

**MINUTES OF THE GENERAL COMMITTEE MEETING
HELD IN COMMITTEE ROOM 2 AT COUNTY HALL, MORPETH,
ON MONDAY 23 APRIL 2018 AT 1PM**

PRESENT: NIFCA Members:

Mr L Weller (Chair), Mrs E Cartie (EC), Mrs L Dunn (LD), Mrs C Hedley (CH), Mr D Herriott (DH), Dr M Kitching (MK), Mr S Lowe (SL), Mr P Rippon (PR), Mr S Ritchie (SR), Mr N Robinson (NR), Dr C Scott (CS), Mr J Stephenson (JS) and Mr I Thomas (IT).

Also in attendance were the NIFCA Chief Executive Officer Mr M H Hardy (CEO), Chief IFCO Mr A B Browne (AB), IFCO Ms A Aitken (AA) and the NIFCA Admin Officer Mrs E Stiles (ES). Darren Sanders from the MMO and Ben O'Connell, Reporter from the Northumberland Gazette also attended the meeting.

3.1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE, DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND ELECTION OF CHAIR AND VICE CHAIR FOR THE TERM OF OFFICE TO 22 APRIL 2019

Election of Chair and Vice Chair:

The CEO confirmed that Les Weller had been nominated for the role of Chairman of the Authority for NIFCA year 2018-19. There were no other nominations. Members voted unanimously for LW to continue with this role.

The CEO confirmed that Wendy Pattison had been nominated for the role of Vice Chairman of the Authority for NIFCA year 2018-19. There were no other nominations. Members voted unanimously for WP to continue with this role.

Apologies:

Apologies were received from Mr B Burdis (BB), Ms W Pattison (WP), Professor N Polunin (NP) and Mr G Renner-Thompson (GRT).

Declarations of Interest:

There were no declarations of interest given at this meeting.

Welcome:

The Chair gave thanks to members for his re-election and welcomed Alex Aitken to NIFCA as a new Environmental Officer. He commented that the staff at NIFCA do a tremendous job and praised NAW and AA for their work in recovering the tangled nets in Seaton Sluice, which received great publicity on social media.

3.2 DRAFT MINUTES OF GENERAL COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 22 JANUARY 2018 (AND MATTERS ARISING THEREFROM)

These minutes were accepted by the meeting with one amendment noted by SL who confirmed that on page 4 it should read "Wildlife Trust" instead of "National Trust". The minutes were confirmed to be an accurate record.

Regarding CVM, the CEO confirmed that the Authority still intends to go ahead with this project now that the IFCO team is fully staffed and this will be given for final approval at the quarterly meeting in July.

3.3 MEETINGS ATTENDED THROUGHOUT THE QUARTER

The report was received by the meeting. The CEO confirmed that the Authority has a strong and positive Communication Strategy and are very happy to take suggestions from Members on any events or meetings which NIFCA could arrange in the district. He also noted SL's suggestion about communication regarding the Annual Plan and confirmed that it will be highlighted on the website and social media in the following few days. The CEO confirmed that the Authority held an event with the Scouts which was very well received as was the other outreach work in the community such as school visits. He confirmed that the children are always very enthusiastic about our work. It was confirmed by the CEO that AB did not attend COG on 18th April as that became unnecessary, and thanks was given by the Chair to the standing committee for their support to NIFCA throughout the year.

3.4 CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S REPORT ON FOURTH QUARTER OF NIFCA 2017-18 (MEMBERS ONLY)

The CEO explained that it has been a challenging time for the Authority without a full complement of staff, which is still the case for the Admin team but that all necessary work has still been carried out and he also confirmed that NIFCA are very pleased to welcome Alex Aitken to the Environmental team. The CEO gave thanks to SL for his email giving suggestions regarding the Annual Plan which will be given careful consideration for the 2019-20 Plan. He also confirmed that the Authority submitted a response to the salmon consultation and explained that it has been suggested that NIFCA write to the netsmen in the district with a copy of our response; this was agreed by the meeting.

Regarding the Governance review, the CEO confirmed that he and the Chair have made a start on this task regarding updating suggestions to the standing documents. The Chair confirmed that he and the CEO recently had a very useful meeting with Anne-Marie Trevelyan, MP and explained that they will soon also be meeting with Alan Campbell, MP and others local to the district.

