

**MINUTES OF THE GENERAL COMMITTEE MEETING
HELD AT 8 ENNERDALE ROAD, BLYTH, NE24 4RT
ON MONDAY 28TH JANUARY 2019 AT 1PM**

PRESENT: NIFCA Members:

Mr L Weller (Chair), Ms W Pattison (WP), Mr B Burdis (BB), Mrs E Dunn (LD), Mr D Herriott (DH), Dr M Kitching (MK), Mr S Lowe (SL), Professor N Polunin (NP), Mr P Rippon (PR), Mr A B Richie (SR), Mr N Robinson (NR), Mr G Roughead (GR), Mrs C Seymour (CSe), Dr C Scott (CSc), Mr J Stephenson (JS) and Mr D Thompson (DT).

Also in attendance was Mr P Gray (PG) from the MMO, Mr I Maddox (IM) from Scottish North and East Coast Region Inshore Fisheries Group and Mr B O'Connell from the Northumberland Gazette. Local fishers Mr M Bould (MB), Mr N Nyberg (NN), Mr C Armstrong (CA) and Mr I Henderson (IH) were also in attendance.

In attendance from NIFCA was the Chief Executive Officer Mr M H Hardy (CEO), Chief IFCO Mr A B Browne (AB), Environmental IFCO Ms A Aitken (AA), Research Officer Mr A Boon (AnB) and the NIFCA Administrative Officer Mrs E Stiles (ES).

3.1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Apologies for absence were received from Mr F Armstrong (FA), Mrs E Cartie (EC), Mrs C Hedley (CH) and Mr G Renner-Thompson.

Declarations of interest were received by SL regarding some agenda items due to his work with the Rivers Trust, which was noted by the Chair.

The Chair gave thanks to everyone for their attendance at this meeting. He welcomed Iain Maddox, Chairman of the Scottish North and East Coast Region Inshore Fisheries Group. He also welcomed attendance from local fishers and stakeholders and noted that contribution from the local industry is essential.

The Chair confirmed that NR is retiring. He gave thanks to NR for all of the work which he has contributed to the Authority during his time as the MMO representative and he was presented with a gift from everyone at NIFCA.

3.2 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS QUARTERLY MEETING HELD ON 22 OCTOBER 2018 AND MATTERS ARISING THEREFROM.

These minutes were accepted as an accurate record of the meeting. Regarding byelaw 7 on page 3 of these minutes, the CEO confirmed that the Authority did inform Defra of the objection which was received after the consultation, as discussed at last quarter's General Committee Meeting. He confirmed that the Authority has agreed to be a sponsor for the 2019 Marine Biological Association Post Graduate Conference at the cost of £500 which is a great opportunity to do additional work with the University and for the Environmental team to meet with graduates and explain the work of NIFCA, as well as further raising our profile. He also confirmed that recruitment was completed for the FLAG funded crab stock assessment project and introduced Andrew Boon as the new Officer for this post; the Chair welcomed him to the meeting. The CEO confirmed that Ian Jones, former Chief of Sussex IFCA has now been appointed as the Lead Training Officer for the IFCA's and regarding the discharge of mine water at

Lynemouth, the CEO explained that a further public meeting is now pending which it is understood will be held in Lynemouth in April and also noted that there will be a beach clean at Lynemouth on 22nd February, as organised by SL and LD and which it is intended some of the NIFCA officers will be attending.

3.3 MEETINGS ATTENDED THROUGHOUT THE QUARTER

This report was received with thanks by the meeting.

3.4 CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S REPORT ON THIRD QUARTER OF NIFCA 2018-19

This report was received with thanks by the meeting. The CEO confirmed that he and the Chair, along with three of our Councillor members have met with a range of local MPs including Mary Glindon, Alan Campbell and Anne-Marie Trevelyan to ensure they understand the work of NIFCA and the importance of our fisheries with the view to them being able to raise any upcoming issues in Parliament or to central government if ever required. The CEO also noted that the Authority has been having a lot more communication with Marine Scotland in recent months which is a great development towards cross-border joint working. He confirmed that the changes to the NIFCA byelaw permit conditions have now been communicated to all applicable fishers throughout the district and noted that the Officers visited local ports in December to meeting with the local industry and to allocate their 2019 pot tags.

The Chair confirmed that he and the CEO will be attending Parliament in February for a presentation regarding MPAs which will also give them the opportunity to meet with Defra and MMO representatives. He also explained that the Association of IFCA's is conducting an internal review and noted that the 2019 spending review has now been delayed for at least 3 months.

3.5 REPORT ON PROGRESS OF PROJECTS DURING 2018-19

This report was received with thanks to NP from the CEO and Chair. The CEO confirmed that a strong partnership continues between the Authority and Newcastle University which is of great value.

3.6 RECREATIONAL ACTIVITY UPDATE

The Chair confirmed that the Amble Open was held in January and he explained that tragically, one of the anglers in attendance lost his life; the Chair extended condolences and very best wishes to the family and friends of the angler on behalf of the Authority.

