget and confirmed that he would like to see Council Members on the Finance Committee. The CEO asked if anyone would like to volunteer for the Finance and or Watch committees to which ED said she would like to learn more about them first before deciding. The CEO confirmed that there will be a further training day (for new members who could not make the first one) on 10th August and once this is completed the Authority can look at appointing new Watch and Finance members.

Additional Item: Pot Tags

The CEO confirmed that there is an additional item for discussion at this meeting regarding pot tags. He explained particularly for the benefit of new members that pot tags are given to recreational and commercial potters under Byelaw 4 as part of the management regime to regulate fishing to reduce the risk of over exploitation and told the meeting that in recent months, NIFCA has been contacted regarding some half a dozen tags which have washed-up on the shores of Scandinavia, as well as others which have washed-up on occasion across the district. The CEO asked for suggestions from members on how to improve this issue and added that a letter was sent out to permit holders last week asking them to assure tags are fitted securely. He also explained that a NIFCA tag was also found during a beach clean in Skegness and the Authority

were contacted about this by the Wildlife Trust via social media, noting that there is increasing awareness regarding plastics in the sea. JS commented that the old NIFCA tags were more secure than the current ones. PR asked if the Authority could consider using biodegradable tags to which AB explained that fishers could say “my tags dissolved” if questioned over unmarked pots and also explained that the Authority uses them for 3 years so they have to be hardwearing.

EC asked what happens when Officers find a pot without a tag to which AB explained that if it is attached to a fleet where for example only one tag is missing, the Officers would inspect and put it back. If there were no tags on the fleet at all, the pots would be seized and advertised then a decision would be made regarding potential byelaw infringements and required action. The CEO said that this issue can be kept in mind for review and can be looked at during the next T&S meeting.

3.2 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS QUARTERLY MEETING HELD ON 24 APRIL 2017 AND MATTERS ARISING THEREFROM

These minutes were accepted as an accurate record.

3.3 MEETINGS ATTENDED BY REPRESENTATIVES OF THE AUTHORITY

For the purpose of new members, the CEO explained that this paper lists all of the meetings attended by IFCOs, staff and members to show the quantity and variety of the meetings NIFCA attends. He confirmed that not all meetings are directly related to NIFCA and in some cases are attended to help to raise the profile of NIFCA and for networking purposes. The CEO noted that this paper also shows the community work which NIFCA takes part in such as the work with the Sea Cadets which is a collaborative project with the MMO and EA; public engagement events such as the Blyth Maritime Festival, Puffin Festival and World Ocean’s Day event and the working groups for collaborative work such as the Joint Local Enforcement Group attended by representatives of various agencies in the area including the police and NEIFCA amongst others.

The Chair gave thanks to CS for her hard work with the JWA. He confirmed that he wrote to the Authority on 9th June to give thanks on behalf of himself and the committee members for the hard work in getting the Authority’s voice out there on Social Media and to ES for her work on New Members Information Pack.

3.4 CHIEF EXECUTIVE’S REPORT ON SECOND QUARTER OF NIFCA 2017-18

The CEO confirmed his understanding that the Defra “road shows” which he refers to in paragraph 2 of his report now have to be rearranged and explained that Defra would like to hold these events alongside any local events which may be being held and NIFCA will let Defra know if there is anything they may wish to consider. He also explained that the IFCA and MMO collaborative working in Northumberland has been excellent, as is NIFCA’s local working relationship with NE and the EA. The CEO explained that Defra are continuing to seek more collaborative working between IFCA’s and the MMO and confirmed that there are ongoing discussions between MMO and IFCA’s nationally regarding joint working in the future.

For the benefit of new members, The Chair confirmed that Phil Rippon, Neil Robinson and Catherine Scott are statutory members of the Authority. He also explained that NIFCA currently cover the 0-6nm but IFCA’s have held out the possibility of working the 0-12nm. He added that there has been a lot of discussion regarding “day one readiness”.

3.5 ANNUAL REPORT 2016-17

The CEO confirmed that he will soon be starting on this report which can be repetitive in format as it needs to contain all of the information upon which IFCA's are required to report, but is an accurate tool for summarising the year's work and achievements.

The Chair reminded Council members that if there are events taking place in their areas or wards that they would like NIFCA to attend to please contact the office. He also said that if any members of the fishing community in their wards would like to speak to the Authority, they will be very welcome to contact us directly or Council members should feel free to ask if they have queries.