3.5 IVMS – A REPORT AND UPDATE

The CEO confirmed that Defra are currently in discussion with the MMO and IFCA's regarding the introduction of a Statutory Instrument which will make it mandatory for all fishing vessels measuring under 12 metres in length to be fitted with iVMS (Inshore Vessel Monitoring System). This will be similar to the system currently in place for vessels measuring over 12 metres. The CEO explained that it is intended for the project to be funded from EMFF, with IFCA's initially covering the cost of all equipment and labour costs, allowing all local vessels to be fitted with the required system. This money would then be claimed back by each IFCA. He commented that this is likely to be quite burdensome on NIFCA's Finance/Admin teams.

The CEO explained that there are 3 iVMS suppliers which the fishers can choose from (one in the North East, one in the South and one in Spain) with orders and works being coordinated by a designated Officer within the MMO. The SI will require all vessels wishing to fish in the district to be fitted with iVMS. He also explained that this system will produce a track record of the movements of all local vessels and added that as catch returns are likely to be required in the future, iVMS should be a useful tool for fishers to aid this requirement.

The CEO confirmed that Defra recognise that this approach needs to be approved by all IFCA committees. He explained that the recommendation is to continue with this project as requested by Defra, putting in a bid to EMFF and reporting back to the

Chair and Vice Chair of the Authority where required. It was noted that in doing so, NIFCA will not be committed to the project if it proves to be untenable. Finally, the CEO confirmed that approval of this recommendation is sought from the membership.

AB confirmed that there are around 130 vessels in the district which will need to be fitted with the new system over the next 3 years which will be done in 3 tranches; the first roll-out of this project is due to begin in 2019 with any vessels measuring 11.9–9 metres in length, followed by those measuring 8.9 – 6 metres in 2019/20 and finally fitting vessels measuring under 6 metres in 2020/21. He confirmed that if the fishers volunteer to get these devices fitted they will be done for free. If they decide not to fit the device during this period but wish to fish within 12nm in England, the iVMS equipment will still be required but will have to be self-funded.

SR asked how this will affect the returns which fishers need to complete to which the CEO confirmed that NIFCA returns will still have to be completed in the usual way each month. The Chair confirmed that any national returns which are introduced post EU Exit will most likely affect fishers who export their catch, at which point they would need to prove where it was caught, including coordinates. This is where iVMS may be useful.

The Chair commented that he is happy to accept the Officer recommendation but would like to ensure that this is underwritten by Northumberland County Council in case there is a shortfall of EMFF at the end of the process which NIFCA cannot recover, although this is not anticipated. CS asked if the Authority plan to make the purchases and then claim each one back through EMFF or if this would be done at the end of each tranche to which the CEO explained that this has not yet been decided but it is envisaged that the Authority will claim on a quarterly basis. AB confirmed that EMFF have said they plan a turnaround of each iVMS related claim within 4 weeks.

The Chair asked for confirmation from members on this recommendation. SL moved to accept the recommendation which was seconded and agreed by the members.

3.6 ANNUAL PLAN 2018-19

The Chair gave thanks to the CEO for producing the Annual Plan which was an interesting and comprehensive read. The CEO also extended his thanks to the team for their contributions to the document and confirmed that they have looked as far beyond 2018/19 as possible. He confirmed that Member training can be developed as mentioned by SL who commented that this is a good read which should be shared and celebrated. The CEO confirmed that if approved, this Plan will be uploaded to the NIFCA website and sent to Defra as required; SL added that copies should also go to local libraries which was agreed by the CEO.

The Annual Plan was approved by the meeting.

3.7 REPORT ON PROGRESS OF PROJECTS DURING 2017-18 INCLUDING A PAPER ON PROJECTS WITH NEWCASTLE UNIVERSITY

JG confirmed that NIFCA has had Newcastle University student Emily Henderson in the office recently to analyse the views of recreational fishers which we received from the questionnaire which was included on the 2018 permit application forms. The CEO confirmed that Emily has completed some excellent work during her time with NIFCA and added that the Authority has a fantastic relationship with the University. He gave thanks to NP for his support in achieving this which is a great benefit to both NIFCA and Newcastle University's Marine students. SL commented that a lot of the data from the University does not go into the public domain which should be encouraged

as it could offer a benefit to the Authority and other public bodies, if shared wisely. The CEO confirmed that NIFCA does send information into ERIC where applicable and explained that there are a number of student reports which are due to be uploaded to the Authority website. MK asked if NIFCA Officers had received any feedback in relation to a student project surrounding cetacean monitoring around windfarms. The CEO confirmed that they had not received any such feedback and suggested that MK contacts NP to get some information about this; MK agreed he will do so.

