

West Coast Regional Inshore Fisheries Group – Management  
Committee Meeting



22<sup>nd</sup> July 2021 12.30pm via Zoom Conference Meeting

NAME		ROLE
Chair	Simon Macdonald (SM)	WCRIFG
WCRIFG Attendees	Harry Hedley (HH) Femke De Boer (FDB) Robyn Dutton (RD) Ken Smith (KS) Malcolm Morrison (MM) Neil Robertson (NR) Jennifer Mowat (JM) Gordon Taylor Duncan Macinnes (DM) David Beard (DB) Allan MacLean (AM) Kenneth Coull (KC) Clare MacFarlan (CM) Neil Grant (NG) Elaine Whyte (EW)	Solway SWFPA Ullapool Shellfish Association Hook Marine SFF RSSLFA NERIFG Marine Scotland Western Isles FA  Mull FA MNWFA Solway Firth Partnership Fisher Clyde FA/CIFA
Also attending	Carlos Mesquita (CM) Jim Watson (JW) Helen Downie (HD) Chloe Aird (CA) Kirsty Dearing (KD) Hazel Fuller (HF)	Marine Scotland Science Marine Scotland Marine Scotland Marine Scotland Nature Scotland WCRIFG- minute taker
Apologies	Shaun McGuire John McAlister Stuart Bell Lynda Blackadder Nick Turnbull Harry Wick William Maclean William Jones Carole Laignal	Marine Scotland

1. Welcome, introductions and apologies

SM welcomed the meeting, thanked everyone for their attendance and advised that it is being recorded. All attendees introduced themselves.

SM asked for a minute's silence for the following individuals who sadly lost their life - Alistair McNeil, Lachlan Robertson, and Peter Davidson

## 2. Minutes and Actions from previous meeting (10<sup>th</sup> November 2020)

SM stated that he had sent updated minutes this morning with a revision on section 8 first paragraph and section 9.

SM advised that following earlier discussions today, additional changes need to be made. SM will send these to CA to amend and then redistribute for sign off.

## 3. Marine Scotland Update- Jim Watson

JW gave an update for Marine Scotland

### **Changes**

\*Change of Ministers – Mairi Gougeon (MSP) - Scottish Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs and Islands, Mairi McCallum (MSP) - Minister for the Environment and Michael Mathieson (MSP) – Cabinet Secretary for Net Zero.

\*Changes of staff within Marine Scotland - inshore team all on the call except Stuart Bell who sends apologies.

### **Updates**

\*New programme for Government launching in September.

\*Current discussions in the media between Scottish Government and the Green Party – officials are not involved in these.

### **Covid 19 & Brexit**

\*Fishing sector currently recovering from impact of Covid and Brexit (TCA deal). Negotiations following Brexit are on-going. Some agreement has been reached between the EU and UK including flexibilities, fishing opportunities, management of non-quota stock – the detail of which has been put into the Specialised Committee of Fisheries who are currently working through the context.

\*Marine Scotland is starting to see more science on topics.

\*There is currently funding available for scallop fishers.

### **Policy Priorities**

\*The strategy document was launched in December 2020, detailing a plan for the next ten years.

There are five priorities within the document- REM (roll out of cameras.) There will be a wider consultation on REM and a consultation on a catching policy, which are set out in the Future Fisheries Management Strategy. These will start at the end of the summer. The third policy priority looks at how fishing can best operate in a shared Marine Space. The engagement piece on Marine Protected areas that stopped during Covid will recommence with advice going to Ministers shortly. The East Coast and Islands are seeing expansion in the renewables sector- there is a lot of resource going into this.

\*Marine Scotland are supporting the Specialist Committee on Fisheries, with an objective to ensure engagement across all forums including getting the management of non-quota stock species on shellfish correct which includes how the EU waters and UK fleet are monitored.

\* Exchanges and quota exchanges – international quota swap arrangement. JW stated the need to be encouraging and facilitating more exchanges to try and bring in, for example, additional whitefish.

\*The Future Fisheries Management document sets out options for the longer term. Within the document there is a choice for shellfish management which looks at using either an outsource quota approach or using the existing arrangements amended through effort and technical measures – this is a three-year programme of works.

\*JW acknowledged the pressing issues on the inshore sector – including the need to get a better grip of inshore shell fishing effort.

SM thanked JW for his update- there were no questions.

#### 4. Shellfish Stock Assessments (Carlos Mesquita)

CM gave a presentation on Crab and Lobster stock assessments (attached)

SM thanked CM for his presentation stating Mull have advised there has been a decrease in numbers. CM stated there have been low catch rates noted in the last couple of years- not just in Scotland.

The following questions/ comments and responses were discussed -

- \* **Although not recruitment over-fish**, based on the evidence- fishing effort should be reduced.
- \* There is a maximum landing size for female lobsters in Scotland.
- \* Brown crab catching's in the Solway are extremely low, if more data becomes available for the Solway area- this will be included.
- \* One fisher raised concerns around enforcement of minimum landing sizes.

