

DRAFT MINUTES OF THE GENERAL COMMITTEE MEETING
HELD AT THE QUADRANT, SILVERLINK NORTH
ON MONDAY 22 OCTOBER 2018 AT 1PM

PRESENT: NIFCA Members:

Mr L Weller (Chair), Ms W Pattison (WP), Mr B Burdis (BB), Ms E Dunn (ED), Mr D Herriott (DH), Mr M Kitching (MK), Mr S Lowe (SL), Mr G Renner-Thompson (GRT), Mr P Rippon (PR), Mr N Robinson (NR), Mrs C Seymour (CS), Mr J Stephenson (JS) and Mr I Thomas (IT).

Councillor, Mr Gregah Roughead attended in place of Mr Roderick Lawrie.

Also in attendance was Bex Lynam from the North Sea Wildlife Trust, Stephanie Ingram from the MMO. Tim Steinlet also attended as an observer and Ben O'Connell from the Northumberland Gazette was also in attendance.

NIFCA attendance also comprised Chief Executive Officer Mr M H Hardy (CEO), Deputy Chief IFCO Mr M Southerton (MS), eIFCO N Wallace, and the NIFCA Administrative Officer Mrs E Stiles (ES).

3.1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Apologies for absence were received from Mrs C Hedley (CH), Mrs E Cartie (EC), Professor N Polunin (NP), Mr F Armstrong (FA), Mr S Ritchie (SR), Dr Catherine Scott (CSc) and Chief IFCO Mr AB Browne (AB).

No Declarations of interest were given.

3.2 DRAFT MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS QUARTERLY MEETING HELD ON 23 JULY 2018 FOR APPROVAL AND MATTERS ARISING THEREFROM

The CEO confirmed that he sent some suggested changes for these minutes out to the members prior to the meeting and asked for confirmation if these amendments could be accepted; it was agreed by members to accept these changes.

The CEO gave thanks to WP for her work in making NCC a member of the LGA Coastal Special Interest Group (LGA Coastal SIG) and it was confirmed that GRT is NCC's representative.

These minutes were accepted as an accurate record.

3.3 MEETINGS ATTENDED THROUGHOUT THE QUARTER

The CEO confirmed that there have been a number of meetings attended this quarter including one regarding the North Sea Interconnector, attended by AA. He explained that this link between the UK and Norway is of particular interest to Northumberland and the IFCA as the line cuts through a fishing area in the district. He confirmed the understanding that planned works for this project remain on schedule.

The CEO explained that the Chief IFCO attended a meeting with the MMO to discuss what amendments can be made to improve the way shellfish catch data is collected by the MMO. MS confirmed that the proposed web-based return submission system will be used by all vessels under 12 metres in length and the MMO have asked for IFCA input to see if one catch-return system can be used instead of separate ones for each

organisation; MS said that it seems unlikely for a system to be agreed which will entirely replace the NIFCA catch return.

Regarding community outreach, the CEO confirmed that NW and AA attended the Dales School in Blyth to give a presentation at their morning assembly which was very well received. He also confirmed that the Authority has carried out work with partner Agencies with the Sea Cadets which has been a great example of communication and local engagement. It was confirmed by the CEO that he and JG attended the National Heritage Weekend open day at Dove Marine Laboratory in Cullercoats in September at which they received more than 280 visitors and NW and AA attended the same event on Holy Island.

The Chair gave thanks to the Members who attended the stakeholder events in August. He also extended thanks to WP for attending the AIFCA meeting in London, to SL for his work on the River Lyne and to IT for his support regarding the Patrol Vessel.

3.4 CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S REPORT ON THIRD QUARTER OF NIFCA 2018-19 (MEMBERS AND CHIEF IFCO ONLY)

Further to his report to members, the CEO confirmed that the Association of IFCAs is an important tool to keep the IFCAs up to date and involved as required regarding Brexit and the future of fisheries. He noted that a representative from Defra attended the last Association meeting which he and WP attended in September, where it was confirmed that a marine spending review will take place and consideration will be given to the continuation of "New Burdens Funding" which makes up around 18% of NIFCA's funding; the outcome of this review will be important for all IFCAs. He also confirmed that the attendees were given an update on the prospects for a Fisheries Bill, which received a lot of responses, and noted that a Fisheries Act of Parliament may need to be implemented sooner rather than later, depending on the outcome of Brexit negotiations. The Chair commented that whilst membership to the Association is an expense to the Authority, it is an integral tool for monitoring national changes and in gives the IFCAs a collective voice during times of change. He noted that Devon and Severn IFCAs are currently still not a member of the Association, but it is hoped that this may change in the not too distant future.

