**Outer Hebrides Regional IFG Executive Committee Meeting**

**1030 – 1330 28 June 2019**

**Committee Room 2, CNES, Stornoway**

**Minutes**

**Present**

Donald Nicholson Chairman

Duncan MacInnes Admin Support

Angus Campbell WIFA

Angie Campbell WIFA

Elaine Whyte Clyde Fishermen’s Association Tel/c

Femke de Boer Scottish White Fish Producers Tel/c

Iain Gatt Scottish Pelagic Fishermen’s Association V/c

Pete Middleton Comhairle Nan Eilean Siar

Stuart Bell Marine Scotland Policy Tel/c

Anne McLay Marine Scotland v/c

Lynda Blackadder Marine Scotland Science v/c

Iain Gatt Scottish Pelagic Fishermen’s v/c

Donald Morrison Marine Scotland Compliance

Roddy MacMinn Scottish Natural Heritage

Charlie Main Scottish Natural Heritage

Andrew Brown MacDuff Shellfish

Ali McKnight SIFIDS

**Apologies**

Diane Buchanan Marine Scotland Policy

Jo Holbrook Marine Scotland Compliance

Alasdair MacLeod CNES

Finlay MacDonald WIFA

Ali MacNeil WIFA

Ronnie MacNeil WIFA

E Whyte Clyde Fishermen’s Association

Fiona Matheson Orkney Fisheries Association

**1.** **Welcome and Introductions**

Donald Nicolson welcomed everyone to the meeting and a gave special welcome to Stuart Bell and Andrew Brown who were attending their first meeting.

**2.** **Minutes of meeting 1 February 2019 and matters arising**

The minutes of the Executive Committee of 1 February 2019 were approved by Angus Campbell and seconded by Donald Nicolson

Duncan MacInnes, Donald Morrison and Ronnie Scott, Islander Shellfish, had met with Marine Scotland officials regarding the spurdog avoidance project which had stalled due to poor data reporting by vessels in 2018. Marine Scotland officials confirmed that after speaking to DEFRA that a full 6 month reporting of daily data had to be provided before a 2 tonne monthly allocation would be released to permit commercial landing. Scottish interests had not been notified of this requirement, resulting in vessels having ceased providing data as no quota had been forthcoming when spurdog had appeared on the grounds.

The Sheigra was the only remaining vessel of the original 4 still fishing in the Minches during the winter months. The Comrade had indicated they wished to join the project as did a Clyde based vessel. DEFRA has not given permission for any additional vessels to join the project until the 2019 reporting data of the Sheigra is fully documented as per conditions on the project. Daily data from the Sheigra has been sent via the Orkney PO, with a gap in returns in late summer due to the skipper being off work due to illness, with relief skipper not making nil daily returns.

Less vessels participated in wrasse fishery due to some salmon producers purchasing reduced volumes, this should be reflected in less values in overall Western Isles landings.

An application for a pilot project between CNES and Galson Estate had been submitted to the Crown Estate for an area to the West of Lewis with regards to management of possible renewables had now progressed to the next stage of the process.

Meeting of Pot Limitation pilot had been held.

An application for funding for cockle surveys for 4 beaches had been prepared and sent to FLAG. Marine Scotland’s IT systems would have to be enhanced to accommodate provision for non-vessel cockle landings.

Meeting with local stakeholders to discuss management of Sound of Barra had not proceeded due to skippers fishing away on mainland on arranged date.

**3.** **Chairman’s Report**

Chairman had attended an MPA Stakeholders Meeting in Edinburgh with a further meeting expected in the autumn, which would provide further information on priority marine features outwith MPA. It was clear that many areas on the West Coast would be recommended for further closures to mobile gear methods.

Chair had attended the IFG’s Chairs meeting in Edinburgh in March when discussions on progress with current Management Plan was discussed. The Outer Hebrides having progressed with the original plan and in the process of completing outstanding matters.

He had attended the IFMAC meeting with minutes attached to papers.

He had attended a recent meeting of the Council Fisheries Joint Consultative Committee when detailed discussions on future Marine Designations around the Outer Hebrides and the National Discussion Paper on the Future of Fisheries Management in Scotland had taken place, with detailed responses having been sent from CNES to bother consultation papers.

Chair had attended a West Coast open meeting in Glasgow to discuss the National Discussion Paper on the Future of Fisheries Management in Scotland which had been chaired by Alan Gibb. Most of industry had been supportive of the matters raised within the discussion paper.

**4. FINAL UPDATE ON SIFIDS PROJECT**

Ali McKnight gave a final update on SIFDS project which was due for completion by end of October. progress. AMK gave a summary of recent updates from some of the work packages, this is noted below.

