

MINUTES OF THE GENERAL COMMITTEE MEETING
HELD AT 8 ENNERDALE ROAD, BLYTH
ON MONDAY 27 JANUARY 2020 AT 1PM

PRESENT: NIFCA Members:

Mr L Weller (Chair), Ms W Pattison (WP), Mrs L Dunn (LD), Mr Dr M Kitching (MK), Mr S Lowe (SL), Mr P Rippon (PR), Mr A B Ritchie (SR), Mr G Roughead (GR), Mrs C Seymour (CSe), Dr C Scott (CSc), Mr J Stephenson (JiS), Mr B Burdis (BB), Mr P Gray (PG), Professor N Polunin (NP) and Mr G Renner-Thompson (GRT).

The meeting was also joined by Rachel Louisa Joyce and Alex Pearson-Ross from the Marine Management Organisation byelaw making team.

Also in attendance from NIFCA were the Chief Executive Officer Mr M H Hardy (CEO), Deputy Chief IFCO Mr M Southerton (MS), Senior EIFCO Ms A Aitken, EIFCO Mr A Boon (ABO), IFCO/Engineer Mr P Ridley (PRid), NIFCA Administrative Officer Mrs E Stiles (ES) and the NIFCA Administrative Assistant Katy Smart (KS).

3.1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Apologies:

Apologies for absence were received from Mr A Browne (AB), Mrs E Cartie (EC), Mr D Herriot (DH), Mr P Rippon (PR), Mr J Stephenson (JiS) and Mr I Thomas (IT).

Apologies were also communicated to the meeting by PG on behalf of the MMO Chief Executive Officer Mr Tom McCormack, who had hoped to be able to attend the meeting.

Declarations of Interest:

The Chair noted recent news relating to declaration of interests. If unsure, it is best to declare an interest then the Chair can decide, and it is recorded.

No declarations of interest given.

Welcome from the Chair:

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and wished all a Happy New Year.

3.2 DRAFT MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS QUARTERLY MEETING HELD ON 28 OCTOBER 2019 AND MATTERS ARISING THEREFROM.

These minutes were received by the meeting.

Regarding matters arising, the CEO noted KS was now covering for ES's maternity leave. KS was settling in very well and he thanked both.

The CEO commented, the team had completed a desk top exercise for crisis management which had been a great innovation. The CEO thanked MS/AB for providing scenarios which were worked through and to ES for drawing out key points to make a crisis management flow chart. MH will consult communication advisor

Richard Simpson about press releases. If any crisis ever unfolded, all communication would come via the office. The Chair noted, if a member (or officer) is approached by the press in a crisis, it must be ensured 'no comment' is always given and referred via the NIFCA office. Chair commended NIFCA for planning risk avoidance. The CEO planned to circulate the crisis management flow chart to members to show the responses that would be given.

The CEO requested anyone wanted to see the Environment Agency presentation on T and J nets to contact him. Consultation in relation to this had been commenced by the Environment Agency.

SL updated that the AONB consultation referred to in 3.2 of the minutes was now public. The CEO noted to speak with the Environment Team regarding the consultation.

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

3.3 MEETINGS ATTENDED THROUGHOUT THE QUARTER

The Chair asked if there were any queries from the list of meetings this quarter. GRT asked what questions were asked at the Scrutiny Committee meeting (3.3.2). The CEO commented the minutes were available and he was happy to be shared as they are in the public domain. The Chair commented that the meeting was very useful, NIFCA weren't known by all of the committee, but we gave them a good briefing note in advance which was appreciated. CEO thanked Chair for that and said Robert Arckless and the CEO had previously attended the Scrutiny meeting and one at North Tyneside. The Chair and the CEO discussed the intention to increase dialogue with the council, and this meeting helped. Special thanks to WP for facilitating the meeting.

SL declared chairing the 3.3.31 meeting as part of his paid role as the Northumberland Rivers Catchment Partnership Coordinator. The Chair happy this declaration has previously been noted.

The Chair asked AA for additional information on the 3.3.13 meeting with a university student re. "understanding the public perception of the marine environment". AA commented this was a brief meeting with an undergraduate student who was conducting research by a short set of questions to different marine organisations.