#### 5. Work Group Updates

##### 1. Creel

- \* Creel management has been raised by all RIFG areas and a work group has been created.
- \* SM and JM are in the process of preparing a document and Paper.
- \* It was noted that creel numbers have been discussed for years and each area has a different set of needs for numbers ranging from 1600 creels per vessel in the Northwest to 800 creels per vessel in Mull. Other considerations include distance between creels on fleet.
- \* The Paper will look at what level of enforcement can be taken forward and a sensible solution for numbers given the needs in each local area.
- \* Discussion took place around how the numbers are decided which included using science, stock assessments, averages, and localised number management.
- \* Reference was made to the Torridon Pilot where a limit was decided, once stocks improved more fishers came in which caused issues. Reference was also made to the previous Creel Paper in 2017 by Marine Scotland.
- \* The pilot running in the Outer Hebrides, 40 of the vessels have trackers on board. They are catching more with less than half the gear and the grounds are benefitting. There has been concerns raised from the UK and Ireland around too many pots on the ground and how this can be addressed.
- \* Issue highlighted with vessels coming in from Ireland.
- \* Marine Scotland acknowledged that people are feeling change is needed. The National Consultation 6/7 years ago did not go ahead due to enforcement challenges and licensing. Marine Scotland concluded that, for this to be a success, the number of vessels allowed to fish in an area also needs to be agreed.

Next steps- SM and JM will continue to devise the Paper, submit to Marine Scotland, and then circulate.

##### 2. Scallops

SM is in the process of going through scallop management Paper from July 2019. This is an area highlighted by the Clyde. It needs to be concentrated. SM is keen to get this implemented.

Next steps - SM will arrange a meeting with the West Coast Scallop Group with the view to implement.

##### 3. Aquaculture Work Group

\*Currently affecting all of Scotland – this is being made an RIFG wide issue and Crown Estate Scotland are involved with meetings taking place.

\*There are issues with entanglement, permissions of setting up fish farms, disposal of chemicals used in treating Sea lice and the responsibility of clearing up debunked sites.

\* EW advised there is an issue with licences as currently falls within three agencies and when there is an issue it is currently difficult to ascertain who is responsible/liable.

\*JM advised that Aberdeen City Council did a feasibility study looking at three areas for seaweed harvesting with no consultation from the fishing industry. SM advised there is a kelp farm South-West of Iona which is in for various awards- they spoke with the IFG during their planning process. There is another at Loch Melfort and a few more proposed – all have been in discussions with the IFG.

Next steps- Aquaculture Work Group will meet on 28<sup>th</sup> July and SM will report back at next West Coast Meeting.

## 6. Sub-Group Updates

### 1. Solway

\*The Solway Group are working on a project for a viable vessel cockle fishery. A first draft of Paper has been sent out – amendments are being made to the 2<sup>nd</sup> draft. Looking at piloting in the **Wigton Bay** area and adopting a similar method to the one used in Poole.

\*HH reiterated SM's update and advised they are looking to diversify and give other creatures a rest. Sea-beds are dying as they are overpopulated.

\*There are 5/6 interested boats. Meetings have taken place with Environmental Health, Nature Scot and the Harbour Master at Dumfries and Galloway.

Next steps - HH has offered the use of his vessel for the trial - SM to complete Paper send to Marine Scotland for approval and then arrange a follow up meeting.

### 2. Clyde

\*Scallop and Creel number suggestions have been submitted for different types of pot fishing.

\*The Clyde Group are keen to see the conservation movements progressed in relation to Scallop fishing.

\*Resilience of the fleet; branding and marketing- this has been brought up in the Aquaculture workgroups.

\*Cable burial – the Clyde group are starting to see some licence issues with these projects in the area. SM is aware. EW stated stakeholder engagement is key.

### 3. Mull

\*Recent meeting highlighted creel saturation issues. Oban are having issues with local boats. Looking to put in local measures.

\*Marine Scotland are liaising with affected stakeholders involved in the Mull Pilot with the view to either stop, extend, or amend the existing pilot. The Mull Group would like the project to continue for at least 5 years.

### 4. Proposed new groups for the North-West

\*The North-West area is currently too large. After discussion and recommendations, SM has contacted Fishery Officers in the area who have contacted vessels stating there will be two groups- Ardnamurchan – Rua Reidh then Rua Reidh to Cape Wrath. Once all responses received, SM will update with next steps.

Discussion took place around sub-groups which included communication, structure, purpose, and current focuses.

## 7. Brexit

\*New EHC certificate has been launched – this has been causing some issues and is considered an area that will negatively impact the fishing industry.

\*Some countries are dropping their prices in some areas up to 25%. This is affecting market share, there is concern the UK will have to drop their prices. Also impacting exports, processors, and the boats.

\*Work ongoing to redevelop the home market and to encourage people to buy local fish.

## 8. AOB- Date of next Meeting

### **AOB**

\*Herring Spawn Ground; a discussion took place around Herring Spawn Ground - there is no change to the existing agreement that there is currently no fishing in these areas. Concerns were raised including the view that some fishers are using this as an excuse to remove fishers from that area.

\*Part of the Marine Scotland's, Future Fisheries Management Strategy, outlines the potential to consider protection for fish spawning grounds and juvenile congregation areas. This project has not started yet and will involve stakeholder engagement which members of the call stated was key.

Next steps SM to add an item to the agenda for the next meeting for Marine Scotland to give an update on the topic.

SM thanked everyone for their attendance stating future meetings will be split with fewer agenda items and increased frequency.