* Vessel track analysis (WP8) –trialled using static gear vessels involving GPS reporting with some validation by observers, with 96% accuracy in predicting fishing location and 60% accuracy in effort prediction.
* On board data collection system (WP2A*)* – 14 vessels fitted with cameras and trackers for nearly a year, with collected data contribution to online visualization tool
* On-board laser crab and lobster scanner (WP2B*)* – laser scanner used was found to be 95% accurate in determining the sex, size and species of catch in less than one minute. Further development of this technology could be used in carrying out stock assessments.
* Electronic data submission (WP5) – mobile app. was designed to submit FISH1 form electronically. Had the ability to record wildlife sightings and vessel track information.

The SIFIDs team were keen to disseminate findings at future fisheries association meetings or port events to share the project results more widely with industry. A newsletter and a number of short videos would be prepared with the final report shared after sign off from Marine Scotland.

Chairman thanked Ali for her presentation with IFG keen to assist Team with further industry

**5. DISCUSSION ON FUTURE OF FISHERIES MANAGEMENT IN SCOTLAND**

Scottish Government keen to engage with stakeholders which could result in better management and greater integration of stakeholders into decision-making processes. Possible increased roles for public sector bodies including local authorities, with some local authorities already involved in community quota schemes within Islands locations. Government keen to provide clarity on which stakeholders should be engaged in relation to each issue. Specific role for Regional IFGs in some areas.

Member considered the importance of this National Discussion Paper and were keen to see the Scottish industry prosper and achieve a fair and proportionate access to any increased opportunities available to a new Coastal State out to 200 miles.

**Local Management**

Members supportive of consideration being given for RIFG’s to take a more formal role and region expanded to 12 nautical miles to being compatible with Marine Planning Partnerships.

**Delivering Confidence and Accountability**

Members supportive of REM applicable to all vessels, with systems being proportionate to methods fished and impact on seabed.

**INTERNATIONAL**

**International Negotiations, Future Coastal State Negotiations and Future Relationship with the EU and other Countries**

The UK Government to operate in partnership and not as sole arbiter as was currently the case. In any scenario of a UK Coastal State, Scotland to have leading role in stocks that are dominant in Scottish waters and in relation to access to Scottish waters by foreign vessels. Closer involvement by stakeholders within the negotiating delegation brings advantages but also many challenges, not least the requirement for collective support required around any final decisions taken. Stakeholder representatives will want to consider how this situation can best be managed.

 **ESTABLISHING FISHING OPPORTUNITIES**

 **A Science Based Approach to Setting Quota**

Managing fishing stocks towards MSY was considered to be sensible provided a sensible timetable was set to conserve and sustain future stocks.

**Data Limited Stocks**

Sources to be divert for science, data collection and analysis towards targeted data limited stocks to strengthen assessments in the future. Members had been supportive of SIFIDS project and would support recommendations to assist improved data for inshore fisheries to further improve science.

**TAC vs Effort**

TACs had worked reasonably well as the primary method of managing most fish stocks

Any future quotas systems would have to reflect variations between inshore and offshore fisheries especially shellfish fisheries, with need for possible community linkage for inshore areas. The value attached to existing white fish and pelagic quota was making it impossible for new entrants to get access to those stocks.

The razor fish permit pilot had been innovative by restricting daily landings and allocating a maximum number of annual fishing days with no value attached to either and had worked well for localized inshore stocks.

**Quota Management System**

Members were supportive of Producers Organisation’s and their current community roles but saw a need for more community engagement in more distinct localities with a possible role for RIFG and Local Authorities where support and demand existed.

**Fishing Opportunities after Brexit**

Access to additional quota opportunities following Brexit could be used to incentivize new entrants.

TAC shares to reflect zonal attachment, as an independent Coastal State could further provide new fishing opportunities for the devolved fleet.

A bid for an allocation of blue fin tuna could be used in the first instance on a catch and release basis to enhance social and economic returns to coastal communities and marine tourism.

**Making the Most of Scottish Fishing Opportunities**

White fish and pelagic members urged caution on insisting too much economic linkage to landings into Scotland. Vessels restricted to catching quota within specific months with buyers very selective in ensuring high quality of fish landed. Japanese buyers would not purchase mackerel caught in February, therefore pressure for heavier landings being made in January.

Whilst most shellfish was landed into Scotland an increasing number of Scottish vessels now landing brown crab into EU ports.

**Future Catching Policy**

Government to support the landing obligation which has to reflective the complexity of mixed fisheries. However, industry has to accept that to achieve sustainability of fish stocks discarding of good quality fish must cease.

