

West Coast Regional Inshore Fisheries Group – Management
Committee Meeting



5th November 2021 10.30 am via Zoom Conference Meeting

NAME		ROLE
Chair	Simon Macdonald (SM)	WCRIFG
WCRIFG Attendees	Nick Turnball (NT) Duncan Macinnes (DM) Elaine Whyte (EW) Malcolm Morrison (MM) Jennifer Mouat (JM) Femke De Boer (FDB) Neil Robertson (NR) David Beard (DB) Kenneth Coull Neils Iphone Tommy Finn Harry Hedley (HH) Hazel Fuller	MFA Western Isles FA Clyde FA/ CIFA SFF NERIFG SWFPA RSSLFA Manx FPO MNWFA Clyde FA Solway WCRIFG Notetaker
Also attending	Karen Galloway (KG) Kirsty Dearing (KD) Stuart Bell (SB) Helen Downie (HD) Chloe Aird (CA) Anneli Hill (AH)	Scottish Seafood Nature Scotland Marine Scotland Marine Scotland Marine Scotland Crown Estate
Apologies	Linda Blackadder Harry Wicks John Hermes Duncan McAndrew Jim Watson	

1. Welcome, introductions and apologies
SM opened the meeting and thanked everyone for attending.
2. Minutes and Actions from previous meeting (22nd July 2021)
SM stated he had requests for changes to be made to the previous minutes which included areas to be expanded. SM asked if any further updates to be made – request made in AOB under “Spawning Ground – currently no fishing in these areas” – add that this is a “voluntary seasonal agreement. “
Next steps – SM will update the previous minutes from 22 nd July meeting and re-distribute for sign off.
3. Marine Scotland Update and Presentation by Karen Galloway, Seafood Scotland
SB gave update from Marine Scotland

*The inshore team at Marine Scotland workstreams are currently dominated by the Co-operation Agreement that has been struck with SNP and the Scottish Green Party

*Current priority areas – inshore capping, this has started with some considerations relating to scoping and technical background.

*Looking at the considering of approaches to dealing with latent scallop capacity and continuing the work on the modernisation of the inshore fleet (supplying REM systems to inshore vessels.) This is a programme for Government commitment that has stood for a couple of years. In light of the Co-operation Agreement there will be a degree of acceleration to the process. The consultations for these will happen early next year on cap and the consultation on the general principles of REM has been delayed but should go ahead early next year.

*MS have undertaken a major prioritisation exercise which has resulted in the slowing of other projects and other smaller discreet pieces of work. This is not a halting but the majority of resources within Marine Scotland will be placed into the agreement work streams.

*SB acknowledged people may feel uncertain or concerned but assured the members of the call that any or all decisions taken under the agreement will be underpinned by evidence and a transparent approach to how Marine Scotland engage with all stakeholders. Marine Scotland will be working on certain impact assessments.

* All decisions made will be informed by dialogue at RIFG level. The RIFG remains and is the chosen mechanism for the inshore teams' stakeholders to engage with Marine Scotland.

*The Future Fisheries Management Strategy remains in place.

HD gave an update on HMPAs

*All still in line with the Future Fisheries Management Strategy. The Co-operation Agreement outlines that they will be seeking to have a network of highly protected marine areas covering at least 10% of the seas – 2026 for the inshore area. For the offshore sites agreement is needed from the UK Government but looking at same timescales. These are taking a more eco-system approach. The criteria for this have not yet been agreed.

*Another element of the Agreement is the protection for inshore marine protected areas and priority marine features.

* Stakeholder meetings are ongoing – there will be a meeting in Troon on refining management proposals for the MPAs – this will then go to public consultation. No date for consultation but looking to have the management in place for March 2024.

SM thanked SB and HD for their updates. The following questions, answers and responses were noted –

*Q. Will the different sectors be separated out for Aquaculture – A. Too early to say as the proposals have not been agreed.

*Need to ensure the personal interaction on the ground is maintained and worked on at a local level. Fishers are less likely to participate remotely. A. Marine Scotland are hoping to have three workshop type meetings in Troon, Inverness, and Dundee with a follow up meeting in the Outer Hebrides. Marine Scotland will look to do most of its engagement online – this also reduces carbon. It was also noted due to travelling time for some areas online is the preferred method.

*Positive that the Future Fisheries Management Policy is still a focus and whatever the processes are going forward, ensuring a fair framework that all can follow. With diversification the inshore fisheries are going to start seeing further restrictions, some of the fleet may not be able to cope with this.

*Look at getting a communication out stating that FFMP is still a focus.

KG gave an update on her new role at Seafood Scotland

*KG joined Seafood Scotland two months ago. Current focus is the domestic market, taking on some of Claire Deans projects and bringing in new workstreams.

*Long term strategy looking at retail – UK focused activity. Understanding what is going on in UK retail and what the requirements are to increase Seafood Scotland’s market in this. This involves understanding what they need, what processes they use and how Seafood Scotland can showcase their catch to the major supermarkets. Focus is on creating reputation and focusing on high end products.

