

North and East Coast Regional Inshore Fisheries Group meeting

Minute of Meeting 24th January

Macdonald Norwood Hall Hotel, Aberdeen

1. Alastair McNeill introduced himself as Chair of the West Coast Regional Inshore Fisheries Group (WCRIFG). He said he would be chairing the North and East Coast Regional Inshore Fisheries Group (NECRIFG) on this occasion but that Jennifer Mouat would chair future meetings. He welcomed the group and invited all present to identify themselves.

Attendees		
Diane Buchanan	DB	Marine Scotland
Alastair McNeill	AMcN	National Regional Fisheries Group (RIFG) Coordinator
Simon Macdonald	SM	WCRIFG
Jennifer Mouat	JM	NECRIFG
Stuart Bell	SB	Marine Scotland
Anne McLay	AM	Marine Scotland Science
Lynda Blackadder	LB	Marine Scotland Science
Barry Smith	BS	Marine Scotland Compliance
Selena Henderson	SH	Marine Scotland Compliance
Michael McLeod	MMc	Marine Scotland Conservation
Stephen Stanulis	SS	Dunbar Fisherman's Association
Albert Ritchie	AR	North and East Creel & Line Fishermen's Association
Charlie Hill	CH	
Charles Milne	CM	Whitehills Inshore Fishermen's Association
William West	WW	
Alex Wiseman	AW	Scottish Pelagic Fishermen's Association Ltd.
David Whyte	DW	Rosehearty Harbour Inshore Fishermen's Association
David Whyte	DW	
Gordon Pattison	GP	
Chris Anderson	CA	
Ian Mathieson	IM	Aberdeenshire Inshore Fishermen's Association
Edwin Flett	EF	Moray Firth Inshore Fishermen's Association
Billy Wood	BW	Fishermen's Mutual Association F.M.A (Pittenweem)
David Anderson	DA	Aberdeen Fish Producer's Organisation (AFPO)
Daniel Sutherland	DS	
Hamish McPherson	HM	Scottish Whitefish Producer's Organisation (SWFPA)
Ryan Costen	RC	
John Swankie	JS	
Bob Teviotdale	BT	Arbroath and Montrose Static Gear Association
Richard Hamilton	RH	
Andrew Whiston	AW	St. Andrews Fisherman's Association

Kenny Coull	KC	Scottish Fishermen's Federation (SFF)
Elena Balestri	EB	SFF
Femke de Boer	FdB	SWFPA
Bill Wiseman	BW	SWFPA
Malcolm Morrison	MM	Anglo Scottish Fishermen's Federation
Malcolm Fraser	MF	
Roger May	RM	Marine Scotland Science
Sophie Humphries	SH	Marine Scotland
John McAlister	JM	John MacAlister (Oban) Ltd.
Robert Souter	RS	
Foster Gault	FG	SWFPA
Ian Fletcher	IF	
Monica Fundingsland	MF	Equinor
Eddie Shearer	ES	
Peter Sinclair	PS	
Donald Anderson	DA	
Jack Dale	JD	Vessel owner / registered buyer
Helen Downie	HD	Marine Scotland

Apologies

George West	
Sandy Ritchie	

Actions of Previous Meeting

Action	Outcome
SB to investigate previous system of recording V-notched lobsters with Compliance	Readout obtained from Compliance colleagues. Briefed the group that while V notch clippers were still being distributed by Fishery Offices the process of recording had discontinued as a result of the fact that the fleet had, over time, ceased submitting them.
DB to identify early adopters groups.	Work on this front is ongoing. SB reiterated to the group during the meeting that we are actively encouraging groups to come forward.
AM to determine existing guidance on acoustic deterrent devices.	MS LOT have advised they aren't aware of any measures other than the requirement to obtain a licence through EPS.

1. Marine Scotland update from Diane Buchanan

Paper: *NECRIFG Newsletter January 2020*

DB gave an update from Marine Scotland on matters including, JM as new Chair, an update on the now completed procurement process for Modernisation of the

Inshore Fleet (MotIF), ongoing gear conflict initiatives, Commercial Fisheries Working Groups, Inshore Fisheries Pilots and the forthcoming RIFG web platform.

Main points

- MM asked for a newsletter to accompany DB's brief to be taken off the table as he said he had not seen it beforehand. DB requested the Chair to make an intervention. AMcN asked whether there were any objections to DB continuing with her Update Report as per the agenda. No objections were received and DB continued.
- DB asked the group to come forward with suggestions for what they would like to see in future newsletters and what would help them out. CA asked that the scale of the charts be adapted to enable different species to be identifiable. FG asked that squid be added to the list of species data.
- A contractor has been appointed for the MotIF Programme and the scallop dredge sector will be fitted-out first. An official announcement is to be made soon.
- Gear conflict policy continues to evolve through a range of work streams.
- The Forth and Tay and Moray Firth Commercial Fisheries Working Groups sat in Edinburgh and Aberdeen respectively that week.
- Arbroath and Montrose Inshore Fisheries Pilot, remains a potential for the Group.
- JM introduced herself as the new Chair of the NECRIFG.
- It was agreed that the new Chair would help with the issuing of papers ahead of future meetings.