It was confirmed by the CEO that DH asked whether other members (besides the Chair or Vice) would be able to attend a future Association meeting to get an experience of the larger IFCAs picture, to which the Chair said he could not see this being an issue and it was noted that the CEO will run this past the AIFCA CEO, Stephen Bolt and confirm with members.

3.5 BYELAWS UPDATE INCLUDING PERMIT REVIEW

Permit Review

Following the permit review sub-committee in August, the CEO asked for members to consider the recommended conditions for byelaws 1,2 and 4 and vote accordingly.

Regarding the commercial shellfish permit, the Chair noted that it is recommended by the sub-committee that all permit conditions, including display of permit card, £180 fee, submission of a monthly catch return and the pot limitation, should be confirmed. The CEO confirmed that the sub-committee did also consider increasing the fee by 10% but upon checking with the MMO it was noted that this would not be possible without a full byelaw amendment. Members of the General Committee were asked to vote on the recommended commercial shellfish permit conditions and unanimously voted in favour of accepting these conditions.

The Chair explained that the sub-committee felt it would be appropriate to amend the conditions attached to the recreational shellfish permit to include the mandatory use of an escape gap for all pots and to increase the daily limit for landing lobsters from 1 to 2. He added that this will hopefully tie-in with North Eastern's plans to reduce the allowed number of pots from 10 to 5 in their district and retain the 2 lobsters per day allowance. PR asked if it will also be made mandatory for commercial fishers to use escape gaps to which the Chair confirmed it will not. He explained that as recreational fishers generally do not check their pots as regularly as commercial fishers, there is a higher likelihood of mortality to shellfish, so it seemed more necessary to introduce escape gaps for recreational permit holders at this point in time. He noted that this can be monitored and reviewed regarding the situation with commercial permit holders in the future. Members of the General Committee were asked to vote on the recommended recreational shellfish permit conditions and unanimously voted in favour of accepting these conditions.

Finally, regarding trawl and dredge permits the CEO explained that the sub-committee recommend that the display of permit cards should be made a permit condition along with the requirement to submit a monthly catch return. He commented that data collection is a very important part of the Authority's remit and the returns are a good way to get the required information without being too much of an imposition to the industry, who have made no adverse comments about this proposal. The Chair asked if the returns would ask for data on the species they are catching as well as general weights to which NW confirmed they would and noted that this is also the case for shellfish catch returns. Members of the General Committee were asked to vote on the recommended trawl and dredge permit conditions and unanimously voted in favour of accepting these conditions.

Byelaw 7

The CEO confirmed that the amendments to this byelaw were made by the Authority last year and the decision was made to reopen some soft grounds which were originally closed. He confirmed that the consultation received one comment which was dealt with satisfactorily at the time; he explained that NIFCA has since received an objection outside of the consultation period and whilst the Authority has no legal requirement to report this to Defra, the CEO recommends this would be appropriate. The Chair said that the Authority is open and transparent, and he agrees with the CEO about informing Defra of this objection; this was seconded by SL who said that a lot of time, effort and evidence has gone into this decision to re-open the grounds following what was a precautionary approach to close them.

It was agreed by the Members to inform Defra of the objection.

3.6 I-VMS UPDATE

The CEO gave thanks to AB for his report, which was received by the meeting. He confirmed that the MMO have now decided to take over the funding aspect of this project which removes any uncertainty for IFCA's regarding ownership following the purchase of iVMS equipment. The CEO explained that knowledge of this project is now in the public domain and IFCO's are engaging with the industry about this. He noted that it is intended for the Statutory Instrument regarding iVMS to be introduced in spring 2019 and with which around 2,500 vessels along the coast of England will eventually be required to be compliant with implementation still planned on a staged basis based on vessel size; it is also understood that Scotland and the EU are planning to introduce similar legislation.

The CEO commented that credit should be given to AB for his dedication to this project and noted that NIFCA are in a good position to deal with iVMS because of his input. The Chair agreed and also confirmed that catch certificates will be required by the

industry for all exports following Brexit and iVMS will aid fishers with marking the location of catch.

MS explained that working with the MMO Bravo 1 has been fitted with an iVMS test terminal. He confirmed that it is solar charged with a bank battery and the device sends a report every 10 minutes; he noted that this is a good prototype for small under 6m vessels.

3.7 ANNUAL REPORT 2017-18

The CEO confirmed that the Annual Report is currently being finalised and will be sent out as a draft to members by the second week in November and then to Defra by the end of November and placed on the Authority website. The Chair gave thanks to MH and all NIFCA Officers for their input to this Report noting that a great deal of work goes into it.

