

Regional Inshore Fisheries Group Network

RIFG Chairs' Meeting Note

05th July 2021, Via Microsoft Teams – 1pm – 3pm

Attendees

Present		
Jim Watson	JW	Head of Domestic Sea Fisheries
Stuart Bell	SB	Inshore Team
Helen Downie	HD	Inshore Team
Chloe Aird	CA	Inshore Team
Gordon Taylor	GT	Inshore Team
Duncan MacInnes	DM	Outer Hebrides RIFG
Simon Macdonald	SM	West Coast RIFG
Jennifer Mouat	JM	North and East Coast RIFG
Donald Nicholson	DN	Outer Hebrides RIFG
Carole Laignel	CL	Shetland Shellfish Management Organisation (SSMO)
Kate Rydzkowski	KR	Orkney Sustainable Fisheries (OSF)

Apologies	
None	

1. MS Update – Jim Watson – 13.00

- Noted that RIFG Chairs meetings will continue to be presented via Microsoft Teams for the foreseeable future.
- DM – Requested issue of high density of spurdog continuing to be encountered around the Outer Hebrides. Inshore Team to pick this up with colleagues.
- Advised of RIFG's meeting with Cabinet Secretary – Mairi Gougeon likely to be around the end of August and this will be carried out virtually.

- SNP/Greens discussion still ongoing, noting recent media reports. Will provide update as soon as possible.
- Mairi Gougeon will have a two day visit to Shetland to meet various stakeholders w/c 12 July 2021. Other ministerial summer visits are in the pipeline.
- Work still ongoing with the Future Fisheries Strategy delivery plan.
- 2 consultations to take place this summer on REM and a new catching policy.
- A briefing will be going to ministers shortly on Marine Protected Areas.
- Marine Fund Scotland – Lots of positive feedback on this scheme and many applications received, however some concerns this may put some additional pressure on proliferation of Static Gear.
- Update on Inshore Teams - Greg Allan has moved temporarily to Seafood Trade Team to help deal with the challenges on leaving the EU.
- SB – Gear conflict process – Explained how our colleagues in Compliance have now rolled out our new mechanism for recording loss/damage/theft of gear. This should be reported directly to your local fishery office for assistance.
- SB – Scottish Scallop Sector Working Group update – The paper produced by the sub group will be circulated soon as well as the next meeting date.

6. North and East Coast (NECRIFG) Update

- The Moray Firth Geofencing project proposal has been developing and comments from Marine Scotland have been beneficial. Meetings have been arranged with the Scottish White Fish Producer's Association to go through comments towards a final draft to Marine Scotland soon.

- Renewables has been taking up a lot of time with applications and guidance/procedural work being undertaken and reviewed at the moment. Would like to see more people participate from the fishing industry and supplying comments, so will think of ways to achieve this.
- Seal deterrent work is complete and report is now available. Hopeful that St Andrews University will take the lead on this with the spring of 2022 pencilled in for next phase.
- Mackerel fishery quota for the fortnight is being decided with the help of RIFG and group of fishers. Varying ideas for this quota, however general agreement tends to be achieved across the board.
- Aberdeen Council commissioned a report on seaweed production on North/East coast. Suggested improvements for better data collecting, would be to set up a group through the RIFG network, which will hopefully make more people feel part of the process.

5. Shetland Shellfish Management Organisation (SSMO) Update

- Update provided on current stakeholder discontent regarding SSMO licensing regime and management decisions. Situation is being made worse by misreporting in the press.
- Work is in place to update the Articles of Association in advance of advertising for a new Chairperson, with Ian Walterson leaving in August. An application pack with a Job Description, Person Spec and Application Form has been put together.
- SSMO Board Meeting on 17 June 2021. Various matters were discussed and Richard Shelmerdine from the NAFC Marine Centre gave a presentation on two surveys which have taken place, despite restrictions caused by Covid.
- The MOU between SSMO and Marine Scotland Compliance is due for review and this has been sent out to both parties.
- Welcomed news heard from last week is SIC grant funding for this financial year.
- Updates will be made to SSMO website with future addition of a FAQ section and a Meet Your Directors section pending approval.

- Resignation of Carole Laignel as RIFG Chair but will continue in the role until the end of this year.