The CEO thanks AB for this report which was received by the meeting.

3.7 HRAS UPDATE

The CEO gave thanks to NW and AA for their work on what is a very complex matter. He confirmed that JG has been off work due to illness since October and the two Officers have covered the full work load in his absence with the support of CSc. Thanks were given to CSc and very best wishes to JG for a full and speedy recovery. The Chair confirmed that the Net Limitation Order will be in place at the end of May.

Turning to the management of the Coquet to St Marys MCZ, the CEO confirmed that this is a particularly complex topic for all involved; guidance in MACAA and other relevant legal documents needs to be given full consideration and the weight to which we give certain factors during our decision process, such as evidence and socio-

economics, needs to be determined. He confirmed that it is recommended by the Watch Committee to pause the decision regarding the management of this site, and the making of the relevant byelaw, to allow further discussion at a working group of Members, Officers and representatives of Natural England; from this group a recommendation can be made to the Technical and Scientific meeting for final approval at the General Committee in April. The CEO commented that it is essential that the Authority's discussions are thorough to ensure the most appropriate outcome. The Chair confirmed that there will be a consultation period in which the Authority will seek feedback from the industry, and he urged the stakeholders in attendance to respond with their views. The Chair then opened the floor to members and it was agreed by the meeting to accept the Watch Committee recommendation of a pause in this decision and to form a working group to further discuss this matter.

The Chair then opened the floor to visitors. Mr M Bould (MB) asked if any evidence gathered regarding this would be accessible to the public to which the Chair confirmed that it will. MB commented that in deciding upon how to manage the MCZ, the socio-economic impact is as important as the environmental one. He noted that there are only 4 boats which use this area, but the fish landed there makes up about 80% of their annual income so the impact would be great. He added that the MCZ is a great area for nephrops, the numbers of which have significantly increased which suggests that the impact of fishing in the area is low. MB explained that there are no young fishers starting to use this area so within a few years, this area will cease to be exploited. Mr I Henderson (IH) asked if the Authority was thinking of banning trawling out to 6-miles or just in the MCZ to which SL explained that a trawl ban was not proposed. This was agreed by the CEO who confirmed that a trawl ban out to 6-miles is not currently being considered by the Authority.

3.8 iVMS

AB confirmed that the MMO has taken over management of the iVMS project; they have made the funding request to EMFF and it is intended for the project to begin mid-March. He explained that there are 3 tranches, the first being for vessels sized 12 to 9 metres in length, the second for those 9 to 6 metres and the third for any under 6 metres. When the SI is introduced, all vessels under 12-metres will need to be fitted with iVMS and under this project, each owner will be given the opportunity to have the equipment fitted and fully paid for, for the first year. They will have a choice of 3 suppliers (one in Newcastle, one in the south of England and one in Spain), and they will be offered only one appointment to get the device fitted, failing which it will fall to the owner to pay for the supply and fit of the device when the SI is live. AB confirmed that one of the main areas of discussion has been what happens if a device stops working, preventing the fisher from going to sea; the MMO have said that each supplier will guarantee a 24-hour maintenance call-out and up to 48-hour replacement. He also confirmed that the only people who will be able to see the position and movements of vessels other than their own will be the MMO and IFCAs. MB confirmed repair and maintenance is a contentious issue because this could stop someone from earning a living, noting that it seems unlikely that a 24-hour call-out guarantee could be stuck to. He added that for small boats, having to find an additional £100 per annum for equipment monitoring is a big ask. The Chair asked if any compensation scheme could be offered to fishers who do not get a call-out within 24-hours to which AB said that this has not been considered. PG said that it may be possible for a dispensation to be allowed to fishers if a system fails to which IH said that this is what is required. SR commented that a large boat at Lynemouth recently broke down at sea so to make a phone call, they had to be within 3-miles of the shore and in coming into the district they were breaking the law; he noted that this sort of situation should also be kept in mind.

The CEO confirmed that the MMO's consultation on this subject is still live and urged for anyone with concerns about the project to please respond to the consultation as it will help with its development.

3.9 MEMBERSHIP MATTERS

Nothing to discuss.

3.10 ASSOCIATION OF IFCAS REPORT

The Chair was congratulated on his new appointed as Vice Chair at the Association of IFCAs. The CEO confirmed that Defra like to receive representation from a single body, so the Association acts as a great way to do this. He confirmed that the Association holds a quarterly meeting which is attended by himself and the Chair/Vice Chair and frequently receives guest speakers from the MMO and Defra. The CEO confirmed that the Association is currently making representations on behalf of the IFCAs regarding New Burdens Funding which makes up between nearly 100% and closer to 10% of the budgets of the various IFCAs. He confirmed that they are also commissioning an audit of its own work and Defra has now commissioned an independent review of the IFCAs themselves. It was confirmed by the CEO that he and the Chair will be attending an event at Parliament, hosted by the Association of IFCAs in February regarding the work of IFCAs in relation to MPAs at which the work undertaken including with partner agencies will be presented to MPs and representatives of other statutory bodies, including Defra.

