

## Regional Inshore Fisheries Group Network

### RIFG Chairs' Meeting Note

19<sup>th</sup> January 2021, video conference via MS Teams

Present		
Jim Watson	JW	Head of Domestic Sea Fisheries
Chloe Aird	CA	Inshore Team
Stuart Bell	SB	Inshore Team
Carole Laignel	CL	Shetland Shellfish Management Organisation (SSMO)
Simon Macdonald	SM	West Coast RIFG
Duncan MacInnes	DM	Outer Hebrides RIFG
Jennifer Mouat	JM	North and East Coast RIFG
Donald Nicholson	DN	Outer Hebrides RIFG
Kate Rydzkowski	KR	Orkney Sustainable Fisheries (OSF)

Apologies	
None	

1. Welcome and late additions to the agenda
<p>JW welcomed everyone to the first meeting of the new year, acknowledging the challenging start to the year.</p> <p>There were no requests for additional items to be added to the agenda.</p>
Actions
NA

Actions of Previous Meeting	
Action	Outcome
1. RIFG Chairs to submit Management Plans, including timelines and required resources, to Marine Scotland to be factored into next year's work plan.	Not completed. JW reminded Chairs during his update.
2. RIFG Chairs to suggest any information they would like to see from Marine Scotland Science to Inshore Team on behalf of Lynda Blackadder.	Not completed. JW reminded Chairs during his update.

Corrections to Minute of Previous Meeting
None

## 2. Marine Scotland Update

JW provided an update from Marine Scotland.

### Key points

- The fishing industry is currently facing a variety of problems caused by the pandemic, EU export issues and a poor Brexit deal. A major stumbling block with the latter is that we have given away our biggest asset – access to our fishing grounds and in the main only received additional quota for fish that we do not need in return. This has placed additional pressures on the bilateral and trilateral negotiations currently underway.
- The current consultation on additional quota ends Friday 22<sup>nd</sup> January. This has particular relevance for the inshore sector in terms of opportunities for diversification. JW thanked those who have responded to the consultation so far.
- Discussions are ongoing regarding further support for the fishing industry, with the UK government currently being pressed hard by Scottish Government.
- The Future Fisheries Management (FFM) Strategy launched on 17<sup>th</sup> December and has generated a positive response. A delivery plan is currently being completed. JW said that he would like to have a separate meeting with the Chairs to discuss the FFM and opportunities therein for the RIFG network, including:
  - Evolution of the network.
  - Modernisation of the Inshore Fleet programme.
  - Protection of juvenile/spawning areas.
  - Learning from the inshore pilots – including Arbroath.
  - Additional quota opportunities.
  - Inshore permitting/licensing.
- Marine Scotland are disappointed by the outcome of the Judicial Review and are considering the Court's decision very carefully. It is important to note that the case focused only on the assessment of a proposal for the Inner Sound of Skye, and is not related to wider inshore fisheries management matters.
- We want to support the new RIFG website as being a key resource for our stakeholders. The Chairs are encouraged to make full use of it and to liaise with CA for support.

### Feedback/questions from the Chairs:

- DMac welcomed the FFM strategy but expressed concerns about static gear proliferation inshore, noting parlour pots and technological creep as being causal factors.
- DMac expressed the desire for fishermen in the Outer Hebrides to be allowed to benefit from diversification opportunities such as the Spurdog Avoidance Scheme and the emergent fishery for Bluefin Tuna.

- DMac raised concerns for future access to inshore waters (out to 12 nm) by foreign vessels. JW responded that, despite the poor Brexit deal there is no access to these waters for non-UK vessels.
- JM agreed that management of the creel sector was key and that a nationwide strategy is called for. JW noted the desire for the RIFG network to lead the way on this and that Marine Scotland were awaiting formal proposals from both the West Coast and Outer Hebrides groups, outlining their desired approach to effort management.
- On effort management proposals, SM noted that he had a meeting with the Mull subgroup later that night and believed that the general feeling was that a maximum of 1000 creels per vessel would receive agreement.
- JM asked when outstanding issues regarding scallop management would be resolved. JW responded that meetings were taking place this week on access and opportunities.

**Actions**

1. All Chairs to feed back to SB/CA on Management Plans and 'Science Asks' for Lynda Blackadder.
2. SB/CA to arrange next Chair's meeting with focus on FFM Strategy.

**3. WCRIFG Update**

SM gave an update from the WCRIFG

**Key points:**

- Issues arising from Brexit have dominated recent work.
- Engagement is continuing with the Clyde Marine Planning Partnership with a focus on ensuring they give sufficient airtime to fishing interests.
- An outline has been received from a stakeholder detailing proposed fishing restrictions around the island of Coll. The applicant has been advised that any such proposal would need to be presented to the RIFG in the first instance.
- SM has communicated with Philippa Whitehead MP who is hoping to organise a safety at sea event, possibly in February.
- SM has been working with SB and Greg Allan from Inshore Team to outline a proposed boat-based dredging fishery for Cockles in the Solway Firth. He is currently working with the stakeholder on a written proposal.
- The recent WCRIFG video conference on Brexit issues featured a detailed presentation on procedure of catch certification for exporting shellfish by Lucy Law of Marine Scotland.
- SM attended a meeting with Fergus Ewing MSP on Friday 15<sup>th</sup> regarding exports post-Brexit in which there was discussion on a 6 month 'grace period' where bureaucracy would be suspended to allow shellfish exports to proceed.