3.8 REPORT ON PROGRESS OF PROJECTS DURING THE THIRD QUARTER OF 2018-19 INCLUDING A PAPER ON PROJECTS WITH NEWCASTLE UNIVERSITY

The report was received by the meeting and the CEO gave thanks to NP for his continued work with the Authority and also to JG, NW and AA for their input with the University. The CEO noted that the MSFD project has been a significant one for NIFCA in the last few months with IFCOs supporting the University with surveys. MS confirmed that Northumberland has 7 corridors of significance to this project (and 3 in NEIFCA district) and NIFCA Officers have carried out mud sampling in each of these areas which is to be repeated in 2019. The CEO confirmed that the University are chartering St Aidan for this work which is helping their work towards "good environmental status".

The Chair asked if Ashleigh Tinlin's report is now available regarding hand gathering and bait collection which NW confirmed that it can be shared with NIFCA Officers and Members at this stage but cannot be distributed yet beyond this Authority. The CEO added that it is hoped that a recommendation regarding hand gathering will be able to be given at the Technical and Scientific meeting on 10th December.

The CEO explained that the Authority has been asked to become a sponsor of the Marine Biological Association Postgraduate Conference 2019 and confirmed that he will speak with NP about this and report back to the members for further consideration.

3.9 STAFFING UPDATE

The CEO confirmed that the Authority is now advertising for a Research Assistant to join the environmental team on a 15-month placement, to be funded by the FLAG to carry out work on NIFCA's crab stock assessment project. The closing date for this is 28th October and the Environmental team will shortlist and interview. The CEO also confirmed that JG is currently unwell and off work, although this is expected and hoped to be short-term. He added that NW and AA have been doing well in his absence.

It was confirmed by the CEO that the Association of IFCAs are now advertising for the recruitment of a Lead Training Officer to continue with the development of IFCO accreditation.

The Chair confirmed that SR is still unwell and very best wishes are sent to him for his recovery.

3.10 RECREATIONAL ACTIVITY REPORT

This report was received by the meeting with thanks to AB for his work on this. The CEO confirmed that the codes of conduct issued earlier this year appear to have improved marking of gear in the district, which is a good result.

3.11 MPAS UPDATE

This report was received by the meeting with thanks to AA.

The Chair noted that the environmental team are carrying out a HRA for “bait-digging with forks” and asked why this is the only method being assessed, as the use of pumps is often more common practice. NW confirmed that this was the title given to them by Defra, as bait-digging with forks seems to have a greater impact on the ground, but it is intended by the team to assess all methods of bait-digging in this HRA.

3.12 FLAG UPDATE

The CEO confirmed that the North of Tyne FLAG, managed by Simon Baxter, has so far been very successful. He confirmed that NW's report notes the benefits of the FLAG and its successes in awarding funding in each of its 4 priority areas. He explained that the North of Tyne FLAG would not be here today if not for the hard work of NW and VR, along with Northumberland County Council, noting that not all applications to create a FLAG are awarded, so this one for the North of the Tyne was a great success for the area. The CEO confirmed that the Research Assistant position currently being advertised is to be funded by the FLAG which offers a great opportunity for the Authority to gather data about the district's crab fishery, which will be a significant piece of work. GRT asked if there is still funding available for other projects which NW confirmed that there is, and the FLAG are looking to receive initial applications by December.

The Chair asked if the Seahouses Harbour work has started yet to which GRT confirmed that it has been delayed and work is planned to start in the New Year.

3.13 DISCHARGE OF MINE WATER AT LYNE MOUTH

The paper by AA was received with thanks by the meeting. The CEO confirmed that the EA are leading on this issue and noted that AA, SL and LD attended the meeting which took place earlier this month and was attended also by the Coal Authority. LD explained that the Coal Authority seemed to be taken aback by the interest there is in this issue and the concern which was expressed regarding the lack of communication there has been about the consultation and its responses. SL added that the Coal Authority were not expecting there to be as much of a response to this discharge as there has been and they confirmed that they are not aware of which Appropriate Assessments have been carried out in relation to water quality. SL told the meeting that there is a visible plume from the discharge area and the issue is that this discharge smothers things rather than the concern regarding its chemical makeup. He confirmed feedback was given to the Coal Authority regarding the Authority's concern that this is not the only discharge being released into the North Sea and they were encouraged to be more open about this issue moving forward.

LD said that AA's report on this is a very good one and noted that it does say that Northumberland County Council responded to this consultation, but it was in fact only her who did so; she commented that it would be good to see more of a response to this from the Council and possibly the LGA Coastal SIG. GRT commented that Councillor Sanderson or Paul Jones would be the people to speak to about a response from the LGA Coastal SIG. SL confirmed that both himself and LD agreed to undertake

a beach clean in the area and if NIFCA Officers would like to take part he can confirm details; the CEO confirmed that it would be great for Officers to be involved. The CEO also noted that the Authority received a call from a concerned member of the public who said he had seen something similar to this happen “further up the coast” a few years ago and the discharge there has prevented any life from growing back in that area and he is concerned that the same is about to happen here and this shows the level of public interest there is in this matter.