3.4 CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S REPORT FOR QUARTER ENDING 31 DECEMBER 2019

The CEO commented that all information in the report is very current. One correction noted on the second page, the delayed IFCA 10 year review report should read the 10 year "evaluation" report. The CEO confirmed that a meeting was planned with DEFRA on Friday of this week to look at the Authority remit. This will be an opportunity for an update on the Evaluation Report. It is good that DEFRA are visiting all of the IFCA's for dialogue.

The Chair commented anyone wishing to contribute to AB retirement gift to contact KS. Chair confirmed AB last day as 27th March.

3.5 NIFCA MCRS BYELAW

The CEO confirmed NIFCA made the emergency byelaw last August with the three other East Coast IFCA's. Subsequently an informal consultation in the district was undertaken. This maintains the continuation of minimum size regulation for fish and

shellfish in the district that would have been lost due to the change in EU regulations. At the Technical and Scientific meeting in December the making of the permanent byelaw was confirmed. The byelaw was sent out to the membership and the MMO on the 10th January to give the minimum statutory notice period and MMO forwarded it to DEFRA. The CEO thanked DEFRA and has been told they were happy with the byelaw and slight amendment added on the 13th January. The process to set up the byelaw is now complete. The impact assessment was prepared and checked by the CEO and other officers involved. NIFCA planned to coordinate action with the other three IFCA's (that have already made the byelaw) to advertise in accordance with the statutory requirements. If the byelaw was made today, NIFCA will advertise in a national and local newspaper. 28 days from the second advert will be the closing date for consultation. The byelaw will be then sent to MMO with their approval it will be passed to DEFRA for Ministerial sign off. Hope the byelaw will be made permanent in each IFCA district before the end of the emergency byelaw timeline.

The CEO confirmed this was a matter for decision and had been researched by the environment team and legal advice given. The Chair gave support for the byelaw.

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

3.6 REPORT ON PROGRESS OF PROJECTS DURING 2019-20

The CEO thanked NP for his quarterly update and to ABo for a good report on his crab project.

The Chair questioned NP what the 'novel' low-cost methods were for the marine mammal and environmental monitoring project. NP explained the project used acoustic data to monitor marine mammal activity and to identify species and abundance.

The CEO confirmed NIFCA were a partner for the novel low-cost method project and a project partner with Natural England for the Greater North Sea MSFD Partnership Project.

The CEO asked NP of the progress for the contemporary fishery food-web with 1900's data comparison project. NP explained there had been difficulties in recreating the historical gear as important details were lacking in the records. The project had recreated a trawl but unfortunately that hadn't worked, in spite of advice from manufacturers, scientists and fishermen; the project had had to resort to the standard small beam trawl routinely used by the University, so very frustrating outcome. Now, thanks to CEFAS for collaboration the research was using more limited historical data from offshore sites to look at the abundances and composition of the fish communities as well as looking at stomach content data. NP pointed out the findings to date showed interesting shifts in stomach data, the present data tells us the animals are consuming far more polychaetes and fewer bivalves. Information on the historic benthos composition was not available, the historic stomach data might provide clues as to how benthic community composition has changed. Detailed work has also been done on the food webs supporting the inshore nursery sites and whether these vary spatially. All fieldwork for the project has been completed. The project received a UKRI NERC facilities grant to do stable isotope analyses on the materials collected and the findings, along with the stomach data. NP noted a lot of lobsters in trawl habitat soft sediment for 2 years now. Potentially due to weather changes – no clear explanation for this.

SL commented that Dr Ben Burville (BB) has had a listed research project for a few years but we have not seen any results (declaration of interest noted). MK made a similar observation to NP. NP confirmed he will talk to Dr Per Berggren the project

supervisor and raise the query. SL added BB had a licence from the MMO to swim with white-beaked dolphins and is the only person in the country with said licence. SL slightly concerned information should be gathered if a licence was issued and if not then the licence should be reviewed (requirement to submit a report to the MMO). RLJ noted that when Dr Ben Burville reapplies for his wildlife licence, he must provide supporting information on what his activities are and why it is beneficial. The MMO sometimes see data outputs such as how many dives he's done, species sighted and how that will contribute to his PhD. Currently wildlife licence information is kept off the public registrar in the interest of the applicant. SL declared an interest as personally he may make a freedom of information request. MK's noted declaration of interest is because he is north east regional officer for two national marine conservation charities.

