



MINUTES OF THE GENERAL COMMITTEE MEETING HELD AT NORTH TYNESIDE COUNCIL, THE QUADRANT ON MONDAY 23rd OCTOBER 2017 AT 1PM

PRESENT: NIFCA Members:

Mr L Weller (Vice Chairman), Ms E Dunn (ED), Mr D Herriott (DH), Mr S Lowe (SL), Professor N Polunin (NP), Mr G Renner-Thompson (GRT), Mr P Rippon (PR), Mr S Ritchie (SR), Mr N Robinson (NR), Dr C Scott (CS), Mr J Stephenson (JS), Mr I Thomas (IT), Mr D Thompson (DT).

Also in attendance were the NIFCA CEO Mr M H Hardy (CEO), Chief IFCO Mr AB Browne (AB), DCIFCO (Operations) Mr M Southerton (MS), DCIFCO (Environmental) Mr J Green (JG), IFCO/ Engineer Mr J Cooke (JC) and NIFCA Admin Officer Mrs E Stiles (ES).

3.0 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Apologies: Ms E Cartie (EC), Mrs C Hedley (CH), Ms W Pattinson (WP), Mr M Bould (MB), Mr M Kitching (MK), Mr G Roughead (GR).

There were no declarations of interest given.

3.1 MINUTES OF THE QUARTERLY MEETING HELD ON 24 JULY 2017 AND MATTERS ARISING THEREFROM

The minutes were received and accepted as an accurate record.

3.2 BYELAW 7

The CEO confirmed that byelaws 7 and 8 were made following the “Revised Approach” at which time the Authority undertook to review byelaw 7 and consider reopening any areas which may not need to be protected by this byelaw. He explained that the Officers including the Environmental team have carried out mapping of the area and are now at a point to be able to confirm review of this byelaw. The CEO confirmed that Defra, the MMO and NIFCA Members were all contacted at least 14 days prior to today’s meeting (allowing them time to consider these amendments) as required by MACAA and the members now need to decide whether to accept the revised byelaw. If agreed upon and made today, a consultation period will be entered comprising the byelaw being advertised to allow comment by members of the public. Following this time, the byelaw can be sent to the Minister with any responses requesting sign off; the CEO confirmed that he understood the Authority would like this to do be completed in the New Year.

The Chair said he agreed with the amendments to the byelaw and called for this to be moved. This was done and seconded by SL and agreed by all to proceed with changing this byelaw as per what had been sent to the members and the papers for this meeting. The Chair gave his thanks to MS, JG and the other IFCOs involved.

3.3 MEETINGS ATTENDED BY REPRESENTATIVES OF THE AUTHORITY

The list of meetings was received and accepted by the meeting. The Chair asked what the 'Delve Deeper' filming was to which the CEO confirmed that Delve Deeper is a Newcastle University introduction to Marine Sciences course for mature students. He explained that Heather Sugden from the University wanted to do some promotional filming with MH and VR to support the educational package offered by Delve Deeper.

The CEO explained that the discussion at the Technical and Scientific meeting about the Community Voice Method confirmed a general enthusiasm for the project but members wanted to be reassured that there would not be too much of an additional burden on Officers to accommodate this. The CEO confirmed that he had spoken with Peter Richardson and Sue Ranger in the meantime to explain that NIFCA are keen to go ahead with the project, but will consider further in the New Year.

The CEO confirmed that JG attended the Invasive Species training which was hosted by the Marine and Nature Partnership which went well. Thanks went to Nick Brodin for the invitation.

The Chair told members that the meeting with North Tyneside MPs Mary Glindon and Alan Campbell and Northumberland MP Anne-Marie Trevelyan had both been postponed. These meetings between MPs and the Authority is an important process which has continued since at least the inception of the IFCA and aims to establish and maintain links with Honourable Members.

3.4 CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S REPORT ON THIRD QUARTER OF NIFCA 2017-18

The CEO explained that this has been a significant quarter which saw a positive outcome on a Court case which has been well advertised in News Post Leader and other local newspapers. He confirmed his understanding that this case made us the first IFCA to obtain a court imposed suspension of a person's permit following an offence, which many people may not have been aware a court is able to do and so sends a strong warning out.