The Chair gave thanks to all involved with particular thanks to SL and LD.

3.14 RISK MATRIX

The CEO confirmed that the Risk Assessment Matrix is a living document which is reviewed every 6-months, most recently in September. This review was carried out by MH, MS, JuS, AB and ES and it was noted that a number of new risks have been added in the last 18-months. The CEO confirmed that a copy of the matrix will be sent out to members for approval, following which it can be placed on the Authority website.

3.15 EPITOME OF CORRESPONDENCE

This report was received by the meeting. The Chair noted that a road had been built along the River Aln and asked what the situation is there. NR commented that a 5-year licence has been granted to allow repairs to be carried out on the bridge and Stephanie Ingram added that MMO Officers have been to the site to check the status of these works.

Regarding the sheetpile removal and cropping at Blyth, the CEO confirmed that the Authority submitted their concerns to Marine Consents at the MMO and it was pleasing that they responded confirming that those concerns had been taken account of, with conditions attached to the marine licence to reinforce compliance and avoid the potential for damage in the Coquet to St Mary’s MCZ.

Regarding item 14 and the disturbance to wildlife in the Tweed Estuary SSSI, SL confirmed that this is a police matter rather than a NIFCA one due to it being “reckless disturbance”. CSe asked if there had been a response from NE regarding this matter to which the CEO said that there had not, and he would chase it up. The Chair asked if consideration had been given to introducing a byelaw to prevent jet-skis coming into the harbour to which CSe said this could be a possibility depending on cost. IT commented that jet-ski have been quite disruptive throughout the county and as they are not defined as a vessel they do not have to comply to the speed limit. JiS confirmed that a byelaw had been made at Seahouses by the Harbour Commission, banning jet-skis from coming into the harbour; IT commented that the same had been done in Amble.

3.16 SUMMARY REPORTS OF WATCH AND FINANCE COMMITTEES BY CHIEF EXECUTIVE

Finance:

The CEO confirmed that all minutes were approved by the meeting. Consideration was given to the Accounts which were approved by the Members. He confirmed that the Authority is in a good position financially and noted that there is a good amount of reserves in the PV fund for when it is necessary to replace St Aidan in the future. The CEO confirmed that the precepts have been signed by himself, the Chair and Vice chair retrospectively and noted that there is a Finance meeting in December for members to plan the budget for 2019-20 and agree upon a recommendation for the General Committee in January 2019.

Watch:

The CEO confirmed that all minutes were approved by the meeting and the PV and Sea Activity Reports were received by the meeting. He noted that the new RIB is currently under construction, with 70% of its cost being funded by EMFF, and the rest being paid by the sale of the old RIB and from the reserves. The CEO confirmed that both the Health and Safety and the Infringements Reports were received and matters relating to Membership of the Authority and the Association of IFCA's were discussed. Finally, the CEO confirmed that following the Governance Review by himself and the Chair earlier this year, the Members Handbook has now been updated and a copy can be sent to members by email or they can access it via the members section on the NIFCA website.

3.17 IFCO REPORTS

3.17.1. Chief IFCO Report on Activities for Quarter Ending 30 September 2018

This report was received with thanks by the meeting. The Chair asked who will be able to skipper the new RIB and MS confirmed that there are 5 Officers with the required Advanced Powerboat qualification.

3.17.2. Environmental IFCOs Report for Quarter Ending 30 September 2018

This report was received with thanks by the meeting. The CEO gave thanks to the Environmental team and noted that there has been some very positive engagement with others in the marine field which has been great to enhance our experience and knowledge.

3.17.3. Maintenance Report and Engineering Log for Quarter Ending 30 September 2018

This report was received with thanks by the meeting. The Chair explained that there have been a few further issues with St Aidan in the last quarter and gave thanks to JC for his work on this. He confirmed that the vessel has been repaired and is now back in the water at an additional cost of around £2,000 to the Authority. Thanks was given to IT for all of his support to the Officers with this issue.

3.18 FUTURE QUARTERLY MEETING TIMES AND VENUES

The CEO confirmed that the April quarterly meeting will now be held on Monday 29th April as 22nd is a bank holiday. This will be held at County Hall. He also asked if members had any recommendations for the venue of the July Quarterly Meeting which is now usually held in the north of the district to which GRT said that there is a village hall on Holy Island which could be used.

3.19 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Nothing to discuss.

There being no further business to discuss, the Chair closed the meeting at 15:00.