

NECRIFG Full Committee – Note of Meeting

13th December 2020, video conference via MS Teams

Attendees

Raymond Hall	Scottish Whitefish Producers Association (SWFPA) Renewable Policy Officer
Charles Milne	Whitehills Inshore Fisherman’s Association - Chairman
Robert Soutar	SWFPA Squid Fisherman’s Representative
Simon Macdonald	West Coast Regional Inshore Fisheries Group - Chairman
Andrew Whiston	St Andrews Inshore Fisherman’s Association / Community Inshore Fisheries Alliance (CIFA)
Kenny Coull	SWFPA
Helen Downie	Marine Scotland
Stuart Bell	Marine Scotland
Billy Wood	FMA Pittenweem / Fishing Industry Rep (FIR)
Malcolm Morrison	Scottish Fisherman’s Federation (SFF)
David Whyte	Chair Rosehearty Harbour and Inshore Fisherman’s Association
Elena Balestri	SFF – Science Officer
Foster Gault	SWFPA
Aisling Duncan	Marine Scotland
Ross Parker	Marine Scotland – Quota Manager
Cara Duncan	Marine Scotland
Malcolm Fraser	NatureScot
Ian Gatt	Scottish Pelagic Fishermen’s Association (SPFA)
Charlie Hill	Representing Portnockie fishermen
Davie Gilchrist	Anglo Scottish Fishermen’s Association
Jack Dale	North Berwick Fisherman’s Association
Ian Gatt	Scottish Pelagic Fisherman’s Association
Malcolm Scott	Naturescot

Apologies	
Jim Watson	Marine Scotland

1. Welcome and Review of actions from Previous meeting
<p>JM welcomed everyone and requested round table introductions. There was a call for late additions to the agenda and two further matters were raised:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promotion on a PhD currently being carried out on Seaweed Farming. • Discussion on support for new entrants to the fishing industry.

Actions of Previous Meeting	
Action	Outcome
None.	

1. Marine Scotland Update – Helen Downie and Stuart Bell

- Trilateral discussion over quota for demersal fishing opportunities are now concluded with bilateral about to begin.
- Update was provided on enforcement of the 2020 Gear Marking Order during 2021.
- Reminder to all fishermen to make use of their local fishery offices to report instances of lost gear.
- Position statement provided on Future Fisheries Management Strategy and work streams of particular relevance – support available under Marine Fund Scotland, development of a new catching policy, progression of Modernisation Programme.
- Early 2022 will see consultations on 1: REM, 2: Catching Policy and 3: Cap on Inshore Fishing.
- Update give on work progressing towards a Cap on Inshore Fishing and how that will complement progression of the MPA network and designation of HPMA's.

2. Handline Mackerel – Ross Parker

Ross Parker gave a presentation on his work managing quota for Handline Mackerel and how the annual allocation is arrived at:

- From Scotland's overall Mackerel share, 1000 tonnes was allocated for vessels in the 10 meter and under pool.
- That amount is shared among separately managed sub-fisheries in Scotland:
 - Moray Firth
 - Shetland
 - Orkney
 - Area IVb
- A special allocation of 50 tonnes of North Sea Mackerel was made for vessels in the 10 meter and under pool.
- The 10 meter and under pool was also allocated 16 tonnes of quota carried forward from 2020.

Comments and observations of the fishery from the group:

- There was general agreement that the 2021 Mackerel season was a success.
- Balancing supply and demand to maintain a premium price is a concern, with prices dipping as low as 35p per Kilo at times.
- Setting the allocation at 2 tonnes per month creates supply to the point where the price received is at the upper end of what might be considered 'premium'.
- Marine Scotland are clear that collaboration and cooperation are essential to ensure a good price for the fishers.
- Part time fishers tend to depress the price.
- The 2021 season lasted well enough to allow the fleet to diversify away from creels.
- During bad weather the price went as high as £140 per box.
- RP explained about the Area IVa flexibility box – that reserves of other fish species that can be reported against the western mackerel stock are used to increase Mackerel fishing opportunities for the under 10 meter fleet.

- There are times when depressed market price and high logistical costs means it is more cost effective to send the Mackerel for bait. This is an undesirable situation.

Actions

1. RP to share presentation.
2. JM to set up meeting to discuss future management of this fishery.

3. Renewables – Malcolm Morrison

Malcolm Morrison gave an overview of current offshore renewable energy developments and how they fit into the network of restrictions impacting Scottish waters. He highlighted specific concerns about Round 3 licences being awarded without due consideration for the fishing industry.

Actions

1. MM to share presentation.
2. JM to establish renewables as a standing agenda item.

4. MPA / PMF Stakeholder Engagement – Aisling Duncan

AD gave a presentation on stakeholder engagement for progression of the national network of Marine Protected Areas. This was in order to prepare the group for the forthcoming meeting to discuss fisheries management measures appropriate to this developing network.

The presentation will be made available to the group.

Actions

None.

5. Gear Conflict

General discussion on this long-standing issue, including:

- NECRIFG have been cleared by Marine Scotland to progress the Aid to Navigation Project which will trial using RFID transponder-type devices to mark fleets of creels, bringing them to the attention of other fishing vessels as well as other marine traffic.
- There was general discussion about gear loss / conflict being created not just by fishing vessels but also by the increasing amount of vessels connected with offshore renewables developments in and around fishing grounds.

The discussion on other marine traffic led to the unfolding issue of seaweed farming developments:

- Aberdeen City Council are involved in proposals for the Moray Firth and are touting it as a diversification opportunity for fishers.
- Fishers in the area had not indicated that they wanted to diversify and there has been no engagement with the RIFG on this.
- Mara Seaweed are currently considering various development opportunities and have allegedly received funding to do so.
- There was general agreement that there has been virtually no engagement with the fishing industry on these developments.

Actions

1: JM to put seaweed on the agenda for next meeting.

6. Date of Next Meeting / Close

The Chair thanked everyone for attending. The date of next meeting will be determined following the Christmas break.