3.8 RECREATIONAL ACTIVITY

JG confirmed that recreational activity is being monitored wherever possible including observation of Fenham Flats. He explained that boat angling is starting to pick up now but there is not much activity surrounding bait collection; he confirmed that this is being monitored in Boulmer and Hauxley. JG added that the team have been looking out for cleekers up and down the coast but there has been very little activity which could be due in part to the bad weather and the possibility of there being few lobsters inshore following the "Beast from the East". He also confirmed that the team have been distributing leaflets to recreational sea users and have also been in to speak with shop owners. The Chair commented that he is interested to see what long term effect this will have on cleekers and also noted that the "Beast from the East" has brought attention to the unexpectedly large octopus population in the north east. The CEO also noted the increased activity surrounding winkles and confirmed that JG and NW will be attending Dove Marine to get some tips on methodology using quadrants when surveying this fishery. JG explained that this fishery seemed to start in Berwick and has now worked its way down the coast.

The CEO confirmed that there are now in the region of 150 recreational shellfish permit holders who are each allowed to use up to 5 pots each in the district. He explained that for this reason, consideration is now being given to making escape gaps mandatory for recreational permit holders to support the conservation effort. The Chair commented that there have been issues with incorrectly marked gear in the district and AB confirmed that all recreational shellfish permit holders have now been sent the Gear Marking Code of Conduct.

3.9 MPAS UPDATE

The CEO gave thanks to the Northumberland Gazette for their recent coverage about MPAs and also gave thanks to CS for her support of the Environmental team. JG confirmed that there are a number of draft conservation suggestions which are soon to be released which can also be forwarded to members. LW commended CS and the Environmental team for their hard work and dedication to this monitoring process.

3.10 BYELAW AMENDMENTS UPDATE

The CEO confirmed that the statutory consultation has now taken place regarding the amendment to byelaw 7 to open some soft grounds in the B&NNCSAC as previously approved and made by the Authority. He confirmed that the consultation received one response, which will be forwarded to Defra and the MMO along with the details of the consultation and byelaw amendment, with the aim of the amended byelaw being signed off by Defra and implemented in the next few months.

AB confirmed that byelaw 3 is in the process of being amended to include the emergency byelaw which was created in September 2017 regarding berried hens. He confirmed that the byelaw needs to be amended and implemented by September 2018 and has now been sent to the MMO for their consideration. A consultation will follow after the byelaw is made and it is hoped that the amended byelaw can be made

at the July 2018 quarterly meeting but if this deadline is not able to be met, NIFCA will contact Defra regarding a 6-month extension to the emergency byelaw to ensure compliance continues throughout the district in alignment with the national regulation. The Chair asked if the Authority has received any information related to the possibility of the ban becoming EU wide (and thus encompassing Scotland), to which AB confirmed that they had not.

AB confirmed that the permit review is due this year and a meeting is planned for 17th May where Members can discuss amongst other things pot limitation for commercial fishers and escape gaps for recreational shellfish permit holders.

3.11 GEAR MARKING CODE OF CONDUCT UPDATE

The Chair gave thanks to the members and staff for their work on finalising the gear marking Codes of Conducts. SR noted that the “responsibility” paragraph in the commercial and recreational Codes are different and should be reconsidered when next printing a batch. The CEO confirmed that the Authority are not planning at this stage to amend the byelaw regarding gear marking but trying to get people to comply with good practice throughout the district. He noted that the NIFCA has received some positive feedback from some members of the public. In response to a query from PR, the CEO confirmed that the Codes of Conduct have been sent out to all shellfish permit holders (both commercial and recreational) and have also been given out to tackle shops and Mariners’ officers. IT asked if the Authority will review these Codes to which the CEO confirmed that the sub-committee could reconvene after the summer.

3.12 RISK ASSESSMENT MATRIX

The CEO confirmed that the Risk Matrix can now be found in the back of the 2018-19 Annual Plan. He explained that the Matrix is reviewed every 6 months with the latest review taking place on 19th March 2018 and attended by the CEO, AB, MS, JS and ES. The CEO confirmed that a new risk has been added related to GDPR about which he added that the Authority is currently finalising policies in preparation for 25th May. This was received and approved by the meeting.