3.6 REPORT ON PROGRESS OF PROJECTS DURING THE FIRST QUARTER OF 2017-18 INCLUDING A PAPER ON PROJECTS WITH NEWCASTLE UNIVERSITY

The CEO explained to the new members that the Authority has a very successful working relationship with Newcastle University which is beneficial to NIFCA and the students who get involved. NP added that this relationship is also very valuable to the University. He confirmed that Ashleigh Tinlin has been working on her PhD thesis regarding bait digging, many of the results from which she has shared with NIFCA. He confirmed that her thesis should be finished by the end of September, but then will be examined, following which some revisions may be required. NP explained that other student projects will include looking at fish assemblages off Seahouses, feeding grounds and food webs, the effect of escape gaps on lobsters and also fish gut contents (cod in particular to see what they are now feeding on). He explained that many students are interested in leading projects which look at the sustainability of the local fishery and the impact of fishing on the environment and hopes that this interest will continue. Finally, NP explained that he is also currently in discussion with MB regarding squid eggs which are increasingly being found on local traps. He explained that he has found this curious as there is currently no inshore squid exploitation but confirmed that this could be explored for future exploitation. SR gave a word of caution regarding the squid fishery explaining that wherever there is a strong squid fishery, much of the shellfish industry has suffered with static gear being interfered with/ destroyed due to the heavy technical gear required. NP thanked Sandy for this information.

3.7 NET LIMITATION REPORT

The CEO explained that the district has seen an increasing catch of pink salmon, a species from Russia which is also known as humpback salmon. He told the meeting that the Environment Agency (EA) would like to set up a working group to monitor this invasive species, which may be a threat to the more indigenous species of salmon, and confirmed that NIFCA will be happy to take part in this. The Chair asked PR if they are also seeing higher catch of Pacific salmon to which he confirmed that this is the case as it can very easily be sold on the market and as this species have a short life cycle, they are likely to be an adaptive species. GRT commented that the Tweed Commission is also very concerned regarding this issue as they have received many letters from members of the industry who are already reporting low salmon numbers.

The Chair confirmed that a Net Limitation meeting has now taken place with the Angling Trust and EA and asked PR what will happen going forward? PR explained that this meeting and the EA position was based around a 5 point

system aiming to reduce exploitation and confirmed that the EA are trying to work out how to best achieve this whilst balancing people's working life and income. He confirmed that the outcomes of this report will be accessible in a few weeks. The CEO confirmed that Net Limitation will be on the agenda for the next T&S meeting. He explained that there are a number of net fishers and they are opposed to this fishery being shut down and confirmed that the Authority has written to the Minister about this, explaining that the biggest concern is the possibility of displacement from netting to potting. He confirmed to the new members that this is quite an emotive topic for the net fishers in the district.

GRT asked what nets are in use in Northumberland to which PR confirmed that there are 11 drift nets left in the district and quite a few T-nets are still used from the shore which can be seen at South Shields. The Chair confirmed that the T and J nets are anchored and are named due to their shape. PR explained that the problem with the net fishery is that they do not target species from only one stock and as salmon are migratory, the nets could catch salmon which are from/travelling to an area where the stocks are particularly low.

3.8 RECREATIONAL ACTIVITY REPORT

This report was received by the meeting. The CEO confirmed that NIFCA have tried to engage with recreational sea anglers as much as possible, particularly to ensure that they are aware of the regulations within the district. For the benefit of new members, he confirmed that NIFCA have recently added a charge to the 5 recreational pot tags per fisher and explained that there may still be some people who are not aware of this change. The Chair confirmed that the Authority has been working on some promotional material aimed at recreational anglers and has also been attending local events such as the Bob White Angling Competition in Amble. He explained that Southern IFCA has recently stencilled pictures of commonly caught fish (such as bass, flounder, lobster) onto local piers showing their minimum landing size, an idea to keep in mind.

3.9 MPAS UPDATE

The CEO gave thanks to CS for her support to the NIFCA Environmental team over the years and added that it has been a great help to VR/ NW who are undertaking what is required very well. VR explained that the B&NNCSAC HRA has been completed and is now just awaiting sign off.

CEO explained the risks table to the new members and confirmed that there were 2 red risks found in Northumberland which led to the implementation of byelaws 7 and 8. CH asked if the team had completed any other HRAs with a red risk to which VR confirmed that they had not.

3.10 BYELAW 7 AMENDMENT UPDATE

The CEO confirmed that the Authority is now able to amend this byelaw following the draft which was sent to the MMO for consideration. He explained that this byelaw was initially brought in to protect the rocky reefs with the promise to the industry that NIFCA would look at opening some soft grounds in the future, which has received objection from the Marine Conservation Society. The next stage for this byelaw amendment is for it to be formally accepted by the committee then nationally advertised, giving a 14 day consultation, following which it can then be sent to Defra to sign off. The CEO said that this can be looked at during the October quarterly meeting, at an EGM or, as recommended by the CEO, at the upcoming Technical and Scientific meeting. The Chair agreed that the Technical and Scientific meeting would be a suitable time to review this byelaw, which was

made as a precautionary measure. He also confirmed that it was promised to the industry that NIFCA would look at opening some soft grounds so it is necessary that this is done if possible.

3.11 LOBSTER PROJECTS

The CEO confirmed that the NIFCA lobster stock assessment project (started by former IFCO Emma McLoughney and supported by Newcastle University) is very important to ensure that we have the best possible idea of the stock levels in Northumberland. The Chair added that this good work is appreciated by the members and fishers of the district and shows that Northumberland has a good lobster fishery.