Locally IFG is promoting the development of low impact selective fishing methods which will enable a sector of the fleet to diversify from high dependency on shellfish.

**ACCESS TO FISHING**

 **Fishing Capacity**

The restructuring of the pelagic sector should be considered carefully amongst that segment of the fleet, to reflect creation of specific licences to match to additional quota opportunities.

Any additional licences or quota allocated to new entrants, would be retained by Government, and would have to have to be backed by sound science that they would not have negative impact on sustainable stock levels.

**INSHORE**

**The Inshore Fisheries Strategy**

Government would consider introducing a significant low-impact trial that will separate mobile activity from static gear and recreational users and in doing so we will further consider the merits of specific zones where mobile gear bottom contact fishing will not be permitted.

Government would consider suspending or permanently removing licences from vessels who persistently damage static gear and would support possible seasonal zoning.

**Inshore Legislation**

Scottish Government will support an inshore fisheries bill, prior to the EU referendum, and incorporate this into wider fisheries legislation, ensuring the principle of free movement of vessel around the coast.

**Reactive Inshore Fisheries Management**

Scottish Government will introduce a distinct licence or permit system to better regulate fishing activity within the Scottish 12 nautical mile zone, to sit alongside current licences.

**FUNDING**

Members were supportive of continued industry support along current EU grant guidelines which had assisted all sectors of the industry, science and research, along with training initiatives.

This was considered more appropriate that being offered loans which can be offered by commercial lenders, in many cases at cheaper rates than can be offered by government agencies.

The UK Shared Prosperity Fund should be devolved to being considered at a more local level as with existing CLLD.

MacDuff Shellfish, Barratlantic Ltd, Kallin Shellfish and Kilbride Shellfish had all contributed to assisting younger fishermen in acquiring newer vessels by offering interest free loans in exchange for guaranteed supplies. The local industry could not have progressed without significant input made by the processing sector.

**LABOUR**

Access to skilled labour had been difficult for Scottish vessels over a number of years, in particular, on inshore grounds since the loss of access to non-EU Nationals. Industry supportive that the UK Government should introduce a new work permit system or restore the previous visa extension scheme.

New ILO 188 Regulations now require signed Work Agreements monitored by MCA Surveyors, so will ensure that fair wage and good conditions aboard are maintained.

A breakthrough had to be made to enable access to seasonal labour in the fishing industry along similar lines to that granted to the agriculture sector.

**INNOVATION, SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY**

Good cooperation was required amongst science players, with increasing institutions becoming involved in the marine environment. Essential survey , stock assessments and improved data collection would continue to be required. Continued funding support was necessary to ensure that sound independent science was available to cover different stocks.

Members welcomed the opportunity to comment on such a wide ranging high policy discussion paper and it was expected that a further consultation paper would be available for consideration by the end of the year.

**6. POT LIMITATION PILOT**

Members considered the note of the Pot Limitation Sub-Group meeting held on 1 June 2019 and supported the way forward in progressing the pilot project.

The current list of under 10 metre vessels to have completed FISH 1 Forms indicating having fished in the pilot area was being checked manually as it was evident that some errors existed in the lat/long data input which remained the same for each day. It was estimated that up to an estimated 140 vessels could be eligible whilst the number of over 10 metre vessels would have to be checked based on local information, but could be in the region of a further 10 plus eligible vessels.

The preferred option for restricting numbers of vessels in the area would be a licence condition indicating access only to vessels that had previously operated in the pilot area or replacement vessels purchased by owners that had previously fished in the area.

Consideration could be given to new entrants applying through the CNES/RBS Fisheries Investment Scheme, during the 2 - year pilot, due to the ageing profile of many current vessel owners.

Members agreed that vessels should be monitored on number of gear used with technology that had been trialed through the SIFIDS project, as part of the £1.5M modernization of the Scottish fleet, rather than the costs involved in using a tagging system.

Marine Scotland officials were confident that equipment had been used as part of the pilot aboard static gear vessels could be developed to monitor pots numbers hauled aboard vessels based on number of fleets hauled.

Members suggested that each fleet should have a maximum number of pots depending on vessel size. Vessels exceeding such numbers could be monitored by numbers hauled between fleet ends. Smaller vessels would have a smaller maximum number of pots per fleet to reflect a standard number of vessel size.

Introduction of the Marking of Gear Legislation was necessary as part of the compliance requirements for the project, with an earliest expected implementation date of January 2020 now anticipated.