3.6b FLAG BROWN CRAB RESEARCH UPDATE

At this point, ABo entered the meeting.

The Chair asked if the intention is to continue the project. ABo answered in the past there has been more focus towards lobsters, but it is now our intention to alternate annually between lobster stock assessment and crab stock assessment. The Chair supported this plan and added the value of crab seems to be increasing.

At this point, ABo left the meeting.

3.7 RECREATIONAL ACTIVITY

The Chair asked GRT how the engineering works were going at Seahouses harbour, GRT answered it is finished. The Chair asked of the work at Berwick harbour and GRT replied it has started. Asked about Natural England involvement with the works. CSc noted that once the appropriate information had been provided then the work was able to continue.

The Chair asked MK about increased whale sightings. MK said the latest beached whales were not emaciated but in moderate nutritional condition (contained a small number of squid beaks). Sperm whales come into shallow water where they can't echolocate and find their way out.

The Chair explained the bass regulations have changed for the next year. From 1st March limit of two fish per day for anglers may be landed in place of catch and return. The CEO noted that it will revert to catch and return from the 30th November.

The Chair commended AA on having 7 anglers national line recycling scheme (ANLRS) bins and great it went into the Amble Open advert showing awareness. Possibility become involved with recycling commercial gear such as gill nets. If we find that equipment it may be a good idea to send that as well. The waste was recycled into various products. SL noted there is a North Tyneside company recently set up making jewellery out of fishing gear.

The Chair thanked IFCOs for attending the Amble Open and handing out literature.

MS commented over Christmas the cost of periwinkles was seasonal/ at its peak. A lot of collection took place in the Berwick area.

3.8 BYELAW UPDATE

The CEO explained we will aim to make the byelaw changes referred to at the next quarterly meeting. Simultaneously there is ongoing byelaw review – any proposed changes of byelaws 1, 2 and regarding Coquet St Marys will be produced to the Technical & Scientific meeting. NP asked if this was subject to consultation. The CEO confirmed it will be and following the informal consultation we've already undertaken. If the byelaws are made at the April meeting they will then go to statutory consultation by advertisement as previously explained.

The Chair thanked everyone involved and commended everyone for what has sometimes been contentious with particular thanks to the Environment team and he felt it is coming out in the right place now. SL thanked Natural England for their support and was seconded by Chair.

3.9 IVMS UPDATE

MS commented that iVMS was for inshore monitoring of vessels 12 m and below. The system used mobile network to transfer data from vessels. MMO have taken over the project and are looking at different devices. They're looking at fixed units or a mobile (app) device for smaller vessels. MMO due to publish a stakeholder paper 11th Feb but will still be providing ongoing updates in the meantime. Both NIFCA vessels have iVMS devices attached via Succorfish. Presently, only NIFCA received the VMS data from Succorfish but it will begin to share the data soon on the VMS hub. When AB retires, MS will take over his position in the stakeholder group. The Chair questioned if Scotland will be using the IOS app? MS noted difficulty with a mobile device was it is not fixed to the vessel so could be moved between vessels, and it was limited by the battery life. SR commented that every vessel in Scotland will have a device by the end of next year.

3.10 MEMBERSHIP MATTERS

The Chair updated the meeting on appointee appraisals and renewals for MMO members and if anyone wished to have a discussion let the Chair know. MMO said they'll consider extensions beyond 10 years based on "exceptionalness". The Chair expressed unhappiness with the overall situation and lack of MMO's responsibility regarding their appointees. AIFCA had written to the MMO to discuss member vacancies. Appalled this work has been given to someone with 6 weeks left in post. The MMO are considering having a national recruitment drive for MMO appointees soon. The CEO asked if any Authority members have any issues they wish to raise please let the CEO or Chair know.