It was confirmed to all members by the CEO that the Emergency Byelaw relating to berried hens was successfully made by NIFCA following the Defra prohibition announced in late September and while the ban was not something the Authority sought the introduction of in Northumberland, there is now full coverage in our district.

Regarding Brexit, the CEO confirmed that it is still "business as usual" and the IFCA's have not yet been affected in our day to day working but there is a possibility that changes will soon begin to come into effect. He explained that IFCA's will likely be required to support a general national effort in patrolling UK waters and whilst it is understood that foreign vessels will be able to enter the UK area, it is intended that following Brexit this will now be solely managed by the UK rather than EU. The CEO said that legally, this will need to be looked into following the Repeal and Fisheries Bills but this is understood to be the intention of the current government in respect of fisheries. The Chair added that Defra officials have said that this Government is 'pro-growth' and have a sense for change.

The Chair gave a sincere thank you for the great work of PT who is now retiring. He also gave thanks MS for his particularly good work with regards to the intelligence project and

DRAFT

recent prosecution, which has been very good. Finally, the Chair gave thanks to ES for the development of the new recruitment policy. He noted that all of the team do great work which should be acknowledged by the members.

3.5 ENVIRONMENT AGENCY SALMON CONSULTATION

The CEO confirmed that the NIFCA response to this consultation was submitted. It particularly outlined the Authority's concern regarding displacement of fishing effort from salmon to potting and the opinion of local netters who feel this is a sustainable fishery that they would like to remain open. The CEO confirmed that he received a response from Kevin Austin (who he understands is heading up the consultation) at the EA and who thanked NIFCA for the response which he will "keep in mind". The Chair commented that recreational anglers are going to be put in a position in which they will need to be releasing a highly priced fish and anglers would prefer an "all or nothing" approach to this fishery. PR explained that many people have agreed with the Chair's view of an "all or nothing" approach which is something PR has reflected at national meetings regarding this.

The Chair explained that some of the people exploiting the salmon fishery are the anglers who enjoy fishing but they are no longer going out due to the catch and release rule which is in place so asks if the rod return is a reliable tool to use when estimating catch to which PR explained that "days fished" are also taken into account.

The CEO asked if there was any more news regarding pink salmon to which PR said that not much is known about this stock at this moment in time but it is being listed as 'high risk' because it is unknown what effects they will have on the fishery.

3.6 ANNUAL REPORT 2016-17

The Chair confirmed that this report is currently in progress and will be with the members next month.

3.7 REPORT ON PROGRESS OF PROJECTS DURING THE THIRD QUARTER OF 2017-18

Hauxley

The CEO confirmed that NIFCA are currently acting upon a 'watching brief' at Hauxley following the ongoing concerns raised by Ivor Rackham about contamination in this area. JG explained that Officers will not be taking regular fish samples unless requested to do so by the EA but confirmed the team had previously done one survey to check the impact on fin fish. In response to a question by the CEO, JG confirmed that there are some levels of manganese in the water but it appears to be diluted to such an extent that it does not seem to be a problem. He added however that this kind of discharge would not be allowed to be released into a fresh water source so he is unsure why it is allowed to be released into salt water. SL said that it is difficult to accurately discuss this subject as it is not clear what the current levels of contamination are. He explained that the Coal Authority have been difficult to pin down for an exact number regarding the levels of contamination and it is understood that there are no current plans for treatment, which is a concern. The Chair confirmed that NIFCA has asked about this and SL explained that the likelihood is that the Coal Authority cannot find the land on which to do these tests. The CEO explained that the

DRAFT

Coal Authority have suggested that this is a test/ trial period and the level of discharge there does not yet warrant treatment. The Chair said that it seems unlikely that this will go away and now Ivor Rackham has contacted Local MP Anne Marie Trevelyan so it is important to keep the watching brief in place. NP suggested that this is something that a student could possibly take on as a research project; this was noted by the CEO.

University Projects

NP confirmed that Ashleigh Tinlin has now submitted her thesis but it will be a while before it is freely available, following marking. He also explained that the MsC Projects are now complete and it may be possible to share some of the projects for internal use. He confirmed that one student is trying to get his head around the lobster fishing stocks presented in Cefas' data but there has been no change regarding the aging of lobsters. The CEO said that the Authority really values the relationship with the University. He also confirmed that NIFCA has offered support to Per Berggren at the University for his project if it goes ahead and similarly to Professor Willmott's project regarding plastics in the sea.

