

Regional Inshore Fisheries Group Network

RIFG Chairs' Future Fisheries Management (FFM) Strategy Meeting Note

31st March 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
Helen Downie	HD	Inshore Team
Sebastian Delamarre	SD	International (Demersal) 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	
<p>JW welcomes the group, noting that this was a return to our regular update format following our last meeting which was to discuss the Future Fisheries Management Strategy (FFM).</p>	
Actions	
None.	
Actions of Previous Meeting	
Action	Outcome
1.	

Corrections to Minute of Previous Meeting
Completed prior to finalisation.

2. Marine Scotland Update

JW gave an update from Marine Scotland, including:

- The up-coming pre-election period
- That the Sea Fisheries Resilience Fund was now closed
- Negotiations post-Brexit were still ongoing
- Marine Scotland are working towards their Future Fisheries Management implementation plan
- Thanks to the Chairs for their support in Mr Ewing’s recent meetings with industry, which heard common concerns over:
 - The economic outlook for the fishing industry
 - The expanding MPA network
 - Remote Electronic Monitoring
 - Calls for a 3 Mile Limit

Actions

1. None

3. Update from NECRIFG

JM gave an update from the NECRIFG.

Key points:

- The year has started with quite a few reports of gear conflict.
- Work is being picked up on identifying voluntary agreements for temporal and spatial separation of mobile and static gear fishers along the NE coast – nothing has been finalised yet.
- JM gave an update on the proposed pilot project utilising Geofencing in the Burghead – Gamie area.
- JM said that she was currently engaged in a lot of work arising from renewable energy developments at sea and interactions with the fishing industry were difficult.

Feedback and questions:

- DN and DMac noted the existence of local agreements around the Outer Hebrides.
- SB gave a general update on gear conflict mitigation measures from the Marine Scotland side.
- SM noted serious instances of alleged gear conflict in the Clyde including creels being dumped in trawl lanes wrapped in barbed wire.

- JW said that we understood the Modernisation Programme was not a 'silver bullet' but that with it we would work towards improving interactions at sea.

Actions

1. None.

4. Update from OSF

KR gave an update from OSF.

Key points:

- Orkney have established a Marine Planning Partnership which KR is on the board of and requested direction as to what the RIFG network should seek to draw out of this relationship.
- JW responded that the RIFG should be the voice of the fishing industry on Marine Planning issues.
- There have been a few issues relating to unmarked gear reported, involving both the aquaculture industry and creel fishing.
- DMac agreed with generally poor practices in the aquaculture sector - involving marking of anchors, feed pipes, derelict equipment etc.
- SM noted that the Aquaculture Sub Group recently discussed this same issue.
- KR noted the importance of ensuring navigational information was correct for aquaculture sight licences. CL agreed this issue, saying that there had been a situation in Shetland where the council had plans submitted where the sites were illustrated as in completely the wrong location.

Actions

None.

5. Update from WC RIFG

SM gave an update from the WCRIFG.

Key Points:

- SM recently met with Douglas Ross regarding issues in the Solway Firth, with Crown Estate Scotland regarding aquaculture navigational and entanglement issues and with MarPAMM regarding raising awareness of the fishing industry.
- SM was invited onto Brexit workgroup along with Seafood Scotland.

- Fishers are reporting issues with having insufficient funds to update and repair vessels and replace safety gear.
- The decision has been taken for the Creel Working Group to become national for the RIFG network.
- There are stakeholder reports that the OH Pilot is displacing creel fishing activity into Gairloch and Loch Broom. DMac responded that he did not think such displacement was credible.
- JM agreed collaboration on creel effort control and requested to see views received from stakeholders on this so far.
- JW said that gear limitation and effort control was a key area of work for Marine Scotland right now.
- JW said that we would progress with the intention of moving the RIFG remit out to 12 NM.
- HD gave a brief overview of current Marine Scotland initiatives in the area of marine litter and end of life fishing gear.

Actions

None

6. Update from SSMO

CL gave an update from the SSMO.

Key points:

- SSMO are currently in the process of issuing annual licence renewals.
- There are currently lots of shared marine space issues around Shetland with BT laying fibre optic cables and tidal array plans in Yell Sound.
- CL has recently been present on an REM technical meeting with Marine Scotland and local scallop dredge fishers.
- The SSMO have handed out a 2 week ban to a licence holder for breach of the seasonal Buckie Whelk closure.
- There is currently lots of unrest among the stakeholder network regarding allocation of SSMO licences.

Actions

None

7. Update from OH RIFG

DN gave an update from the OH RIFG.

Key Points:

- The MarPAMM survey is now complete and on the RIFG website, although industry engagement has been low (12%).
- OH RIFG would like to see Marine Scotland facilitate a hand gathering fishery for Cockles and intend pursuing this matter. They recently had a committee meeting regarding this. The following points regarding this proposed fishery were made:
 - OHRIFG recognise that as this is not a vessel-based fishery Marine Scotland are limited in their ability to regulate it.
 - DMac suggested that harvesters should be licensed or that some kind of permit scheme should be developed.
 - The recent Cockle survey cost £18,000.
 - Barra and Harris are considered overexploited so there needs to be firm management in place.
- DMac reiterated his recent observations regarding the generally preclusive cost of fishing licences and difficulties associated with borrowing for those wishing to enter the fishing industry. JW responded, confirming implementation of the FFM strategy would include prioritising enabling new entrants.

Actions

1. None

5. Spurdog Avoidance Project

SD gave an oral presentation on the Spurdog avoidance project and potential for its future recommencement.

- SD detailed the Scottish Government intention to gather stakeholders - ideally in April - to discuss of a Scottish scheme for by-catch management.
- DMac added:
 - Spurdog used to be a targeted fishery and then a by-catch fishery before the stock was given the prohibited species status.
 - The reason behind the decline of the stock is that boats used to not target the species at the right time and mostly caught females.
 - The by-catch in the *Nephrops* fishery and research demonstrated that during the winter months, mostly males were caught (usually in packs) in the South/North Minch and North of Clyde.
- Spurdog shoal densely and so are easily caught as a by-product of other fisheries. This has been noted to cause safety issues.

- SD said that SG intends to either return to the previous CEFAS project or to set up something of our own.
- SFO are currently working on an app which might assist in such a scheme.

Actions

None