3.11 RISK MATRIX

The CEO confirmed that the next risk matrix meeting will be in March and any changes will be brought to the quarterly meeting in April. Work continues on the environmental risk matrix and that will be placed on the website once it is ready. The Chair gave thanks to the CEO and the rest of the team for their ongoing work in this important area-

3.12 CORRESPONDENCE

The Chair thanked SL and LD for continued work at Lynemouth. SL commented there may be budgetary item for Northumberland County Council in the coming months. LD noted there will be a meeting next week 5th February to discuss the report findings. LW commented the TV appearance was very good and aired after Christmas. SL added Northumbria University MSc course were involved with this work, they have

undertaken monitoring and a documentary for Channel 5 is to be aired in June. The university students produced a 3D model that showed the rate of erosion which is quite worrying. Need for work underwater to see where the waste is carried. The students also looked at bio-accumulation of heavy metals in seaweed and found the 4 out of 6 were well above the normal background rate. More rubbish was collected from Newbiggin than Lynemouth so the waste is moving down the coast. SR commented that children sliding down the dunes caused damage to the dunes, they take tonnes of sand with them and asked if anything can be done. The Chair answered children restriction on the dunes would be a very contentious issue.

SL confirmed he had objected to the Havhingsten fibre optic cable landing because the data is not current. The Chair asked if Seaton Sluice was in the MCZ and SL replied it was, but the landing is not.

3.13 SUMMARY REPORTS OF FINANCE AND WATCH COMMITTEES BY CHIEF EXECUTIVE

Finance:

The CEO confirmed that the minutes of all previous meetings under the finance committee were approved as a true record. There was a risk review as also discussed at this meeting and this was on the agenda as required by the Audit. There was a general financial update including the level of reserves which was appreciated by the membership. There was confirmation that the 2020/21 budget should be approved by this meeting. This included: the 2.5% increase in precepts, 2% salary increase for all staff and incremental rise for all eligible staff. The Chair requested approval from members. A vote was taken and members unanimously approved.

The CEO discussed the Authority vehicle scheme. CEO noted it was agreed by the committee to lease two vehicles, a replacement Ford Ranger and a transit van instead of the previously planned three leased vehicles (on officer advice). If more vehicles were needed they can be added to the policy at a later date. In exceptional cases, IFCOs can still use their own vehicles and claim expenses. The car user allowance therefore continues. CEO added there would be a financial saving to the Authority because of opting for two vehicles instead of three.

Precepts were agreed subject to general committee approval and once signed will be sent to the appropriate council. The Chair commented that the replacement for the current Ford Rangers' 3.2 litre engine will have a smaller engine that is more environmentally and economically friendly.

The CEO noted an update was given on staff matters, the main changes included ES starting maternity leave on 31st January for a year with KS providing maternity cover and AB retirement at the end of March, with MS stepping up as Chief IFCO.

The CEO noted the completion of recommendations made by Northumberland County Council following an audit and looked towards the next audit in May 2020. The next audit meeting was planned for 10am, 4th June at County Hall.

CEO confirmed recommendations of Chair to organise event for 10 years of NIFCA. Confirm further details before next meeting. Hope to finalise soon.

Watch:

The CEO confirmed that the minutes were approved by the meeting. There was a report upon the IFCOs Sea Activity and Vessel/Vehicles and there was the Health and Safety Report by MS. Regarding Infringements, the CEO confirmed a number of

pending cases, either for Court or for FAPs, CEO said if more information was required to speak to the CEO. This work demonstrated the strength of the team and joint work with the MMO. Congratulated everyone for their work. The Chair reiterated if any questions please come and speak to him or the CEO.

3.14 IFCO REPORTS

3.14.1 Chief IFCO Report

This report was received by the meeting. The CEO confirmed the IFCO NW had recently become a father and the Chair sent congratulations. MS commented that it had been a steady quarter partly due to weather, lobsters remained at a very good price and brown crabs price increased. The Chair noted recent international interest for green crabs and asked MS if they were being caught in the district, MS answered not currently.

3.14.2 Environmental IFCOs Report

This report was received by the meeting. The Chair thanked the environmental team for their work. The Chair asked about the removal method for macroalgae at Budle Bay. CSc noted a significant amount of macroalgae was removed by hand and noted it was a small trial to monitor the removal methods effectiveness. CSc will be receiving the report tomorrow. Chair asked if the growth was due to surface runoff and CSc answered it could be due to several factors.

