

MINUTES OF THE GENERAL COMMITTEE MEETING
HELD BY MICROSOFT TEAMS ON MONDAY 27
JULY 2020 AT 2PM

PRESENT: NIFCA Members:

Mr L Weller (Chair) at the Authority Office and joining on Microsoft Teams, Ms W Pattison (WP), Mrs L Dunn (LD), Mr P Rippon (PR), Mr G Roughead (GR), Dr C Scott (CSc), Mr B Burdis (BB), Mr P Gray (PG), Professor N Polunin (NP), Mrs E Cartie (EC), Mr D Herriot (DH), Mr I Thomas (IT) and Mr G Renner-Thompson (GRT).

The meeting was also joined by Ben O'Connell from the Hexham Courant and Bex Lynam (BL) from The Wildlife Trust.

Also in attendance at the Authority Office from NIFCA were the Chief Executive Officer Mr M H Hardy (CEO), and the NIFCA Administrative Officer Katy Smart (KS) and attending on Microsoft Teams was the Deputy Chief IFCO Mr M Southerton (MS), and Acting Lead EIFCO Ms A Aitken (AA).

3.1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Apologies:

Apologies for absence were received from Mrs C Seymour (CSe), Mr S Lowe (SL), Mr A B Ritchie (SR) and Mr Dr M Kitching (MK).

Declarations of Interest:

No declarations of interest given.

Welcome from the Chair:

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

3.2 DRAFT MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS QUARTERLY MEETING HELD ON 27 JANUARY 2020 AND MATTERS ARISING THEREFROM.

The minutes were accepted as an accurate record of the meeting.

3.3 MEETINGS ATTENDED THROUGHOUT THE QUARTER

The list of meetings were noted and accepted by the Meeting.

3.4 CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S REPORT FOR QUARTER ENDING 30 JUNE 2020

The report was noted and accepted by the Meeting.

3.5 MPA UPDATE

The Chair thanked AA for a thorough report and a good overview covering the work undertaken by herself and AB. The Chair noted the Environmental Team have worked extremely well.

The Chair added, he was happy to see an increased presence from the Environmental Team on social media posts and noted how all IFCA's are using more communicative outlets, such as Facebook and Twitter. EC commended the Facebook posts in particular the underwater drone update and expressed interest in seeing the equipment at work on the vessel.

There being no other comments, the report was received and approved by the membership.

3.6 BYELAW UPDATE INCLUDING MAKING NEW NIFCA BYELAW 1 RE TRAWLING

The Chair and CEO confirmed this was a process that began over a year ago. The Chair noted the byelaw had been changed slightly regarding permits issue.

The CEO answered the first question submitted by BL who asked what the timescales were for the formal consultation on the trawling byelaw in the Coquet - St Marys MCZ. The CEO confirmed the plan to advertise and proceed to consultation as soon as possible (within the next month). The public notice is placed probably in Fishing News and the Sunday Sun in accordance with the guidance from Defra for the making of Byelaws in each publication in successive weeks and then a 28-days consultation period follows after the date of the second advert. The CEO estimated by the end of September into October NIFCA will see what responses have been received. NIFCA will deal with those responses and reply where necessary then prepare the package of information to go to the MMO and Defra. The byelaw then needs to be signed off by the Minister to come into effect and which it is hoped may be by some time in the next calendar year.

BL asked if a map was available that demarcates the inner area from the outer area as referred to in the proposed trawling byelaw. AA asked BL to refer to Schedule 1 in the byelaw and figure 1 in that schedule. A map is there which shows the district as well as the 3 nautical mile national demarcation line and the 6 nautical miles.

BL asked AA to clarify if any part of the MCZ falls between the 3-6 boundary and AA replied that the whole of the Coquet to St Marys MCZ is within the 0 -3 nm boundary.

BL questioned if there will be a limit on the number of permits awarded in relation to this byelaw. AA answered there are no limits on permits awarded and to fish within Coquet - St Marys MCZ, a permit holder will have to apply in writing to obtain an exemption to fish within the MCZ. AA continued, there will be a provision in the byelaw to allow activity to be closely monitored and if a significant increase in activity occurred there will be provision to either stop giving out the exemptions or remove any exemptions that have been given out for that year. BL thanked AA.

LW added if changes need to be made within the byelaw the permit conditions will allow more flexibility. The CEO added at this stage he hoped the byelaw will remain as it is but noted it is always possible changes can be made following the consultation period and if required by the MMO/Defra. The CEO also emphasised that the byelaw was not yet effective or operational even if it was made today by the authority. It will need to go through the consultation and the vetting process to achieve implementation. The CEO commented NIFCA have considered this byelaw over the last 18 months, and received appropriate legal advice from our solicitor and well done to everyone involved. BL confirmed to LW she was happy with those answers.