3.13 CORRESPONDENCE

This report was received by the meeting. The Chair asked CS if she was aware of the Natural England Enforcement Powers around Lindisfarne to which she confirmed she was not but will look into it. CH asked if the CEO could forward any correspondence related to this to the members which was agreed. The Chair commented that it is positive that the local public are getting involved in citizen science and suggested that the Authority should consider how we could introduce citizen science to any of our projects. SL commented that Whitley Bay and Tynemouth have both gone “plastic free” which is a great achievement for local businesses. EC confirmed that Blyth have done the same.

3.14 SUMMARY REPORTS OF FINANCE AND WATCH COMMITTEES BY CHIEF EXECUTIVE

Finance

It was confirmed that the minutes of the previous minutes were accepted by the meeting and some information was given regarding the impending changes to Data Protection on 25th May 2018. The CEO confirmed that the accounts were approved and the Risk Assessment Matrix was received by the meetings. He explained that a discussion regarding iVMS was followed by updates about the planned cabin RIB and

confirmed to the General meeting that the budget has been very well managed this year resulting in a credit balance for 2017-18 which is in part due to the lower staff numbers throughout the year. The CEO also confirmed that there have been more meetings in London this year. He explained that at the request of the Chair, JuS produced a ghost budget in case the New Burdens Fund is not renewed in 2020 which has been received with thanks and can be distributed to members who wish to see this. The Budget and Audit meeting was also confirmed for Thursday 21st June 2018 at 9:30am at County Hall. Finally, the CEO explained that staff salary and cost of living increments were discussed and approved, and he confirmed that all staff appraisals were successfully completed.

Watch

The CEO explained that the minutes of the previous meeting were received and accepted as a true record. The PV report was also received. He explained that the procurement for the new RIB is again underway with NCC; this is the second round of applications as the first only received one bid. Once all bids have been received, the Officers will meet with the Council Procurement team to grade and finalise a proposal to progress with.

The CEO confirmed that a report was received regarding work on St Aidan which is currently out of service. He summarised that following issues with coolant and oil pressure, an engineer from Cummins (engine supplier) has been out to St Aidan to assess the situation and the Authority are now working towards an agreement with Cummins as to how to proceed with repairs. He confirmed that the key members of this subcommittee are DH, IT and the Chair who are working alongside the CEO and Officers AB, MS and JC.

The CEO confirmed that the Health and Safety report was received and approved as was the infringement report in which it was confirmed that the Authority has had a successful prosecution outcome against an owner and skipper of a local vessel. The CEO explained that they were each offered a £750 FAP which the skipper wanted to pay in instalments which is not possible, and the owner declined the FAP. Both were taken to Court and each received financial penalties of £1,618. It was also confirmed that this will be publicised following the period allowed for appeals.

The CEO confirmed that Member Appraisals were discussed, and it was confirmed that members are happy with a light-touch approach to these annual reviews. The Chair confirmed that the MMO are now advertising the new member vacancy and Darren Sanders added that the closing date for applications is 15th May; the CEO commented that the Northumberland Gazette may be able to offer some publicity on this and confirmed he will make contact with them about this. JiS said it would be really useful to get a commercial fisher from the south of the district if possible and SL explained that the MMO appointed members would appreciate receiving more contact from the MMO regarding their memberships; both points were noted with thanks by Darren Sanders.

The CEO explained that the Review of the Association of IFCAs was discussed and approved by the Watch Committee. An update was also given regarding Devon and Severn and the visit by the Fisheries Minister to the last Association of IFCAs meeting.

3.15 IFCO REPORTS

3.15.1 Chief IFCO Report on activities for quarter ending 31 March 2018

This report was received and accepted by the meeting.

3.15.2. Environmental IFCOs Report for quarter ending 31 March 2018

This report was received and accepted by the meeting.

3.15.3. Maintenance Report and Engineering Log for quarter ending 31 March 2018

This report was received and accepted by the meeting. The Chair gave particular thanks to JC for the report and hard work with St Aidan recently.

3.16 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

SL and MK volunteered to become members of the Watch and Finance Committees which was accepted with thanks by the Chair and CEO.

The Chair mentioned to Darren Sanders that the Authority is facing a “cliff edge” with NIFCA members around the time of the EU Exit and suggested that the MMO ought to start planning for this, to which Darren confirmed that there are 5 members due to end their membership at the same time which is now being considered by the MMO.

There being no further business, the Chair closed the meeting at 15:40