The CEO confirmed that the Environmental team have now resumed the lobster stock assessment project and VR and NW been going out on local vessels. He explained that the Authority really appreciates the support of the local industry, helping NIFCA to review the district's lobster stocks and to protect the future of the fishery. Finally, the CEO confirmed that Anna Blaylock (student) worked with the Authority over 6 weeks analysing data from the Emma McLoughney/ Sally Stewart-Moore phase of the lobster stock assessment and we should have the reports on her project soon, hopefully in time for the next Technical and Scientific meeting.

3.8 STAFFING UPDATE

The CEO confirmed that Michael Docherty has moved on to a new career with the best wishes of the Authority; interviews will be held in November for a new IFCO from seven candidates selected from nearly 40 who applied for the position. The CEO also explained that Pat Temperley has retired today and also goes with very best wishes from the whole team. He confirmed that Julian Sutton will be going full time from next month.

3.9 RECREATIONAL ACTIVITY REPORT

AB confirmed that it has been a busy time for recreational fishers, although shore gatherers seem to have reduced. He also explained that the team have been distributing size stickers to recreational anglers during competitions and events and at angling clubs. He explained that there have been recent reports of Europeans landing undersized fish which the enforcement team have been investigating and confirmed that NIFCA have now sent flyers regarding the ban on berried hens to all recreational and commercial permit holders.

3.10 MPAs UPDATE

This report was received by the meeting.

JG explained that the Authority is not suggesting that the current level of trawling activity is damaging to the site but if it was to be reviewed using the Revised Approach, it would be considered a 'Red Risk'; he explained however that it is recommended that NIFCA should

DRAFT

take what is felt to be an appropriately balanced approach to this review in the aim of identifying suitable management measures. SR said that he does not believe that this should be decided upon without comments from MB to which JG confirmed that MB has commented that there may be only 1 or 2 vessels who use soft ground gear in this area, but further input from MB will be essential. The Chair asked if a Code of Conduct could be a possibility to which JG confirmed that this could be considered and discussed further at the Technical and Scientific meeting in December.

3.11 BERRIED HENS PROHIBITION

The CEO confirmed that the environmental team are currently looking into possible IFCO training opportunities regarding identifying scrubbed hens and explained that Defra have said IFCA's are expected to 'buy kits' and start testing immediately. He said that Defra may have underestimated how much training time will be required to do this but IFCOs have already been very proactive and started learning about this as soon as the SI was announced. The CEO confirmed that the SI and Emergency Byelaw have been very well publicised on the website, in local papers and social media and noted that letters have also been sent out to all permit holders.

DT asked why the Authority is stopping the v-notch programme to which AB said that if that is the decision of the Authority which still has to be formally decided then it will be partly because it would be hard to get berried lobsters as you are not allowed to land them, but v-notching can remain voluntary for fishers wishing to do so in the district. DT asked if there had been any clarification regarding whether Scotland are likely to also introduce a ban, to which the CEO said that there has not but the EU are said to be planning to bring in the same prohibition next year, which will include Scotland.

3.12 FLAG UPDATE

The CEO explained that there is still money available within FLAG so if members know of any fishers or industry professionals looking for funding, they should be encouraged to contact FLAG. GRT asked if there was an update regarding the Seahouses bid to which the CEO confirmed that he would check.

3.13 RISK MATRIX

The CEO explained that this is reviewed twice a year with the most recent review taking place in September; this will be sent out to members soon.

3.14 CORRESPONDENCE

This report was received by the meeting.

Turning to page 1 of this report, The Chair reported that the Angling Trust are encouraging anglers not to take part in the Substance/ CEFAS survey and on page 15 regarding Broadband connectivity he asked if the Authority has ever considered using satellite connection for hard to reach phone signal areas, to which AB confirmed they had this once but it cost £7 per minute.

DRAFT

The Chair asked if the Authority had raised any concerns regarding the work at River Lyne to which JG said there had been some discussion about the moving of concrete blocks. SL declared an interest in this subject and explained that the beach/ coast in this area is badly looked after and this should be looked at by the Authority. He confirmed that there was some pollution sampling conducted a few years ago and the samples were bad. LD commented that she has been told by someone that the concrete blacks have since washed away and JG confirmed he will look into this.

