

Regional Inshore Fisheries Chairs Meeting

10th May 2021

Via MS Teams

Attendees
Jim Watson (Chair) – Marine Scotland
Chloe Aird – Marine Scotland
Stuart Bell – Marine Scotland
Helen Downie – Marine Scotland
Gordon Taylor – Marine Scotland
Bernadette Moloughney – Marine Scotland
Jennifer Mouat – NECRIFG
Carole Laignel - SSMO
Simon Macdonald - WCRIFG
Donald Nicholson - OHRIFG
Duncan MacInnes - OHRIFG
Apologies
Greg Allan – Marine Scotland
Kate Rydzkowski – Orkney RIFG

1. MS Update – Jim Watson & Stuart Bell

MS is still awaiting confirmation on the new Cabinet Secretary's, Ministers and Portfolio splits. The First Minister announced in her campaign there will be a new Minister for Net Zero & Climate Change. This is a new post and is reflective of the emerging priorities.

Negotiations – There is expected media coverage of this over the next couple of weeks. Discussions ongoing between the UK and EU but a partial agreement is likely outcome. Detailed on management of non-quota species will be discussed at the Specialist Committee. There is broad agreement for management measures but this is yet to be signed off on. MS is aware there is uncertainty across the entire fleet at the moment.

FFM – The work has now turned from reactive (Covid, Brexit) onto upcoming Summer Consultations. The first consultation will focus on REM, mainly within the pelagic sector but will feature broader questions. The second consultation will be on the new catching policy. There will also be a heavy focus on the Shared Marine Space, with industry engagement important. Support for the RIFG's remains a MS priority, as reflected in the Strategy.

Gear Conflict – There is a revised updated mechanism the coast are using to try solve gear conflict issues in a holistic way. If RIFG Chairs receive reports of gear conflict, please advise them to go to their FO and make a formal report. We continue to work to improve collaboration with Police Scotland. A further update will be provided soon.

Wrasse – Letters of Derogation to fish for Wild Wrasse are available to fishers who hold a valid contract with a Salmon Farm. Please contact Chloe Aird or Greg Allan if there are any questions regarding this process.

Actions

1. At each RIFG meeting, the new Gear Conflict approach should be an agenda item.

2. Each Chair should ensure they are keeping their section of the RIFG website up to date.

2. American Lobsters – Bernadette Moloughney

The American Lobster Campaign, which was launched in October 2020, is to raise awareness of potential American Lobsters within British Waters. Any suspected American Lobster is to be retained and reported to Marine Scotland. There are posters on the MS Website which show how to identify the lobsters and contact details of who to contact. The posters are also available in the FO's. Most FO's currently have testing kits to confirm if lobsters are American Lobsters, there is also a possibility they could be hybrids. MS are looking to gather evidence of how many American Lobsters there are.

The week commencing 24th June is Invasive Species week. Marine Scotland will be posting tweets and so will DEFRA for their sister campaign. Northern Ireland are also planning to do the same thing. If the RIFG's use social media, MS would be grateful if they could share this information with their areas. Further information can be found on The Scottish Environment Website.

Actions

1. Bernadette to distribute information/posters to the Chairs, with the minute.

3. Chairs Update

SSMO

A Board meeting was held a few weeks ago and the Directors decided on the 2020/21 closure period. They also got the results of the 2020 stock assessments where continuation of a precautionary approach for velvet crab and king scallop was recommended.

Ongoing projects are V-notching Lobsters & tagging. The Velvet crab red bag scheme is underway – it complements the existing sampling. Science are looking for volunteers to take the samples and check them.

SSMO are looking for funding for habitat assessment work which will be critical for reaccreditation.

SSMO have received criticism in the press so the decision has been made to issue a press release.

Open Seas has requested information regarding specific vessels.

NECRIFG

Efforts have been made to reconvene the series of gear conflict meetings along the east coast, but this has been hampered by some groups only wishing to proceed with meetings in person.

The Geofencing proposal has been returned to Marine Scotland to consider. This would be a pilot project to be assessed after a few months, to try alleviate gear conflict issues. Unmarked Gear has been frequently raised as an issue.

Renewable meetings are still ongoing but there are large areas with no agreements yet. The SSSWG Sub-committee has met considering possible future management measures for scallops.

Seal ADD Project – The report is about to be finalised and will be presented at the next RIFG Meeting. There will also be a presentation at the next Chairs meeting to outline the process followed.

WCRIFG

A planning application for a Salmon Farm, that will be completely sealed in fresh water, within Tobermory Harbour has been submitted.
There is a large scale Seaweed Farm being planned near Lismore. The discussions are still ongoing but there is a risk of it interfering with fishing grounds.
A few webinars have been held on the Bullfish Market. Good feedback from fishers and buyers has been received so far.
A meeting for the proposed Solway Cockle Fishery was held but only one fisher attended. Simon will try find other interested parties.
There was a discussion with Crown Estate Scotland regarding their obligation to clear areas and put them back to their natural state.

OHRIFG

Donald attended the stakeholder advisory group, which was focused on MPA's. Unfortunately he did not find this meeting to be a positive one and found some members to not be industry related.
HSE Consultation of Dive teams – OH has received no adverse feedback since the 1st May closure.
OH Pilot – 4 trackers are still to be installed and suitable sim cards still need to be added to vessels in Barra.
Crayfish Project – Covid-19 has delayed this project but Donald is hoping it will be picked back up next month.

Actions

1. Simon to send Jim a readout of the Crown Estate Scotland discussion.
2. All Chairs to send feedback to Simon regarding Cockle Paper.

Management System for Cockle Fisheries – Stuart Bell

There is currently interest in establishing cockle fisheries in the Outer Hebrides & the Solway. Greg Allan is leading on this and is currently exploring these proposals. Marine Scotland is interested in engaging with fishers to explore see this evolving and on what scale.
Water classification was raised as an issue as was how to licence a fishery that does not involve boats.
Minimum landing size, curfew & seasonal closures were raised as potential management measures.

Actions

1. Outer Hebrides to submit a proposal to MS on how they would like to see this fishery to develop.

Creel Management Measures

Simon outlined the key points and actions of his paper.
Carole outlined the measures currently in place in Shetland and offered to send a written version round the group. Shetland currently has a 600 creel limit and the Board has no desire to change this.
It was agreed there should be a localised approach across the coast as each area has different needs. The creel management paper will focus on fishery and vessel management measures to ensure it is fit for purpose. It was also agreed the measures should go out to 12 NM so large vivier vessels would also be included.
It was noted the paper should only cover licensed vessels.
The distance between pots should also be taken into consideration within the paper as different target species dictate different distance between pots. Consideration should also be given to implementing a maximum vessel size to protect the inshore sector.
Possible displacement also needs to be heavily taken into consideration.

Marine Scotland noted potential measures may be included in the Summer Consultation and the RIFG's should be the driver of these measures. The paper should focus on short & long term measures.

Actions

1. Send feedback to Simon so he can build the paper and organise another meeting.

AOB

Project UK – This is an industry led initiative that MS are happy to support. MS role is an advisory capacity only. Understand there is concern and apprehension from some in the industry.

Accreditation – The question surrounding whether another accreditor could be used instead due to the costs associated with the MSC was raised. Carole offered to send out details of funding available to support accreditation.

Actions

1. Carole to send different funding options round the group.