

**DRAFT MINUTES OF THE GENERAL COMMITTEE MEETING  
HELD AT BERWICK RANGERS FOOTBALL CLUB,  
BERWICKSHIRE ON MONDAY 23 JULY 2018 AT 1PM**

**PRESENT: NIFCA Members:**

Mr L Weller (Chair), Ms W Pattison (WP), Mr F Armstrong (FA), Mrs E Cartie (EC), Mr D Herriott (DH), Dr M Kitching (MK), Mr S Lowe (SL), Mr G Renner-Thompson (GRT), Mr P Rippon (PR) and Mr J Stephenson (JS).

Also in attendance were Mr A Newlands and Mr C Williams from the MMO, Mr K Ferguson from River Tweed Commission, Ms B Lynam from the Wildlife Trust, Mr B O'Connell from the Northumberland Gazette and member of the public, Mr T Steinlet.

NIFCA attendance also comprised Chief Executive Officer Mr M H Hardy (CEO), Deputy Chief IFCO (Environmental) Mr J Green (JG), IFCO/ Engineer Mr J Cooke (JC) and the NIFCA Administrative Officer Mrs E Stiles (ES).

**3.1 WELCOME, APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

The Chair welcomed members, Officers, staff and guests to the meeting and gave thanks to everyone for their attendance.

Apologies:

Apologies were received from Mrs C Hedley (CH), Mr AB Ritchie (SR), Professor N Polunin (NP), Mrs C Seymour (CSe), Ms L Dunn (LD), Dr C Scott (CSc), Mr I Thomas (IT), Mr A B Ritchie (SR), Mr N Robinson (NR) and Mr AB Browne (Chief IFCO).

Declarations of Interest:

There were no declarations of interest given at this meeting.

**3.2 DRAFT MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS QUARTERLY MEETING HELD ON 23 APRIL 2018 AND MATTERS ARISING THEREFROM.**

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

**3.3 MEETINGS ATTENDED THROUGHOUT THE QUARTER**

The CEO explained that this document gives an overview of the meetings and events attended by the Authority in the last quarter. He confirmed that he and the Chair attended the last Association of IFCAs meeting. Amongst other events, he confirmed that the Authority had worked with the Sea Cadets and Scouts and made visits to two primary schools. The CEO also explained that he received an invitation to talk at the Westminster Forum held in June on Future Fisheries Policy, where he was able to present to an audience including many significant figures regarding the work of IFCAs, noting their ability to support future fisheries management post Brexit. Attendees at this event included the Icelandic Ambassador, representatives from the Norwegian Embassy, Green Peace and the Sunday Times Environmental Editor.

The Chair asked that if any members would like NIFCA to take part in any events/community outreach in the district to please contact the NIFCA office. He also gave thanks to the Northumberland Gazette for the local coverage they have given to the Authority in recent months, which is greatly appreciated.

### **3.4 CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S REPORT ON FIRST QUARTER OF NIFCA 2018-19**

The CEO confirmed the remit of the Authority is to ensure sustainable fisheries for the future with the aim to strike the right balance between conservation and a viable fishing industry. He explained that the White Paper is currently at the beginning of the legislative process and ordinarily would become law within about 6 months to a year of being released; this however could change due to Brexit and it could be as long as a couple of years before we see an Act of Parliament. The CEO confirmed that the White Paper will undergo consultation and it is being considered by IFCAs whether in addition to a collaborative repose from the Association there should also be individual responses from each of the IFCAs; the deadline for responses is 12<sup>th</sup> September 2018. SL said that he believes it is important for NIFCA to make its own representation to this consultation and to also ensure the Authority views are included in any national response which is submitted. The Chair confirmed that members will see any draft response and will have the opportunity to shape what is submitted. The CEO explained that the Chair has called an Extraordinary meeting of the General Committee to take place on 16<sup>th</sup> August at 2pm at 8 Ennerdale Road, Blyth to discuss this further; the CEO will write to members regarding this following the meeting.