The Chair asked if JG was aware of the Historical Wreck at Gun Rocks listed in the papers to which JG confirmed that it has no historical restrictions and some local divers wanted to put lines to the cannons in place. He had explained that as an EMS the divers would need to have consideration of the fact that that they may end up diverting kelp and be aware of this in their activity. The Chair suggested this as a topic for the next Technical and Scientific meeting. PR agreed and asked whether their lines could possibly affect fishing gear and JG said that they could and it would be more likely to affect recreationalists.

3.15 SUMMARY WATCH AND FINANCE COMMITTEES

Watch

The CEO confirmed that the minutes of the previous Watch and Technical and Scientific meetings were received and approved by members as was AB's Sea Activity Report, with thanks. He added that the vehicles report was received and an update on new RIB and EMFF funding was given by AB confirming that a letter of principle offer has now been received from the MMO and he has therefore instructed Northumberland County Council Procurement team to begin the process and put the tender onto their portal next month.

The CEO confirmed that the Health and Safety Report was received and there was a lengthy discussion regarding infringements, including confirmation of the Authority's recent Court case which resulted in an overall penalty of some £2,500 and permit suspension; this is understood to be the first time for any IFCA obtaining a court awarded suspension under MACAA. He confirmed that Case 1 was regarding the landing of 10 undersized lobsters and it was decided to proceed to Court and Case 2 was regarding 5 undersized lobsters; the members of the Watch Committee decided it best to consult with Andrew Oliver to advise whether it would be best to proceed in Court or with a FAP.

The CEO confirmed that MK's membership is currently under renewal with the MMO and explained that concern has been expressed by members regarding the difficulty of the process.

LW confirmed that the Authority is now keeping records so can easily update MMO renewals. It is understood that no other members are pending for renewal but it will be SR next then MB.

AIFCA/ national picture - AIFCA has prepared a draft position paper regarding Brexit. Brexit has resulted in increased attendance at meetings (national) and report back to members but there is an increasing likelihood of the need to agree with (or not) a policy immediately and MH to redraft Standing Order regarding this kind of decision making for consideration by the Watch Committee.

DRAFT

Finance

The CEO confirmed that the previous Finance Committee minutes were approved and the CEO updated the members about the Risk Assessment Matrix which will be placed on the website shortly. He confirmed that there was discussion regarding the reduction in the Authority deficit which has been a success of the Finance team although confirmed that next year is likely to bring further financial challenge. He confirmed that the committee had noted healthy general and patrol vessel reserves.

The CEO confirmed that there was a report regarding information technology from ES which was received and while it is unfortunate that the Authority has had to take this step to move away from Northumberland Council Council's IT support, Google does not suit NIFCA and so it is necessary to ensure the best working environment for Authority staff and Officers.

The Chair confirmed that GRT has now become a member of the Watch and Finance Committees to which the CEO welcomed him and gave a reminder to all there are still spaces available for members to Watch and Finance Committees if they are interested.

3.16 IFCO REPORTS

3.16.1. Chief IFCO Report on activities for quarter ending 30 September 2017

This report was received by the meeting and AB noted that lobster prices have been good and stayed stable over summer at around £10, which is better than in previous years.

The Chair asked if Officers had seen more use of mackerel as pot bait following the discard ban to which AB said that they had not seen as much as initially thought. NR agreed and commented that the MMO had anticipated that this would be quite bad but so far use has been minimal. MS explained that the cost of plaice has been increased to such a high price that fishers are no longer buying them for bait. AB said that there have been a lot of applications to FLAG regarding cold storage IT said he is not surprised by this is fishers are in some cases paying up to £50 per pot for bait.

3.16.2 Environmental IFCOs Report for quarter ending 30 September 2017

This report was received by the meeting and the Chair asked if there was ever any response following the Long Nanny Spill to which JG said there was not but he would continue to keep it in mind. PR said that there had been another incident which is ongoing so details cannot be discussed yet and CS said that she believed there to have been 2 such incidents.