Actions

2. Marine Protected Area (MPA)/Priority Marine Feature (PMF) Engagement with Industry (MMc)

Paper: *Pre Consultation Engagement with Fisheries Stakeholders on Management Measures for MPA and PMF.*

MMc briefed the group on how Marine Scotland were developing measures for a second phase of MPAs, following the first phase that was delivered in 2016. Alongside this Marine Scotland was also developing measures for the 11 most vulnerable PMFs. Pre consultation on is currently ongoing with a range of

stakeholder events catering to the significant concerns being raised by stakeholders.

Areas in the Moray Firth, Firth of Tay and May Isle are being considered and refined through workshops and stakeholder engagement. MMc indicated that his team were happy to set up meetings with anyone affected by the proposals, and that there was scope for refinement based on fisher's knowledge.

Main points

- The proposed MPAs include prohibitions on gill nets and set nets because of their capacity to pose a hazard for cetaceans such as bottlenose dolphins.
- AW indicated that his members might wish to pursue a winter cod fishery and asked whether the proposed area might be refined to take account of this.
- JM said that he felt a huge area had been taken over – potentially wiping out the inshore fishing industry. He said that, on the west coast there are fishermen who have not managed to make a pay so far this year and that he wished scientific evidence for these proposals to be shared.
- HM raised the possibility of a sprat fishery being trialled in the Moray Firth where trawling was still allowed.
- KC asked whether sustainable fishing operations would be allowed in areas clear of the PMFs. MMc said yes, indicating that that was the point of this level of stakeholder engagement to strike the right balance between ongoing activity and protection of the environment.
- FG asked whether future effects of MPA designation had been considered beforehand. MMc responded that Marine Scotland undertakes sustainability appraisals which estimates environmental and economic effects for all of the MPA related projects.
- There will be a socio-economic report on the impact of first phase of MPA measures completed this year (AM).
- Regarding the 'other two' options originally presented at the pre consultation workshop, MMc said that Ministers would make a decision on whether these remain under consideration or not once the pre-consultation meetings were completed.
- There was discussion regarding the use of specific fishing gears in certain areas - for example set nets along the north coast. There is almost

certainly no such activity there. Those provisions are being included to guard against such fisheries starting up in the future.

- MMc acknowledged that if a fishermen could produce a track record of activity in a given area, this would be taken into consideration when refining areas. JM added that, in his experience, when fishermen supplied data to support their activities it was often used against them.
- JD said he believed the fishing industry should take account of and support the findings of scientists.
- If fishermen wish to develop new fisheries there will be a means for them to apply and if Marine Scotland can satisfy themselves that there are no adverse environmental effects – they could potentially be allowed.

Actions

- Current regulations on Gill nets to be added to the agenda for next meeting (SB).

3. Sectorial Marine Plan for Offshore Wind Energy – Consultation (SH)

Paper: Consultation on the Draft Sectoral Marine Plan for Offshore Wind: Information for the Fishing Industry (Embargoed at present time).

The Marine Plan for Offshore Wind Energy seeks to maximise offshore development potential while minimising the impact on fishing, in so doing contributing to the UK climate change targets. It relates to commercial developments of > 100 megawatts.

The draft plan details areas of search which were whittled down to a revised set by February 2019. Many areas were eliminated due to the scale of their probable impact on fishing. Ultimately there are 17 options within the draft plan, totalling 14.65 km², but of those, only a couple will be taken forward. SH stressed the proposed areas are not a done deal and stakeholders are invited to get in touch to discuss issues arising.

All draft documents and a sustainability appraisal are available online. A programme of public consultation events is also planned.