The Chair commented that recreational anglers have been mentioned within the White Paper 5 times and it seems that they will feature in future fisheries management in England. He added that an article in Fishing News on the White Paper has summed the position up well. The Chair also gave thanks to Alan Campbell for meeting with himself and the CEO and who has since questioned Mr Gove, including regarding EMFF, in parliament.

### **3.5 IVMS – A REPORT AND UPDATE**

The CEO confirmed that since the last quarterly meeting, there is not much to update the members on for this project but confirmed the agreed bid to EMFF has now been submitted for all IFCAs. He confirmed that iVMS will be discussed with stakeholders at the upcoming meetings in August.

### **3.6 REPORT ON PROGRESS OF PROJECTS DURING THE FIRST QUARTER OF 2018-19**

The CEO explained that NIFCA has a strong and successful working relationship with Newcastle University and one of the current highlights of the joint work we do includes the Acoustic Monitoring Project. He gave thanks to NP for his continued support to NIFCA.

### **3.7 MPAS UPDATE**

JG confirmed that a new MCZ has been proposed for Northumberland from Berwick to St Marys; this is a vast proposed MCZ which has been designated for the protection of Eider Ducks. He explained that the paper for this MCZ seems to suggest that recreational activities such as jet-skis are responsible for the disruption of these birds and this would fall into the remit of Northumberland County Council rather than NIFCA. The CEO confirmed that at the moment, this is still just a proposed designation for which a consultation has been held and NIFCA submitted a response. The Chair thanked the CEO for ensuring a response was submitted and asked JG if this proposed site is an entirely new one rather than an extension to the current Coquet to St Mary's MCZ; JG confirmed that this is a new designation which runs the full length of the district and out to 3 nautical miles. The Chair explained that NIFCA was not aware of any planned new MCZ in Northumberland until the paper

was received by Officers and commented that this designation is unusual as birds are usually protected under SPAs; he also said it seemed “like a sledgehammer to crack a nut” and JG explained that estuary areas which are very important for eiders are not identified in the consultation which could be more focussed on specific areas, as well as eider ducks not actually being able to be protected under an SPA. GRT asked what the practical outcome of this designation will be to which JG explained that this is dependent on what management measures are decided as a result of it. He confirmed that the Council will be the responsible body and will have to consider any byelaws which may need to be introduced. SL commented that at the moment, recreational activity is being pinpointed as the main source of threat to this bird but it seems likely that there will be several aspects to their decline, including issues which cannot be controlled.

The CEO explained that MPA assessment continues which is a very complex and technical piece of work being carried out by the Environmental team. He confirmed that this has been done for a number of years, with the support of Dr Catherine Scott from Natural England, and it is likely that this work will continue indefinitely.

### **3.8 RECREATIONAL ACTIVITY**

This report was received by the meeting. The CEO confirmed that recreational activity is being given more prominence in the media now than ever before including talk in the future of returns being required from recreational sea anglers. He explained that since the inception of IFCAs, the Authority have regularly engaged with recreational sea users including giving presentation at angling clubs and attending competitions and other events within the district. The CEO confirmed that the summer is a busy time of the year for fishing recreationally for shellfish and explained that the Authority had a recent prosecution against a diver for landing undersized shellfish and more than the allowed one lobster per day which received thorough publicity both locally and nationally. He added that cleeking seems to have reduced in popularity, as does shore gathering.

### **3.9 BYELAWS UPDATE**

The CEO explained that byelaw 3 makes provision to protect shellfish and ensure sustainability in the NIFCA district. In October 2017, the Government introduced a ban on landing egg-bearing lobsters in England; neither Scotland or recreational fishers were included in this ban so NIFCA introduced an emergency byelaw on 29<sup>th</sup> September 2017 to ensure comprehensive coverage and fairness regarding berried lobsters for all sea users in the district. MACAA allows an emergency byelaw to be put in place for one year, following which it can be extended once for a further 6 months; the CEO explained that the one-year deadline is now approaching. He confirmed that the byelaw amendment has now been completed by NIFCA and has been agreed by the MMO. The CEO explained that the amended byelaw was sent to members 14 days prior to this meeting and members can now decide whether this byelaw is to be made. If agreed, the byelaw amendment will be advertised locally with the Journal and nationally with the Fishing News and a 28-day consultation period will follow; any responses received will be considered and included in the papers when NIFCA seeks Ministerial sign-off. The CEO explained that it is unlikely that this process will now be completed before the anniversary of making the byelaw so an extension to the emergency byelaw will be requested from Defra. The CEO asked the committee to accept the byelaw and agree to make it. The Chair gave thanks to the CEO and NIFCA team for their work on this and recommended to accept the byelaw. This was agreed unanimously by the meeting.