3.12 FLAG UPDATE

The CEO explained that funding for the North of the Tyne FLAG was awarded last year with thanks to VR and NW who worked with NCC in particular to get it. He explained that there was a pot of EMFF money set aside to create FLAGs across the UK and the North of the Tyne FLAG was one of six areas to be successful in their bid to get this funding. JS commented that interest in the FLAG is ever building and the Chair added that Councillors should be aware of this funding which can be accessed by individuals or organisations in the community for projects in their wards.

3.13 RISK ASSESSMENT MATRIX

The CEO gave thanks to Barbara Mackie (NCC) for initiating this matrix which is reviewed every 6 months by the working group consisting of the CEO, JS, AB, ES and MS. He confirmed that the most recent matrix can be found on the Authority website and will be next reviewed in September. He added that with the upcoming change in IT support, there may need to be an update to our risk matrix.

3.14 CORRESPONDENCE

This report was received by the meeting.

The CEO explained that regarding Grab Sampling on Page 1, Andrew Willmott from Newcastle University is hoping to get funding to research plastics in the sea and with NIFCA's agreement included in their plan that they will use St Aidan's grab sampler. On page 3, regarding the "Ugly Fish Club", the CEO confirmed that this project is trying to get people to eat a more diverse range of fish and proposes to host independent nights with a guest chef, encouraging "foodies" to come and try new fish. He explained that he is not sure if NIFCA can get fully immersed in this project because our resources are not finite but will be happy to support it as much as possible.

The Chair said that regarding the Defra consultation on berried hens on page 4, some people apparently believe the consultation is "a done deal" but should not forget that Northumberland are next to Scotland which could cause big monitoring and enforcement problems as landing berried hens would be illegal in England but not in Scotland. He added that this would also affect the NIFCA v-notch scheme. EC asked if it is illegal to land berried hens at the moment to which the CEO confirmed that it is not illegal in Northumberland but is in some areas. He explained that it is not done in the NIFCA district particularly because we run a successful berried hen v-notch scheme which is supported by the Industry and has been great for sustainability in the area, but explained that introducing a

berried hen ban next to the Scottish border would be a problem as referred to above.

Regarding the Community Voice Method (CVM), the Chair explained that he and the CEO were approached by someone from the Marine Conservation Society (MCS) to introduce CVM in Northumberland. He explained that the CVM is a tool aimed to help with conflict resolution and has been used in some parts of the UK to help diffuse conflicts between users of the marine environment. The project involves filming interviews with members of the fisheries and related communities, including fishers, recreational anglers and environmentalists amongst others showing their day to day experience in that sector. These films are then played at events with the aim of everyone better understanding the views of each sector. The CEO confirmed that a presentation regarding this project will be taking place on 15th August at the NIFCA office to which all members would be very welcome.

3.15 SUMMARY OF WATCH AND FINANCE COMMITTEES BY CEO

Watch:

The CEO confirmed that the minutes of all of the previous meetings were approved and the Activity, Enforcement, Vessels and Health and Safety Reports were all received by the meeting. He explained that the new RIB was discussed by the members of the Watch committee, as was the Infringements report with a decision made to progress one case to prosecution. The CEO added that the meeting received the report regarding future collaborative working with the MMO following a recent IFCA Chiefs and Chairs meeting in London.

Finance:

The CEO confirmed that all previous minutes were approved and the accounts were received with thanks. He told members that NIFCA have decided to take on a new Service Level Agreement with IT providers One IT Support following ongoing difficulties with Google and also explained that the start times of the quarterly meetings was discussed and all members will be contacted following this meeting. He explained that the Authority's contribution towards Officers' home phones will cease and confirmed that the precepts have been prepared and are ready to sign. He also confirmed that it has been agreed to continue the lease of Ennerdale Road until at least 2023.

3.16 IFCO REPORTS

3.16.1 Chief IFCO Report on activities for quarter ending 30 June 2017

This report was received by the meeting. The Chair confirmed that this will be the last report from MD who is leaving NIFCA in September. He gave thanks to MD for his work over the last 6 years with thanks also going to JC and MD for their maintenance work on St Aidan. This was a process which used to cost the Authority £8,000-£10,000 for maintenance using an outside company but doing this work internally has cost only around £1,500.

3.16.2 Environmental IFCOs Report for quarter ending 30 June 2017

This report was received by the meeting.

3.16.3 Maintenance Report and Engineering Log for quarter ending 30 June 2017

This report was accepted by the meeting.

3.17 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Next General Meeting is on 23rd October at the Quadrant, North Shields.

Other upcoming events:

- Gangmasters Licencing Agency event: 1st August 2017
- New Members training: 10th August 2017
- Community Voice Method: 15th August 2017
- East Coast War Channels: 12th September 2017
- Technical and Scientific: 14th September 2017

There being no further business, the Chair closed the meeting at 16:10.

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