

MINUTES OF THE GENERAL COMMITTEE MEETING
HELD AT THE LINSKILL CENTRE, NORTH SHIELDS, NE30 2AY
ON MONDAY 29TH APRIL 2019 AT 1PM

PRESENT: NIFCA Members:

Mr L Weller (Chair), Ms W Pattison (WP), Mr F Armstrong (FA), Mr B Burdis (BB), Mr E Cartie (EC), Mrs L Dunn (LD), Mr P Gray (PG), Mr D Herriott (DH), Dr M Kitching (MK), Professor N Polunin (NP), Mr G Renner Thompson (GRT), Mr P Rippon (PR), Mr A B Ritchie (SR), Mr G Roughead (GR), Mrs C Seymour (CSe), Dr C Scott (CSc), and Mr J Stephenson (JS) and Mr I Thomas (IT).

Also in attendance from NIFCA was the Chief Executive Officer Mr M H Hardy (CEO), the Chief IFCO Mr A B Browne (AB), Environmental IFCO Ms A Aitken (AA), Enforcement IFCOs Mr E Balsdon (EB) and Mr M Lynn (ML) and the NIFCA Administrative Officer Mrs E Stiles (ES).

3.1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND ELECTION OF CHAIR AND VICE CHAIR FOR THE TERM OF OFFICE TO 27 APRIL 2020

Apologies:

Apologies for absence were received from Mr S Lowe (SL).

Declarations:

No declarations of interest were received.

Election of the Chair and Vice Chair:

Chair:

The CEO confirmed that Les Weller was nominated for Chair prior to the meeting and asked for further nominations from members; no more were given. BB proposed that Les should be re-elected as Chair which was seconded by EC; this was accepted, and Les Weller was re-elected as NIFCA Chair for 2019-20

Vice Chair:

The CEO confirmed that Wendy Pattison was nominated for Vice Chair prior to the meeting and asked for further nominations from members; no more were given. GRT proposed that Wendy should be re-elected as Chair which was seconded by DH; this was accepted, and Wendy Pattison was re-elected as NIFCA Vice Chair for 2019-20.

The Chair gave thanks to the members for re-electing him and Wendy. He explained that as his term as member comes to an end in 2020, this will be the last year he will stand for Chair and members should consider who would be willing to stand for 2020-21. The Chair confirmed that he has called upon members a lot during this last year and the work of the members has been greatly appreciated. He commented that this is an IFCO he is extremely proud of and one which he feels is very open and honest. The Chair also gave his thanks to WP for her support throughout the year as Vice Chair.

The CEO noted that NIFCA has a number of sub-committees which require member participation and asked that if any members would wish to join a sub-committee to please let himself or ES know. The CEO also noted that the Authority has recently

received some great feedback from the Chief of Sussex IFCA, Tim Dapling regarding our marking of gear codes of conduct; he gave thanks to everyone who helped to develop these documents.

The Chair welcomed Mark Lynn to the team who will be replacing Eric Balsdon upon his retirement at the end of next month. The Chair extended his sincere thanks to Eric for his long and dedicated service to the Authority and was pleased to present him with a certificate of service, which was received with thanks by Eric.

Finally, the Chair confirmed that the Authority has received notice of resignation from IFCO/Engineer Justin Cooke. He explained that this came as a surprise but noted that it has been a difficult few months for Justin with St Aidan's engines and he leaves the Authority with very best wishes from NIFCA.

At this point, Bex Lynam from the North Sea Wildlife Trust joined the meeting.

3.2 DRAFT MINUTES OF GENERAL COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 28 JANUARY 2019 (AND MATTERS ARISING THEREFROM)

These minutes were received by the meeting and the CEO requested one amendment to page 4 where "independent review" should read "independent evaluation". With this amendment, these minutes were approved as an accurate record of the meeting.

Further to discussion at January's quarterly meeting, the Chief IFCO confirmed that the MMO now plan to begin tranche 1 of the iVMS rollout in January 2020.

3.3 MEETINGS ATTENDED THROUGHOUT THE QUARTER

This report was received by the meeting. The CEO noted that the meeting about the Blyth offshore windfarm decommissioning was mentioned twice in error. Regarding point 3.3.6, the CEO confirmed that this relates to an alleged offence of trawling inside the EMS, which is now proceeding to court and point 3.3.34 refers to the Marine Biological Association which the Authority sponsored, and which will be attended by Environmental Officer AA to give a presentation to delegates about the work of NIFCA. NP commented that this will give the Authority a good chance to meet students who may wish to get involved with future NIFCA projects. The CEO noted that various FLAG meetings have also been attended by NW and that the FLAG is a very positive thing for the area.