Agreed maximum pots numbers for all gears were as follows:

• ‹ 8 metre – 800 pots

• 8 – 10 metres - 1,200 pots

• 10 – 12 metres – 1,500 pots

• › 12 metres – 1,800 pots

Clarification on the eastern boundary line which had been amended to reflect the boundary for the Outer Hebrides Regional Marine Plan, would be required so that everyone involved in the project was aware of the boundary line.

A risk based approach would be undertaken on the final list of vessels involved in the project identifying vessels most likely to be operating at maximum pot limits.

Industry to suggest maximum number of pots to be used per fleet based on vessel length banding, to ease compliance of pots per fleet and numbers of fleet hauled by each vessel.

**Actions:**

* **Finalise list of under 10 metre vessels**
* **Finalise list of over 10 metre vessels**
* **Industry agree maximum number of pots per fleet**
* **Identify high risk vessels**
* **Consider appropriate technology for vessels**
* **Marking of gear legislation**
* **Appropriate licence condition for participating vessels**

**7. CONSULTATION ON FUTURE MPAs**

Marine Scotland had just recently launched consultation on three potential designated areas within the inshore waters of the Outer Hebrides.

The potential annual average loss in value of landings for the commercial fisheries sector was Shiant East Bank £30K - £50K, Sea of Hebrides £2K - £4K and North East Lewis can’t be disclosed as data refers to less than 5 vessels.

**Shiant East Bank** (conservation features of circalittoral sands and mixed sediment communities, northern sea fan and sponge communities, shelf banks and mounds)

Exact lat/long coordinates had not been included in the consultation paper and skippers had been unable to provide catch value returns for the proposed Shiant East Bank area, In addition, they had been asked to provide coordinates of their tracks in that general area to ascertain exactly where they fished.

Alasdair MacLeod, CNES, and Duncan MacInnes had discussed with both Mairi Gougeon, Environment Minister and Michael MacLeod the possibility of amending boundaries of the Shiant East Bank, Any amendment to be based on economic need for continuation with no impact on features to be protected and linked to enhanced monitoring on such vessels.

**North East Lewis** (conservation features of Risso’s dolphin and sandeels);

Area was extensively fished by nephrop trawlers, seasonal white fish trawlers, scallopers and static gear vessels targeting brown and velvet crab and lobster. There was no longer any directed sandeel fishery in the Cellar Head to Butt of Lewis area. The trialing of fish traps for vessels that fished that area on a seasonal basis coupled with a vessel using white fish jigging machines.

Sea of the Hebrides (conservation features Basking shark, minke whale).

Area extensively fished by a large number of both local and visiting vessels targeting , nephrops, shellfish, white fish and pelagic species on a seasonal basis. Vessels in this large area operate a wide range of fishing methods and economic loss to vessels could be higher depending on future management of the site.

Drift netting for herring and netting for crawfish had been pursued within the proposed site and this could increase in future years depending on access to quota and high prices for crawfish. Proposed management measures would prohibit use of current methods being pursued for catching those species.

Members noted that those should be highlighted in any response to illustrate that the economic impact did not accurately reflect the commercial fishing trends in the area.

**Action:**

* **Shiant East Bank skippers responses sent to Marine Scotland with regards to amended chart and economic values**

Charlie Main said that the MarPAMM Partners had agreed a Terms of Reference and would be engaging with communities in discussing overall management of sites, would be monitoring research and would be actively engaged with the Regional IFG. She would be based at Lews Castle College and engaging with the other partners, CNES, SNH, Marine Scotland and WWF.

**8. SPURDOG AVOIDANCE SCHEME**

A meeting had been held with Marine Scotland to discuss whether it would be practical to pursue the spurdog avoidance scheme for 2019. Confusion over length of reporting periods of data for a 6 month period had never been explained to those involved in the project, resulting in vessels ceasing to provide data in 2018 due to no provision of quota being available from CEFAS scientists.

The skipper od the only vessel still remaining in the project agreed to continue providing data for 2019 in the expectation that they would be allocated quota once they have provided 6 months data with previous years being taken into account within the 6 month period.

Another local vessel plus a Clyde based vessel had agreed to provide data although it was unsure whether DEFRA would permit further vessels to join the project.

Members noted large shoals of large female spurdog being reported by anglers fishing inshore waters to the West of the Hebrides. They noted numbers increasing year on year.

**9. FISH TRAP TRIALS**

The fish trap project had been submitted for FLAG funding after an agent in Grimsby had been located that could source fish traps from Sweden. Prof Paul Fernandes, Aberdeen University, would oversee students from the University who would undertake an evaluation of the project.