LW asked if less birds were washed up this year and AA noted it is difficult to say for certain as NIFCA survey two small areas of the coast, there seemed to be fewer in areas the environment team surveyed, and a report has been requested from Daniel Turner about this.

At this point, ABo entered the meeting.

The Chair questioned ABo about ropeless gear marking. ABo explained that the rope remained attached to the equipment but is spooled up and kept on the seabed at each end of the fleet. A radio signal would be transmitted to the spool of the rope, which would then release the rope and allow it to return to the surface to be retrieved. Each system could only be accessed and deployed/retrieved by the owner. The aim was to test the gear and push it to breaking point over in the UK before it was applied in the US, with the overall goal of reducing the incidents of marine mammal entanglement. There was a variety of methods that are currently being tested, although all work in a similar way. ABo noted this was early days. SR asked how it was located by a boat. MK answered by GPS. ABo said that enforcement bodies would still be able to check the gear but we'd have access in a slightly more complicated way.

At this point, ABo left the meeting.

At this point, SR left the meeting.

3.14.3 Maintenance Report and Engineering Log

This report was received by the members with thanks. The Chair thanked PRid specifically for the generator and cylinder work. PRid explained the generator had been off for 6 months, a check found sea water had caused corrosion. There should have been a device to stop backwash of water coming up the exhaust and because it is

below the water line it needed a seacock which will be added during the annual inspection. Two new valves were required, and parts were relatively cheap.

LW asked about the port engine oil pressure. PRid explained it was an ongoing issue with the port engine oil pressure being low. The oil pressure regulator valve was allowing oil to leak back and needed to be replaced. Awaiting quote for replacement of valve and cover. LW thanked PRid for a very comprehensive report and thanked him for work on the generator as it created savings.

MS commented that we'd been in touch with Goodchild Marine in relation to the boat sitting deeper in the water than expected pushing the generator exhaust just below the water line. Hoping to receive some repayments towards the modifications costs as the vessel warranty has expired.

3.15 FURTHER MEETINGS

The CEO noted the proposed date for the technical and scientific meeting was the 16th March at 10 am – agreed. The CEO confirmed the audit meeting was planned for the 4th June followed by the June technical and scientific meeting at the County Hall, Morpeth. The CEO asked members for a preferred location for the 26th Oct meeting, last year it was held at the Linskill. Members said they preferred not to use that venue again. The CEO suggested the AGM in April will be held at County Hall, the July meeting will be at Quadrant and the October meeting will be at NIFCA offices. Agreed.

The Chair noted the collection for AB is for anyone to put in and let us know if you would like to contribute towards.

3.15 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

- a) The CEO noted the consultation by the Environment Agency on the possible extension of the North East Yorkshire sea trout netting season. This was referred to the environment team who will discuss it at the next opportunity. It's a 5 week long consultation, and the possible impact/ pressure on the crustacean pot fishery needs to be considered. SL commented that all rivers trusts are against this. MS added sea trout will want to get through the net while salmon will detect the net and will go back out the net. SL commented that his CEO has footage to see how the nets operate and highlighted self-monitoring creates problems.
- b) SL confirmed both local authorities had declared climate change emergencies and asked if it had any impact on NIFCA and asked if a response was needed to that in the future. AA noted it was something to be aware of and should come into NIFCA planning. The CEO commented we have an environmental office policy Natalie Wallace worked on. The Chair commented that he would like it to be robust enough for the public domain. CSc commented climate emergency was declared last summer and the council had a report that can be sent to NIFCA. BB commented North Tyneside had declared a climate emergency but no strategy, Bristol is the only place with a strategy. The Chair asked if we could be kept updated.
- c) The Chair asked if marine engines must conform to an EU standard. PRid replied they did and will check the exact standards.
- d) SL commented Northumberland Police appointed a Marine Wildlife Officer, Paul Cullen, he's been in post for 8 months. The Chair asked if this was a full-time role.

MK believed it was (but has subsequently confirmed that it is fact not full-time) and his first role on the job was dealing with the jet ski incident on the Tyne.

- e) ES to send out login details for the member section of the website and the updated section will become live from the end of the week.
- f) The CEO asked CSe and PG to check the doodle poll for the next Joint Working Arrangement meeting in May

Finally, the Chair thanked MMO team officers for attending the meeting.

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