The Chair commented that this report shows the range of events and meetings which are regularly attended by representatives of the Authority. The CEO gave his thanks to the Chair for all of the meetings which he has attended this quarter, including as the Vice Chair of the Association of IFCAs.

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

The CEO confirmed that the LTO position has now been filled by Ian Jones and that this is an excellent development for national IFCA training because he brings a wealth of experience as a trainer, a former Police Officer and IFCA Deputy Chief. He confirmed that Ian came to the NIFCA office in March to hold a training refreshment event for our enforcement Officers which was very well received, and ML will attend a similar event in May with Eastern IFCA. The Chair confirmed that it is hoped that ML will be able to be warranted faster than usual because of his Police background.

The CEO confirmed that Defra is currently having carried out an independent evaluation of the IFCAs for which he and the other IFCA Chiefs were interviewed to gather information about the work of the Authorities. Defra have since selected 4 IFCAs, based upon a number of criteria to further analyse with NIFCA not one of them. The report is planned to be published in July.

The Chair confirmed that the Authority will be hosting a naming ceremony for the new RIB; the current date being considered is the 14th June and all members will be invited. He confirmed that the RIB is to be named after former Chair Robert Arckless, MBE who will also be in attendance and asked that if members have any suggestions for others who should be added to the guest list to please let ES know.

Finally, the CEO confirmed that NIFCA will be running a stall at the Environment Agency's event on World Environment and Ocean's Day on 7th June.

3.5 COQUET TO ST MARY'S MCZ FISHERIES MANAGEMENT UPDATE

The Chair confirmed that a Working Group was implemented by NIFCA to continue development of management plans for this MCZ and noted that an overall ban on dredging was agreed by all members together with a requirement to use light gear for mobile activity. He explained that the Environmental team have suggested an exercise which can be carried out in the district on mud, which seems like it will be worthwhile, and noted that this is a matter for approval by the members. He asked for members to vote on approving a prohibition on dredging in the area and introducing a permit condition for light gear, both of which will proceed to consultation and carrying out a consultation regarding the mud areas which need to be further discussed by the Authority; all 18 members present voted in favour of this motion, which was approved and it was confirmed that this matter will be reported on and for further discussion at the next Technical and Scientific meeting at the end of May.

3.6 MPAS UPDATE

AA explained that we are now awaiting confirmation of the tranche 3 MPAs, including whether there will be a Berwick to St Mary's MCZ for the protection of eider ducks. The Chair asked if the MCZ if confirmed will cover estuaries, to which AA confirmed that it does not.

3.7 REPORT ON PROGRESS OF PROJECTS DURING 2018-19 INCLUDING A PAPER ON PROJECTS WITH NEWCASTLE UNIVERSITY

NP confirmed that there are several University projects underway at the moment as listed in his paper for this meeting. He said that if IFCOs have any ideas for projects which would be of use to NIFCA to please let NP know and he can look for student availability. NP explained that there are currently 2 students looking at species living within reef habitats in the district which should be very interesting. They will be using baited remote underwater cameras on traps to capture video of animals in this habitat. He also confirmed that there are 2 students undertaking a year-long study of non-native species, during which time they will be trying to detect the presence of DNA in water. One student is also doing a study of non-licensable activities such as dog-walking, beach games, swimming etc. and their impact on the coast. The Chair asked about the study by Amy Green; NP confirmed that this will be a study of 5 shallow sites at Blyth, Cambois Bay, Alnmouth, Fenham Flats and Druridge Bay. She will be looking at beam trawling over time in inshore sites, including in plaice and dab nursery areas and researching food webs to determine what nourishment supports these sites. The CEO noted that it would be great for Amy Green to give a talk to the Authority on this

project; NP confirmed that this is only a one-year project and it is hoped that there will be some funding for this to continue beyond Amy's studies.

NP referred to a query raised by SL prior to the meeting regarding the database "ERIC"; SL had raised the point that ERIC may be the only way in which people can receive data from Newcastle University and NP confirmed that this is not the case - if anyone would wish to receive data from the University, they should put a request in via NIFCA and this will be considered by the University.

The Chair confirmed that Andrew Boon has been taken on using funding from FLAG to carry out research regarding the brown crab stocks in Northumberland. The CEO extended his thanks to the industry who have been willing to get involved in Andrew's project; their support is invaluable and will offer substantial benefits to better understanding of the stocks.

3.8 RECREATIONAL ACTIVITY

This report was received by the meeting. AB explained that it has been quiet in the early part of the quarter for recreational activity, which is a regular trend for this time of the year but noted that people have been coming in for their pot tags and escape gaps, with about 100 recreational permits being purchased so far. The Chair asked if there is specific guidance for recreationalists as to where the gaps have to be fitted in their pots to which AB confirmed that they need to go in the parlour end (if it is a parlour pot) and should be as low as possible; there is an example pot in the office which can be viewed by the public when they come in to get their tags. AB confirmed that IFCOs have also been regularly distributing stickers and size cards to anglers and shore gatherers and he noted that the increase to two sized lobsters per day for the recreational permit holders has been well-received.