Around 8 local static gear vessels would use up to 8 traps at different geographical locations to the West of the Hebrides from the Butt of Lewis to Barra.

The project would compliment the Fishing Innovation Scotland project which was looking at the use of fish traps, being undertaken by a larger white fish trawler, in more offshore and deeper waters to the West of the Hebrides.

Marine Scotland would have to approve the application once it had been considered locally.

Members were supportive of this diversification project which if successful could take effort from inshore shellfish and develop a new local market for high quality white fish.

**10. IFMAC MEETING**

The last IFMAC Meeting had been held in Edinburgh on 31 May 2019:

**Inshore Fleet Modernisation Programme** - including installation of Monitoring systems aboard all Scottish vessels depending on risk associated with methods used, scallop vessels followed by trawlers being fitted first. Members welcomed this initiative whilst stressing that that such systems should result in improved zoning in reduction in size of future areas that required to be closed to protect marine features.

**Value of Fishing to Coastal Communities -** Hannah Fennell, presented her current work on the quantification and qualification of the social impacts on coastal communities. Her work should form drivers for considerationwhen new government policies are being developed.

**Marine & Offshore Renewable Energy in Inshore Fisheries -** David Pratt (MS Marine Planning and Policy) provided an update on the Marine and Offshore Renewable Energy team’s current programme of work. An area that would have implications in the North Minch was the fishing area know as Clash where considerable seasonal nephrops trawl fisheries occurred, this did not seem to be reflected in values attributed to that area. The importance of vessels having good economic data for proposed areas, in particular, high returns from short seasonal fisheries within areas.

**Future of Fisheries Management in Scotland** - there was widespread support for most the measures raised in the paper with separate industry presentations. A further consultation paper would be issued later in the year based on the responses received to the discussion paper.

**Marine Conservation and Marine Protected Areas** – members noted that further designations would result in further displacement of effort resulting in increasing effort in areas already considered to being fully exploited and suggested that modern technology available should be reduced the need for larger area currently fished being closed.

**11. OUTER HEBRIDES FLAG UPDATE**

Pete gave an update on spend to date of FLAG budget of £528K with 8 projects valued at £240K having been approved. A further 6 applications of Expression of Interest had been approved valued at £181K. A number of other applications had been submitted and were being assessed, including a possible blue fin tuna tagging project and if all were approved a total budget spend would be achieved.

**12. Date of Next Meeting**

Chairman thanked everyone for their attendance and noted the next meeting would be in late autumn 2019 and closed meeting at 1330.

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|  |  |  |  | Project | EMFF CLLD Grant | **EMFF CLLD Grant** | Employment |
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|  |  |  | Boatyard | £25,680 | £12,840 | £6,166 | 2.0 |
|  |  |  | Castlebay Pontoon Development Phase 2 | £432,519 | £90,000 | £90,000 | 0.5 |
|  |  |  | Short Boat Trips | £58,330 | £19,330 | £18,694 | 2.0 |
|  |  |  | Isle of Harris Sea Tours | £406,160 | £44,000 | £25,000 | 1.5 |
|  |  |  | Uist Sea Tours | £125,470 | £40,000 | £40,000 | 1.0 |
|  |  |  | Mingulay Boat Trips | £52,964 | £22,964 | £21,846 | 1.0 |
|  |  |  | Lochboisdale Marine Fuel | £59,759 | £29,880 | £29,880 | 0.0 |
|  |  |  | £1,160,882 | £259,014 | £231,586 | 8.0 |
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|  |  |  | Gear Storage/harbour development - Leverburgh | £63,000 | £63,000 | £63,000 | 2.0 |
|  |  |  | Gear Storage/harbour development - Vatersay | £40,000 | £40,000 | £40,000 | 0.5 |
|  |  |  | Fish trap trial | £41,000 | £41,000 | £41,000 | 0.5 |
|  |  |  | Boatyard expansion | £93,000 | £46,500 | £46,500 | 3.0 |
|  |  |  | Aquaculture work boat | £65,000 | £32,500 | £32,500 | 1.0 |
|  |  |  | Selective jig fishing | £16,992 | £8,496 | £8,496 | 0.5 |
|  |  |  |  | £318,992 | £231,496 | £231,496 | 7.5 |
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|  |  |  | Aquaculture workboat | £900,000 | £100,000 | £100,000 |  |
|  |  |  | Kallin Harbour Development | £40,000 | £40,000 | £30,000 |  |
|  |  |  | Trout smoking/processing | £104,500 | £52,250 | £52,250 |  |
|  |  |  | (directed to mainstream EMFF funding) |  |  |  |  |

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