The CEO confirmed that byelaw 7 was introduced in 2013 when rocky reefs became a red risk feature. The byelaw was brought in to protect any rocky reefs which potentially featured in the area and a pledge was made to the industry to look at the possibility of opening some soft grounds when the position had been fully investigated. The Chair explained that the NIFCA Officers carried out a lot of research in the district and ascertained soft grounds which can be safely opened. The CEO confirmed that it was therefore agreed at the October quarterly meeting in 2017 to open grounds which constitute around 1% of the area of the SAC. A public consultation followed, receiving one response from NWT which was dealt with satisfactorily. The CEO explained that the Authority has since had contact from the Marine Conservation Society and a response will be sent to them shortly. The Chair gave thanks to all Officers and staff involved in this piece of work and for the extensive research carried out over the last few years.

### **3.10 COMMUNITY VOICE METHOD**

The Chair confirmed that the Community Voice Method (CVM) has been used by other IFCA's as a social interaction with stakeholders and a conflict resolution tool. He explained that this could be of benefit to NIFCA if, for example, a new management measure is introduced which sparks debate from different types of stakeholders. The CEO agreed and explained that it would be good to be able to approach the MCS again, who have been very patient in waiting a decision from NIFCA, to discuss this project in more detail. He added that it could be of particular use with the introduction of the Fisheries White Paper Bill and all that may follow and confirmed that MCS have said that funding should be available to NIFCA. The CEO requested that the members endorse NIFCA approaching the MCS regarding this project again. SL commented that he supports this project but is cautious of the amount of time which will need to be dedicated by one Officer, to which MH said that there will be several Officers taking part and time can be managed by the Authority. He added that member involvement will also be sought and appreciated. It was agreed by members for the CEO to begin discussions with MCS regarding this project to consider timescales and funding.

### **3.11 RISK MATRIX**

The CEO confirmed that this document can be found on the website and in the back of the Authority 2018-19 Annual Plan. He gave thanks again to Barbara McKie for supporting NIFCA with the initial set up of this living document which is reviewed every 6-months. He confirmed that there have been one or two risks added to the document in recent years (including IT and GDPR) and commented that if members have any queries or suggestions for additional risks to please contact the office. He confirmed that the next 6-month review will take place in September and will be attended by himself, AB, MS, JuS and ES.

### **3.12 CORRESPONDENCE**

This report was received by the meeting.

Regarding the Seahouses Harbour at point 1, GRT explained that in fact the MMO have not yet granted a licence for this application. He confirmed that the Council have already dedicated a lot of resources to the development of this plan, but they have so far not received any response from the MMO. The CEO confirmed that NIFCA did submit a response to this consultation and said that the Authority can enquire with the MMO regarding this if required. JiS confirmed that he will be attending a meeting with Anne-Marie Trevelyan shortly during which this subject will be raised.

### **3.13 SUMMARY REPORTS OF WATCH AND FINANCE COMMITTEES BY CEO**

#### Finance:

The CEO confirmed that the previous minutes were approved by the meeting and an update regarding the Risk Assessment Matrix had been given. He confirmed that the Audit was completed satisfactorily by Northumberland County Council and explained that the meeting received the Accounts which indicated good revenue streams and reserves. He confirmed that JuS has created a ghost budget to give an indication of how finances may look if New Burdens Funding is not renewed in 2020, which was also received by the meeting. Finally, he confirmed that an update of the Financial Regulations was given to Members by JuS.