AA explained that the Environmental team are keen to get NIFCA involved in the Anglers National Line Recycling Scheme, which was introduced to them by the Chair. She confirmed that the team have asked how NIFCA can support the scheme and they have suggested that publicity on the website and social media will be a great help and the Authority are also able to give a financial donation should they wish to. The Chair noted that this is a small operation and the Authority could buy stickers from the charity and pass them out to anglers, encouraging them to take bins out with them when they are fishing. He asked for feedback from the members and IT said that he feels it is a good idea to get involved with this scheme, which was agreed by NP. The Chair said that he believes the Authority would be happy to donate a small amount of funding to this cause; FA suggested it may be worth asking them if there is a particular project which we could donate towards. The Chair said that this could be left with the Officers to look into, with the understanding that a small amount of funding similar to in Sussex could be made available to this project from the Authority.

3.9 ANNUAL PLAN 2019-20

The CEO confirmed that the 2019-20 Annual Plan has now been drafted and is for approval by the members. NP commented that this is a very comprehensive document with a very professional appearance. The Annual Plan was received and approved by the members; the finalised document will be sent to Defra tomorrow

3.10 BYELAW REVIEW 2019

The CEO noted that the 2019 Byelaw Review is currently in the early planning stages and confirmed that a paper will be presented to the Technical and Scientific meeting

in May, with a guide of what needs to be considered by the Authority for review. He explained that there is nothing urgent to be considered by way of byelaws at this point in time but noted that consideration may be given to provision in relation to periwinkles in the North of the district.

3.11 RISK MATRIX

The CEO confirmed that the 6-monthly review of the risk matrix was carried out in March by himself, AB, JuS, MS and ES when only minor amendments were made to the document. He confirmed that the risk assessment matrix was placed at the back of the Annual Plan for consideration by members, which has now been approved.

3.12 CORRESPONDENCE

This report was received with thanks. The Chair asked if there had been confirmation regarding the EMFF funding for the survey equipment, which AB confirmed and that we are just still awaiting final approval of up to date prices then the approved items can be purchased. Regarding the offshore Decommissioning Project, the CEO explained that NW has spoken with the MMO about giving more feedback to consultation respondents.

The CEO asked if the harbour steps at Seahouses has been approved to which GRT confirmed that the works have now been passed and work should be underway by the summer.

3.13 SUMMARY REPORTS OF FINANCE AND WATCH COMMITTEES BY CHIEF EXECUTIVE

Finance:

The CEO confirmed that all of the minutes received by the Finance Committee were approved and the Risk Assessment Matrix was received. The Accounts were received with thanks and approved by the members; the CEO noted that the accounts and reserves are very well managed and are looking healthy. It was confirmed that the Annual Audit is set to take place at the NIFCA officer over two days, starting on 30th April, following which the Annual Audit meeting of members will be held on 30th May to approve the report received by Northumberland County Council. The CEO noted that there has been some changes in staff in the last quarter with EB retiring and ML joining the team, plus receiving notice of resignation from JC, for which recruitment will begin next month. Finally, the CEO confirmed that it was agreed by members to continue with the £4,000 contribution to the MNP and a request has been made for Nick Brodin/Jane Delaney to give a presentation to the membership at an upcoming meeting.

Watch:

The CEO confirmed that a number of minutes were received by the Watch Committee, all of which were approved. He confirmed that there has been a lot of demand for member support in the last quarter which has been received and greatly appreciated. The Sea Activity report was received and there was discussion regarding the new cabin RIB which continues to be on track for completion at the end of May. The CEO confirmed that the Infringements report was received including one report of 69 undersized lobsters being landed by a commercial fisher, which will proceed to court. There is also an infringement regarding a recreational fisher who had landed 4 illegal lobsters, for which it has been agreed that they will receive a FAP and a written warning. The CEO also confirmed that a case is currently proceeding to court in relation to illegal dredge activity in the EMS. The Health and Safety report was also received by the members with no issues arising in the last quarter.