Main points

- DA observed that the data used on the deployment of demersal gear was quite old (2009-2013) and that the grounds in question had since been fished for good returns of haddock. SH said that the data shown was just a snapshot and a wider set was available to them.
- RS queried whether the Marine Coastguard Agency (MCA) requirement to have a 5 mile corridor between wind turbines would result in the proposed areas growing in size. SH advised that that would be appraised via project-level assessment.
- RM suggested there was potential for 3 consultation projects but that stakeholders needed to take them seriously and submit their data for consideration.
- There was general agreement among fishermen present that they are concerned about being listened to.
- There are no legal constraints on fishing close to wind turbines except during the constructions phase (RM).
- Now the Commercial Fishing Working Groups are set up, Marine Scotland are keen to look at the impact on individual fishermen.
- It would be good to see a map of all the groups that had been denied to fishermen via various initiatives like environmental protection, offshore wind and the oil industry combined (FG).
- MCA comment on hazards to navigation but they do not consider things on the seabed that are a danger to towed gear (MM).
- It was raised that the plans do not include cable routes. Cable routes are determined by the National Grid and, as such, not known at this point. They necessitate Crown Estate leasing.

Actions

- AMcN/JM to check if a cumulative map of sea use denying ground to fishing exists.

4. Fisheries Trial for Hywind Test Site (MF)

There is currently a lot of interest surrounding the use of floating wind turbines as a quicker to establish, less invasive system. The Hywind test site has been

established, trialling 5 6 megawatt floating turbines, aiming to determine what can be learned from this technology. Fisheries Innovation Scotland wishes enlist vessels in helping to trial fishing activity in and around the site.

Main points

- CA indicated that he fished creels in the area while the site was being constructed and that his autopilot system was affected by the installation.
- BT said that the site anchor lines are far-reaching and may take up more area than turbines that are sunk into the seabed. MF acknowledged that the anchor points were 800 to 1000 meters away.
- The Buchan deeps is a traditionally rich haddock ground. Most modern trawlers are 25 – 30 meters long and so from a safety point of view would not wish to go anywhere near the turbines.

Actions

5. Harmonised Cooperation of Mobile and Static Sectors in the North East (FG)

Paper: *Gear Conflict: Industry-led Proposal for Inshore Fisheries Group.*

FG presented on the initiative to promote cooperation between mobile and static fishing sectors. On behalf of Scallop Industry Consultation Group (SICG) and SWFPA he has carried out 3 meetings in the last 6 months aimed at cooperation between fishermen.

In Fraserburgh an agreement is close to being reached and will hopefully be concluded next week. In February 2020 discussion with the Arbroath fishermen will be picked up.

Put simply the meetings aim to agree a date when the dredge fleet will enter an area and a date when they will leave. FG is hoping that, in the future both, a penalty scheme and a compensation scheme can be developed with Marine Scotland.

Main points

- In response to a question from RH, FG confirmed that the initiative was not restricted to large nomadic dredgers and that he had no wish for small scallop vessels to be pushed out of their native grounds.
- CA stated that at a meeting in Fraserburgh before Christmas there were 'quite a few boats' not in agreement with FG's proposals.
- IM said that until your members answer for what has already been done, agreement won't be reached. You are asking us to get into an agreement that you yourselves have repeatedly broken over the last 16 years. FG responded that he was trying to make sure such conflict did not happen again in the future.
- AR stated that his members were broadly in agreement with FG and did not want to be included in IM's statements.
- It was raised that Fergus Ewing had stated that the Scottish Government would impose spatial separation measures if the inshore fishing sector could not 'get along'. SB answered that spatial separation was included in our Future of Fisheries Management Discussion paper and was already being trialled via our Inshore Fisheries Pilots. FG's initiative is an industry led initiative to encourage cooperation between sectors.

Actions

6. American Lobster

Paper: *American Lobster Paper RIFG Meeting 24 01 20*

SB gave a brief on concerns that escapees of American Lobster (*Homarus americanus*) are coming into contact with stocks of native lobster, representing potential problems with interbreeding, predation and spread of disease.

Marine Scotland will soon be launching a leaflet campaign on this matter and were looking to capture live examples of American lobster caught by stakeholders. Marine Scotland are hoping to roll out 'sampling kits' to local Fishery Offices.

Main points

- JD noted that he used to come across quite a few American lobster and had even seen suspected hybrids in the distant past but that sightings were now increasingly rare.
- AW noted that his members had seen no signs of American lobster in their catches.

Actions

6. A.O.C.B.

- MM asked whether the survey work commissioned by St Andrews University on fishing industry infrastructure will be extended around the coast.
- HM raised the matter of large twin rig vessels breaching the '300 HP' line agreed by the fleet in 2016 to keep bigger trawlers out of the inner Moray Firth. There have been a recent allegations of this being breached and HM asked to see something imposed that was enforceable as opposed to the current voluntary agreement.
- FG raised the ongoing matter of identifying Early Adopter Groups for the Modernisation of the Inshore Fleet Programme. SB advised him that we wished such groups of stakeholders to make themselves known to us.

Actions

- AM/JM to set up local liaison meeting on HM's issue in the Moray Firth.

Meeting adjourned. JM to liaise with ground on time and location of next meeting.