A vote was taken, and members unanimously approved the making of the byelaw.

3.7 RECREATIONAL ACTIVITY

The Chair thanked all the officers for their reports and noted for the first-time spear fishing being mentioned in the district.

The Chair added he knows the Angling community felt safe being able to fish once again.

The report was received and approved by the meeting.

3.8 RISK MATRIX

The CEO confirmed the review of the matrix was particularly useful in the challenging current times and NIFCA have brought the matrix up to date including in terms of Covid-19. Members and the public can access this document in our Annual Plan and on the Authority website. It will be reviewed again in September 2020. The Chair thanked the team for putting the matrix together and for adhering to it.

The report was noted and received by the meeting.

3.9 CORRESPONDENCE

The CEO noted items number 9,10 and 14 relating to applications for marine licences and consent through the MMO to which NIFCA responded (as referred to in the epitome itself) and all matters have been confirmed as approved and the necessary licences granted. The Chair thanked AA for the work with the periwinkle collection, and noted the increase of periwinkle sales through Facebook.

The report was noted and received by the meeting.

3.10 SUMMARY REPORTS OF WATCH & FINANCE COMMITTEES BY CEO

The CEO noted that at the Finance meeting earlier today the recorded minutes were noted and approved and the Meeting received the same risk report that was included for the general meeting, the detailed finance summary of the authorities business was received together with the budget report and the confirmation of the authority's reserves. The CEO commented NIFCA are thankfully in a good financial position overall enabling the business of the authority to continue with confidence in the future. The Authority then confirmed that the precepts for the second half of the year which were confirmed at the January Quarterly Meeting can be forwarded to the respective councils to enable payment to be made to the Authority in the next few weeks. It was confirmed that the Authority received a £10,000 grant from Northumberland County Council in accordance with the grant scheme as a result of the pandemic. This was applied for to the Northumberland CC essentially because of the loss of income which we've suffered from not being able to charter the patrol vessel recently and is intended that £10,000 will be paid into the patrol vessel reserves as we normally do with charter fees and they go towards future vessel purchases. The CEO asked the Chair if that could be formally approved by the committee as indicated by the Finance Committee. The Chair asked if all members could formally accept the receipt of those funds and the grant was approved by the meeting.

Turning to the Watch Meeting the CEO confirmed that minutes of previous meetings were received and approved. The Chief IFCO's report on sea activity and enforcement (which had continued to a very high standard over the last few months) as well as the Chief IFCO report on vessels, vehicles and equipment were all approved. The CEO

continued that the receipt of two new authority vehicles had been delayed because of Covid-19 but it was hoped they would be received in the next month through the Northumberland County Council. The authority also received the Chief IFCO's Health and Safety Report which presented a clean bill of health, and a report by the Chair on membership matters regarding the continuation and future recruitment of MMO appointed members. The meeting had also received the report on the Association of IFCAs which is positive with the appointment of a new Chief Officer who is known to the IFCAs to be someone who should fulfil that role extremely well in what will be challenging times in the months ahead. Finally there had been a brief report on the MCRS Byelaw which the authority made as emergency byelaw last August together with Eastern, North Eastern and Kent & Essex IFCAs. That byelaw is due to expire on the 12th August, but the CEO is in contact on behalf of all four IFCAs with Defra regarding the extension of that byelaw for a further 6 months pending the Minister being able to sign the byelaw off.

The Chair thanked the CEO.

3.11 IFCO REPORTS

3.11.1 Chief IFCO Report

This report was received by the meeting. The Chair thanked MS for his report and noted the aim to create a Jon Green Award for Excellence. The Chair noted the Fishing Industry is still struggling and now working more frequently directly with customers. The Chair commended the good work in relation to the JWA.

3.11.2 Environmental IFCOs Report

The Chair thanked the environmental team for their work on the report.

The Chair added Katy Smart has accepted the position of Environmental IFCO when Emma returns and in the interim a Temporary Environment Officer, Beth Harvey, will join the authority next month to work with the Environmental Team.

3.11.3 Maintenance Report and Engineering Log

The Chair thanked PRid for his report and all his work on the Robert Arckless vessel. MS confirmed the inspection went very well, PRid completed the engine service over the past week. PRid had tools specifically made which can now be used for future work. LW thanked MS and PRid for another good report.

3.12 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Finally, the Chair asked if there were any more questions regarding the papers and there were none.

Date of next meeting will be the 26th October, the time and venue is to be confirmed, possibly another virtual meeting.

LW thanked all attendees for their patience with the new technology being used and to please let us know if you have any feedback and send to Katy.

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