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

This report was received by the meeting and JC confirmed that 'WASSP' is the new equipment on board St Aidan. The Chair asked about the oil levels listed in the report and whether this requires action to which JC confirmed that Finnings (the company who analyse oil samples for NIFCA) have said that some further tests should be done due to the high levels of aluminium, which he will now go on to do. IT commented that this is an excellent report and he would be interested to see the final report following the further tests.

DRAFT

3.17 FUTURE QUARTERLY MEETING TIMES AND VENUES

The CEO confirmed that the Authority tries to vary its venues to allow members accessibility and to encourage fishers and others to attend the General meeting. He said that one advantage of hosting the meeting in Blyth is that people know where it is and there is plenty of parking and catering available. The CEO said that NIFCA re completely flexible regarding meeting times and confirmed that either a 9.00 am or 1.00 pm start was suggested by SR earlier this year. He added that until about 18 months ago, SFC/ NIFCA meetings were always on a Tuesday but this was changed to a Monday due to there being less Council business. The CEO asked members for feedback regarding suitable venues for next year and meeting times. Following some discussion, it was then agreed to hold the 2018 quarterly meetings as follows: January and April at County Hall, July at Berwick Rangers football Club and October at the Quadrant. The meetings will continue to be held on the fourth Monday of the quarter months and the January Watch Committee will begin at 10am. The CEO said that further consideration and suggestions can be given regarding future start times.

3.18 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

East Coast War Channels Presentation

The CEO confirmed that a presentation regarding this was given by Dr Antony Firth in September at the Authority office, which was very interesting. The CEO explained that this is not a subject which has yet come into the Authority's remit as it is understood that there are no wrecks in our district which are protected; equally he confirmed that it was understood that there have been no wrecks causing problems for fishers. He said that this is something which the Authority will keep on our radar and MS confirmed that he will be sending some data to Anthony Firth regarding some wrecks they have come across in the district.

Gear Marking

IT confirmed that MB sends his apologies for not being able to attend the meeting in person to discuss this matter but passed on some information for IT to present to the members on his behalf. IT explained that MB had "growing concerns regarding badly marked gear" and has come across many problems particularly when shooting gear at night; his gear has sometime become caught up in the ropes of other fishers' gear which, when hauled, then gets cut loose. MB also had concerns regarding old gear ghost fishing and had given the coordinates to NIFCA but had not yet heard anything back. IT explained that MB believes this gear should be lifted and the person 'named and shamed'. The Chair commented that this seems to reflect the thoughts of other fishers and asked if there is a standard marker which should be used. AB confirmed that there is a standard for outside of the 12 miles but not for inside. He said that this can be looked at again and consideration given to fishers having to use flags/ lights but it will be at the cost of the fisher. With regards to the coordinates provided by MB for the suspected ghost fishing gear, AB confirmed that officers have hauled this gear and found fresh bait and tags were being used; he confirmed that whilst old, this gear is still allowed to be used. The Chair said that it would be useful to discuss this further at the Technical and Scientific meeting in December and suggested that it may be worth rethinking what is meant in the byelaw by "any type of surface marker". SL commented that he often comes across floats which use milk/ soap bottles and in some cases oil drums which IT seconded and said the difficulty is

DRAFT

knowing what to say is acceptable and what is not and suggested the Authority possibly needs to need to consider a specific policy (eg. must be orange). CS said that she remembers discussing this a while ago and it was decided by the members that 'clearly marked' was the legal stance to be taken.

Regarding ghost fishing, IT said that if the gear is old, green and badly maintained it can be very hard to see to which AB agreed and explained that the byelaw only calls for a 'marker buoy clearly visible on surface of water' so this cannot be prevented. MS explained that the difficulty in dealing with the static gear which has been, MB thinks, maybe there for 2 years or more, is that it will now be one single weight and there is a high risk that the Authority vessel could get entangled with the gear and then whose responsibility is its disposal?. He said that there has to be a line at which the Authority's remit ends. IT agreed and asked if MB had been informed that the suspected ghost gear had been lifted by Officers to which AB said he was unsure but will make certain he is contacted about this if it has not been done already. DT commented that ghost gear is that which is not marked and added that many scallopers can face conflict of gear. SL suggested this could be a possible funding project for FLAG. IT agreed to forward a summary of his conversation with MB.

There being no further business, the meeting was closed by the Chair at 16.00.