6. Orkney Sustainable Fisheries Ltd. (OSF) Update

- Gear conflict meeting – Gave positive update on meeting with Ian Blackford MSP, Marine Scotland and a local fisher affected badly by the loss of gear. The stakeholder is happy with the new format for reporting loss of gear.
- Markets for Crab with UK multiple retailers is taking up a lot of resource as they are not keen to buy product that has failed MSC Standards.
- Marine Litter – Monofilament gill nets are being reported found within creels by fishers.
- Gear Conflict – Has seen a seasonal decline as 6 or 7 creel fishers have moved to Wrasse fishing.
- Pleased to announce 3 new young fishers joining the fleet, aided by an apprenticeship scheme with the council.
- Marine Planning Partnership – will chase up planned meeting between Inshore Fisheries and Planning to make sure clear objectives are understood.
- JW – Suggested Marine Scotland’s new Seafood Trade team could explore ways to help with Orkneys problems in accessing UK based retailers for their seafood.
- HD – responding to monofilament litter and will pass this information on to our marine litter colleagues.

7. West Coast (WCRIFG) Update

- Solway Cockles Project – 5/6 fishers interested in taking part in this project and talks have advanced with Marine Scotland to develop the paper for this.

- MPA movie – Shot at Loch Creran near Oban and explains what MPA'S are.
- Spoke about importance of attending other areas RIFG meeting and knowledge gained from recent North/East Coast Meeting.
- Clyde Issues – Creels being caught up in trawlers with barbed wire wrapped around them. Police have been notified of this and are working with Marine Scotland.
- RIFG Creel working group –Good discussions being held on maximum/minimum landing size for crab/lobster and the need for REM.
- Clyde Marine Planning Partnership – Spoke about the imbalance of all parties attending and the lack of fishers present.
- Seafood Brexit meetings – Gave update on these fortnightly meetings and discussed NI protocol and issues with getting product to Europe, with lack of lorry drivers. Also advised of unfortunate decline in prices within the continent.
- Appointment of secretary to do minutes – Hazel Fuller has been appointed to help with all the various working groups on the west coast. Offer to other chairs that this service can be used for their area if required.
- Meeting held with Mull Sub-Group -Regarding claims of creel saturation, large vivier crabbers working close inshore and diminishing catch rates.
- Clyde Sub Group – Discussion/questions on Scallop Management & Conservation strategy paper for west coast waters. Problems with local boats causing Creel saturation and will hopefully develop a plan to bring forward to Marine Scotland.

5. Outer Hebrides (OHRIFG) Update

- Pot limitation pilot – Advised it is going very well with roll out of the app now underway to vessels in the area. DM – Advised how the pilot has been a great success with more ground opened up for fishing. Quality/Catch and more profitable gains are being widely reported by fishers.

- Brown crab – 5 vivier crabbers are currently working inside the 12 miles and having a huge effect on stock. Advises that the maximum pot limitation scheme would be beneficial for the management of the west coast of Lewis.
- Prices of product – Lobster, prawn and brown crab prices have generally increased but catch rates of the latter remain low.
- First time entry scheme – 7 new potential vessel owners have been identified and they can hopefully be funded by end of the calendar year.
- Blue Fin Tuna Project – Development of this project, leading to a fishery for the Western Isles, is ongoing.
- SM Question – Clyde group mentioned about spurdog issue aswell and Marine Scotland will liaise with our international team and provide a response within two weeks.
- SB – Pleased about pilot success so far/ comms to promote app info given. Any feedback would be greatly received.
- SB - Advised he will be taking lead on cockles with Greg Allans departure to Seafood Trade Team.
- JW – Pleased with progress on Blue Fin tuna report on catch/release policy.

6. RIFG Role in Future Consultations/Creel Effort – Stuart – 14.20

- Explained how the Future Fisheries Management Implementation Plan has two priority work streams which are future catching policy and REM across the full fleet. These will go out for consultation this summer
- Keen to hear the chairs views/aspirations on what role they might play in consultation with their networks
- JM - Raised point of trying to clarify where policy development sat, at both national/regional level.
- DM – Believes each chair can give an overall independent balanced view on management of local stocks, particularly for the scallop sector

- JW – Reflected on the difficulties of managing and determining the differences between local and national responsibilities. Has responded to recent queries reaffirming that Fisheries Management is devolved and Marine Scotland are responsible for managing shellfish in Scotland with the RIFGS supporting that within the 12 mile zone.
- These chairs meetings should help inform and shape future policy, then lead to discussions with their respective network before formal consultations take place.
- Chairs – Felt that within their role and after Marine Scotland’s guidance that they had a much clearer idea on developing future policy.

AOB – 14.50

- JW – Gave details on funding for inshore fisheries projects. The application form was sent to all chairs on 12 July 2021, outlining that these proposals must start and be completed by the end of the financial year.