The CEO confirmed that a discussion took place regarding MMO appointed members, noting that the Authority and Association have both contacted the MMO about ensuring that sufficient member recruitment will be underway in time for the loss of all of those members whose 10-year terms come to an end in 2020. He confirmed that the MMO have also been contacted regarding finding a replacement for CH as soon as possible as the Authority is currently one member short. PG confirmed that he has contacted Andrew Wareing about this situation but has so far not received a response from him. The Chair explained that the 6 members whose terms came to an end in March 2019 have now had their memberships extended until 2020 but noted that the same “cliff edge” still exists next year and there is concern about the MMO’s plans to deal with this; he noted that along with NIFCA losing around 4 long term members, the Association will also lose both its Chair and Vice Chair next year. GR asked if the Authority could co-opt members if the MMO does not manage to recruit in time, to which the CEO explained that IFCAs cannot do this as recruitment is run entirely by the MMO with some input from neighbouring IFCAs during the interview process.

The Chair gave his thanks to the members for attending all of the meetings of the Authority which have taken place this year; he commented that NIFCA covers a wide range of complex issues and member support is integral to the Authority making progress. This was seconded by the CEO who commented that 18 out of 20 members were in attendance at this quarterly meeting, which is a fantastic turnout and extremely valued by the Officers.

3.14 IFCO REPORTS

3.14.1. Chief IFCO Report on activities for quarter ending 31 March 2019

This report was received by the meeting. AB gave thanks to MS for his work on this report. The Chair confirmed that the prize draw relating to the old commercial pot tags will take place at the July quarterly meeting. He also noted that the Authority is going to review the NIFCA Ford Ranger, considering a vehicle which is more environmentally friendly once it does not need to tow a RIB like Bravo 1 when we have the new Cabin Rib.

3.14.2. Environmental IFCOs Report for quarter ending 31 March 2019

This report was received by the meeting. The Chair asked if Northumberland have started to develop a whelk fishery to which AA confirmed it has not but noted the Environmental team attended a whelk working group so that this can be monitored and NIFCA can feed into the group if a fishery is ever identified; she explained that the IFCAs are trying to work together to create a national management strategy for this fishery. The Chair gave thanks to her and the other Officers for the additional time they have put into attending talks at WI’s and other external bodies, which has been greatly appreciated.

3.14.3. Maintenance Report and Engineering Log for quarter ending 31 March 2019

This report was received by the meeting. The Chair confirmed that MS will be taking on the work of JC whilst recruitment is underway. He noted regarding Bravo 1 that it is hoped that NIFCA will get a good price when it comes to selling this RIB.

3.15 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

a) Next quarterly meeting 22nd July 2019

The Chair confirmed that the July quarterly meeting is set to take place in the north of the district and the Defra offices in Alnwick (or another suitable venue there) were suggested as a location by CSc.

b) Cabin RIB Naming Ceremony on 14th June

The CEO confirmed that AB, DH and DG are travelling to Yeovil early next month to check on the progress of the cabin RIB build. Once we know that the build is still on course for completion at the end of May, the Authority can begin planning for the naming ceremony. Members will be kept informed.

c) EDF V-notching proposal

The Chair confirmed that EDF have offered the Authority £30k to put towards a v-notching programme. This has arisen further to discussions with NAREC in the earlier part of this decade when the NIFCA v-notching scheme was still underway. They have now come back to NIFCA with this proposal and the environmental team would like to consider using this donation to carry-out a v-notching programme, using male lobsters bought from wholesalers; this is for consideration by members. The Chair noted that the NIFCA v-notching scheme is no longer running following the member's decision to stop this at the time the berried hen prohibition was introduced. He explained that members now need to consider whether to accept this funding, noting that it is a large amount of money which could be very beneficial to the Authority but also asked members to consider if accepting this kind of donation from a national company like this could be a conflict of interest? EC said that this should also be looked at from a financial perspective as £30k is a lot of money. JiS commented that another v-notch scheme would not be well-received by fishers. The Chair concluded that further consideration should be given to this at the Technical and Scientific meeting.

d) Annual Research Report 2018-19 and Annual Research Plan 2019-20

The Chair confirmed that these documents were received by members a little too close to the meeting and more time is required to allow consideration to each of them. The CEO confirmed that an email will be sent out to the members asking for their feedback to both the Research Report and Research Plan.

e) River Tweed Commission

GRT explained that the River Tweed Commission have been trying to get a netting ban implemented by Marine Scotland during the spring. He confirmed that this request has now been accepted and the ban is in place but with this, a ban on "spinning" for anglers taking salmon has also been introduced.

f) Lynemouth

The Chair confirmed that AA was interviewed by the BBC during the Lynemouth beach clean and noted that there was a good turnout on the day, including from Anne-Marie Trevelyan. He explained that the Authority has now written to Councillor Sanderson who has agreed to offer his support for improving the area. LD explained that she is still receiving a lot of contact from the public about Lynemouth and there has also been an offer from the CEO of a large company wanting to offer pro-bono work in the area.

There being no further business to discuss, the Chair closed the meeting at 3:15pm.