The Chair confirmed that he will be acting Chair of the Association whilst the Chair is away and noted that he is able to make representations for Northumberland if ever there is a need to do so.

3.11 RISK ASSESSMENT

The CEO confirmed that the Risk Assessment Matrix was last reviewed in September 2018, where no new risks were added to the table, with the next review planned for March and to be carried out by himself, AB, MS, ES and JuS. He explained that the matrix was initially introduced by Barbara McKie at Northumberland County Council and it is a very comprehensive, living document. The CEO confirmed that the document is now on the NIFCA website and if members have any concerns, they should contact him.

3.12 CORRESPONDENCE

This report was received with thanks by the members. Regarding item 10, SL commented that the UK's oldest windfarm referred to is no longer in operation and regarding item 9, JS confirmed that the alterations to the harbour at Seahouses have now been approved.

Regarding the non-lethal deterrent of seals, PR commented that the EA are currently working on possible devices which will deter seals from coming to piers. IM that a study has been carried out by Dr Fernandes and R. Cooke regarding non-lethal deterrents and a collaboration of FLAGs are looking into funding for a similar project. He confirmed that the North of Tyne FLAG may also have access to the collaboration fund and should contact Mark Smith regarding this if they are interested to get involved. SL commented that it is important to encourage non-lethal deterrents for grey-seals and

noted that this animal is one of the main designations of this area and a great economic income for the area. IM agreed and confirmed that some US wholesalers have now said they will not buy fish from fishers shooting seals as a way to encourage non-lethal deterrents.

At this point, MB, IH, IA and NN left the meeting.

3.13 SUMMARY REPORTS OF WATCH AND FINANCE COMMITTEES BY CHIEF EXECUTIVE

Finance:

The CEO confirmed that all of the minutes from previous meetings were accepted and the Risk Assessment matrix, finance accounts and forecast for 2019-20 were received and approved by the meeting.

The CEO confirmed that approval was given by the Finance Committee to recommend the budget, which includes a 2% precept increase and 2% cost of living rise for all employees, to the general Committee. The Chair called for a vote by the General Committee on whether to accept this budget; the meeting voted unanimously in favour of accepting this budget. The budget for 2019-20, which includes a 2% precept increase and 2% cost of living increase, was therefore approved. The CEO confirmed that he, the Chair and Vice Chair will sign the precepts to be sent to the relevant Councils.

The CEO confirmed that the audit has been approved by the Finance Committee to be conducted by Northumberland County Council in April/May and the audit meeting is proposed to be held on 30th May 2019 at County Hall. Finally, the CEO confirmed that the Financial Regulations have been reviewed in 2018-19, as agreed.

Watch

The CEO confirmed that the minutes from previous meetings were approved, and the recommendation regarding the Coquet to St Mary's MCZ was agreed, as per the earlier discussion at item 3.7. He confirmed that the PV, health and safety and infringements reports were received and noted that the new RIB is now due to be received by the Authority at the end of April, following some delay in its build; AB, MS, JC and member DH will be visiting the vessel builders, Ribcraft, in March. The CEO confirmed that it was agreed by the Watch Committee to continue with the Authority's membership to the SAGB at the annual cost of £500 and confirmed that development of the Authority's plastics policy, which demonstrates NIFCAs proactivity in reducing plastic waste, was approved. The Chair added that the Authority is committed to reducing plastics in the sea and plans to continue to engage with community projects such as beach cleans and organisations such as "Anglers Against Single Use Plastics".

3.14 IFCO REPORTS

3.14.1 Chief IFCO Report and Reports on Areas 1 and 2 for the quarter ending 31 December 2018

This report was received by the meeting. The Chair confirmed that he was approached by anglers to praise the work of 2 of our Officers at the Amble Open, noting how approachable they were; this is a great recognition for the work of our Officers.

SL explained that there are people selling bait on Facebook which may be of concern to the Authority. The Chair asked if there appears to be an emergence of a whelk fishery, to which AB said that it has not picked up greatly in recent months and noted that there has been a large drop in cost of these shellfish. IM confirmed that whelks are being largely over-exploited in Scotland and they are being exported en masse to both China and Korea.

3.14.2 Environmental IFCO Reports for quarter ending 31 December 2018

This report was received by the meeting with thanks to both NW and AA for their hard work, especially in the absence of JG.

3.14.3 Maintenance Report and Engineering Log for quarter ending 31 December 2018

This report was received with thanks by the meeting.

3.15 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Future Meeting Dates:

The CEO confirmed that a timetable of all of the proposed 2019-20 meeting dates has been sent to the members and noted that another venue will be required for the April quarterly meeting following a cancellation by the Council of the room we had originally booked, which is now required for the elections. It was suggested that the Fish Quay Heritage Centre could be considered.

Staff

The CEO confirmed that EB has given notice of his retirement as an IFCO. He will be leaving the Authority with very best wishes in May. He confirmed that NIFCA will now start advertising for a replacement with interview planned for mid-March to allow a handover period between the two.

There being no further business, the Chair closed the meeting at 14:55.