**Actions**

1. JW requested SM to make contact with Derek Cardno co-chair of the Scottish Fishing Safety Group regarding safety at sea work.

#### 4. OHRIFG Update

Donald Nicholson and Duncan MacInnes both gave input from the OHRIFG.

##### Key points:

- OHRIFG stakeholder meetings have not yet recommenced. The primary reason for this is that they wish to have a high level meeting with the Council and Marine Scotland establishing a strategy for the Cockle fishery first. Once this has taken place, 3 stakeholder meetings around the Outer Hebrides will follow.
- OH RIFG continues to progress in a generally positive fashion:
  - 9 further REM systems are still to be allocated to vessels.
  - REM compliant inshore vessel in the vicinity of Barra are experiencing communication problems and an alternative mobile phone network is being sought to address this.
  - DMac noted that compliance with the restrictions of the pilot was critical and noted that the licence condition enabling it allowed Marine Scotland to require a vessel to install an REM system.
  - A key issue with the pilot is regulating soak time.
- The final FLAG meeting has been held with funds allocated to purchase crawfish traps now having been used to place an order.
- A portion of the fleet is tied up. The Barratlantic factory remains closed but the Macduff one is still operational.
- DN noted that the new RIFG website looked good and that they were currently considering which projects to populate it with.
- DMac noted possible market opportunities for Crab and Lobster in the Far East where there are far fewer restrictions on foreign imports.
- DMac asked when an application procedure for the EU transitional fund might be released. JW responded that there was no news on this yet.

##### Actions

1. DMac and DN to provide SB with any relevant feedback from stakeholders regarding the pilot – **Completed 20-JAN-2021.**

#### 5. SSMO Update

CL gave an update from the SSMO.

##### Key Points:

- A lengthy SSMO board meeting took place in December 2020.
- A replacement Project Officer for the Fair Isle MPA has now been retained.
- Vivier trucks made two successful visits to Shetland, returning to France without delay over the Christmas period. They have now stopped operations until at least the 24<sup>th</sup> January.

- Scallop sales are currently all for the domestic market but CL acknowledged that Far Eastern sales appeared to represent a good future strategy as exports to Hong Kong were proceeding without issue.
- Shetland's fishery for Buckie Whelks will recommence on 1<sup>st</sup> February 2021.
- Work is currently ongoing for annual reissue of the SSMO licence. This year, the packs will be coupled with a disclaimer requiring the applicant to confirm he has read and understands the terms and conditions.
- There is an upcoming stakeholder meeting regarding a possible new cable route onto Shetland being established.
- CL has a meeting at the NAFC this week regarding their annual research and development plan.
- CL also has a technical meeting this week with scallop fishermen regarding installation of REM systems as part of the Modernisation of the Inshore Fleet Programme.
- SSMO have been successful in passing their MSC Audit so retain accreditation for Brown Crab and King Scallops.

**Actions**

None

**6. OSF Update**

KR gave an update from OSF:

**Key points:**

- The FLAG had a £12K underspend after a project with Orkney Fisherman's Association didn't happen on time.
- KR has been in meetings with the council and has established a 2 year roadmap for regenerating Orkney fisheries.
- KR has been overseeing data handling for Crab and Lobster stock assessment work that has taken place around Orkney.
- It is thought that a Fisheries Implementation Plan will be necessary to ensure future sales of shellfish to large multiple retailers.
- Discussions are ongoing with Marks and Spencer who are interested in doing a 'hand caught' line of products.
- Like all areas, there are some significant challenges facing Orkney inshore fisheries at the moment. One saving grace locally is that the main processor has a large freezing capacity, lessening the impact of bottlenecked exports.
- Local creel fishermen are reporting average losses of £8K per week.

**Actions**

None

**7. NECRIFG Update**

JM gave an update from the NECRIFG

**Key points:**

- Many enquiries relating to the renewables sector are taking place at the moment, through Scotwind Leasing.
- JM updated the group on the recent Blue Marine Foundation-backed meeting regarding proposed establishment of ‘management measures’ for the Berwickshire coast. She confirmed that this organisation have been contacted advising them that the RIFG is the correct forum for discussion of such matters. The primary concern is that the project appears to have been baselined with little or no communication with the fishing industry.
- Gear conflict work is ongoing, including the ‘Aid to Navigation’ project - which is being progressed by fishermen from Whitehills – as well as the proposed geofencing project outlined for the summer squid fishery in the Moray Firth.
- JM has been involved in ProjectUK scallop and *Nephrops* working groups and said that she will share minutes and relevant documents with the group.

**Actions**

1. SB and JM to discuss ‘Foster Series’, geofencing and ‘Aid to Navigation’ on the Friday 22<sup>nd</sup> January.

**5. AOB and close**

There were no further matters for discussion raised under AOB.

JW summed up, requesting that during these challenging times, the Chairs continue to feed any relevant intelligence in to Marine Scotland.

**Actions**

None