#### Watch:

The CEO confirmed that the minutes were accepted by the meeting and the Sea Activity report was received with thanks. He explained that a report was given on St Aidan which is currently out of the water for repairs and confirmed that the IFCOs are functioning well with Bravo 1 in the meantime. The Chair added that this gives a very positive insight into NIFCA's future work capability with the new RIB. The CEO confirmed that the health and safety report was received by the meeting with thanks to MS. He explained that 2 infringements were discussed, when it was agreed to action both, one with a FAP and one with court summons'. It was confirmed that all MMO member appraisals were completed and sent to the MMO and an update on the Association, including IFCA training and accreditation, was given by the CEO. He also confirmed that WP is exploring whether NCC can become a member of the LGA Coastal Special Interest Group and finally, regarding the Governance Review he confirmed that Watch Committee members agreed to accept the suggested changes to the governance documents, as prepared by himself and the Chair.

### **3.14 IFCO REPORTS**

#### **3.14.1 Chief IFCO Report on Activities for Quarter Ending 30 June 2018**

This report was received by the meeting. The CEO noted that IFCOs have carried out over 100 boardings from Bravo 1 whilst St Aidan has been out of the water which has been a great help to keeping presence in the district.

The CEO confirmed that the mention of the Blyth Maritime Festival at point 4 of this report was added in error. The Chair noted that there has been a rise in the sale of velvet crabs in the district and asked if there is a reason for this to which JG said that there appear to be more on the ground at the moment.

#### **3.14.2 Environmental IFCOs Report for Quarter Ending 30 June 2018**

This report was received by the meeting. The CEO noted that the Environmental IFCOs have attended a number of events in the district this quarter including the visit to Embleton and Ellingham schools, joint working events with the MMO, Natural England for the Sea Cadets, a wildlife festival at St Mary's Island and a Coastal Care event on World Oceans Day.

#### **3.14.3 Maintenance Report and Engineering Log for Quarter Ending 30 June 2018**

This report was received by the meeting and the Chair gave thanks to JC for the details which the report goes into which is very useful. The Chair commented

that this process with St Aidan has been a very long one and gave thanks to JC, MH and all of the Officers and members involved; it is hoped that she will be back in the water soon.

### **3.15 ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

#### Questions from guests:

The Chair opened the floor to guests for questions and comments.

In relation to byelaw 7, Tim Steinlet (TS) asked who had initially said that the site contained rocky reefs? JG confirmed that no one had advised the Authority of their existence in the area but as it could not be confirmed whether they were a feature in the district, the Authority had to bring in a byelaw as a management measure when that feature was nationally re-graded to a red risk and then had to work to scientifically confirm whether it was in fact a rocky reef site. The extensive surveying of the area has led to the Authority now amending the byelaw and re-opening some of the soft ground sites in the area. TS commented that this is a very good piece of work carried out by the Authority.

#### Report to Parliament on IFCAs

The CEO confirmed that Defra will shortly be carrying out a review of the work of IFCAs from which a report to parliament will be produced. He confirmed that NIFCA will place a link to the public consultation on the Authority website for anyone wishing to respond.

#### Tweed Commission

GRT declared an interest in this subject.

He explained that the River Tweed made an application to the Scottish Government to stop net fishing in the summer and introduce catch and release only. He confirmed that this consultation has now closed; Mr Ferguson from the River Tweed Commission agreed and confirmed this is the case. The Chair asked how many netsmen there are and GRT confirmed there is just one who has argued that the net fishery should remain as he only catches a few salmon and although rod fishing is only allowed catch and release, there is a 10-15% mortality rate for those salmon being released.

#### Stakeholder Meetings

The Chair confirmed that there are 4 stakeholder meetings planned for August 2018 at which the Authority will discuss the permit review, iVMS and the White Paper. He confirmed that member attendance at these events will be greatly appreciated.

#### Date of Upcoming Meetings

- Extraordinary General meeting: Thursday 16<sup>th</sup> August 2018 at 8 Ennerdale Road
- Technical and Scientific meeting: Thursday 20<sup>th</sup> September 2018 at 8 Ennerdale Road
- October quarterly meeting: Monday 22<sup>nd</sup> October 2018 (at the Quadrant)
  - EC gave apologies for this meeting

There being no further business, the Chair closed the meeting at 14:45.