*Specific project looking at the independent retail market. The project will look at putting a programme together like the Scotch Beef Club – providing support to the independent sector across the UK. Educating the shop floor staff.

*Driving insights and knowledge – understanding what is going on with consumers and what are some of the drivers to market places. Working with Scotland food and drink.

*Food Tourism – over the last five years there has been a massive increase in this sector. NC500, toastie shacks, pop up places. Current project on this looking at supporting individuals who are looking to open pop up places. Colleagues have been to Iceland to look at how it works over there – brought back some great learnings. Opportunities over the next few years – working co-operatively or in collaboration with other sectors.

SM thanked KG for their updates. The following questions, answers and responses were noted –

*UK supermarkets do not purchase a lot of our produce. NC500, whilst it is good to have the food there, there is not enough to feed the number of tourists. KG advised the infrastructure must be there to allow this to happen. NC500 is a separate discussion but there are several positive examples of fishers who have branched into the retail market successfully.

*There has been an increase in fish vans over the last few years. Mobile vans and online traders have separate conversations to retail due to competition.

*Missed opportunities, Murrayfield for example will sell European produce but no Scottish seafood. The Highland Show. The value should come back to the fisher.

*Location can be a barrier – how food can be safely transported to the towns if the fishers are based far away e.g in Campbeltown.

*It would be good to have something like the “Red Tractor” scheme used in Farming. Supermarkets are receiving letters from lobby groups suggesting Scottish produce is not of good provenance and this could be preventing them from purchasing our produce. KG will investigate this.

*With regards to traceability, a lot of vessels have tracking devices on them. This could be used going forward to state where the produce had come from. Would like to see promotions, marketing and accreditations for Scottish Seafood.

Next steps – KG provided email address and invited anyone to contact her for further discussions

4. Work Group Updates

1. Creel

SM advised The Creel Management Discussion Paper which he and JM has been working on has been circulated. SM stated there has been feedback and questions about the Paper.

JM advised difficult to do paper and collaboration due to differences of opinions and suggested that the North and East Coast RIFG do a questionnaire to interested parties and members asking – what they would like to see in terms of vessel and creel management. JM stated there is a lack of evidence of stock and creel numbers and whilst there are key themes that run across the whole of Scotland a regional approach would be better.

A discussion took place on the next steps – the following points were noted –

- *The Paper should identify from working with key stakeholders, what would work for them.
- *Each area has a different need – how can this be addressed?
- *There is talk of capping measures being brought in from the Scottish Green Party/ SNP and if this happens the paper would be obsolete.
- *Local focus is so important. There are areas that have higher numbers of concentrated creels than others. There are fishers fishing a lot less creels in areas that are remote.
- *Any agreement should be made with scientific evaluation/ evidence. Look strategically and what is needed locally and what will never threaten fish stocks. Look at the sustainability of the rural fishing communities – that should be a priority.
- * The paper should accommodate what can be policed. If there is no functioning policing, then people will find loopholes.
- *A concern was raised that the SCFF are not going to engage with the RIFG.
- *There should be discussions with all parts of the UK and Ireland as the large nomadic vessels that fish in the Scottish areas should comply with the management agreements within those areas.
- *Pot limits were not agreed previously as in 2002 a decision was made that Marine Scotland could not enforce pot limits. There is a pot limitation pilot currently in the Outer Hebrides where St Andrews University are analysing data collected with a 96-98% accuracy and reports exactly how many pots are being hauled, when it is being hauled and the numbers.
- *We must address what is happening to gear that has been left unattended for a long period of time.
- *The Torridon Box – there was a study done on tonnage and the information is available online. The tonnage reduced as the number of creels in an area reduced. The discussion should focus on the number of creels in an area. The Torridon Box could be used as a benchmark.
- *Marine Scotland stated that there has been some disparity on fish one forms and how these were filled in. Stock assessment data for some inshore species is limited. DM will be working with Herriot Watt University or St Andrews and give them the opportunity to analyse the Outer Hebrides fish one forms since 2018.
- *Regional management discussions have been ongoing for six years. This could be an issue if fishers are putting forward ideas and not seeing these come to fruition. There is an opinion from some that local fishing associations do not put forward sustainability measures, but they do – the issue is that they have not been able to deliver it.
- *Creel manufacturers – some have an eight-month delivery timeframe. There are rumours that the West Coast has over 1 million creels. There was a presentation a few years ago demonstrating that if you worked less creels, you could earn just as much – would be good to share this.
- *There needs to be protection of entrants in the areas.
- *Gear marking regulations – need to see something about the ability to remove abandoned gear. Marine Scotland will provide an update on enforcement action taken as a result of the gear marking order.
- * Need to take into consideration – renewables, seaweed, and Aquaculture. This is putting restrictions on where fishers can go.
- *Declining crab stocks – how do we manage that locally when the stock can move huge distances. Crab fisheries should be separated. Whilst super crabbers have the right to fish, they should be obliged to comply with local agreements. A point was noted that if that happens, need to take into consideration the size of the vessel and have more workers on board – they are not a comparison to a single fisher. It should be adjusted to meet the size of the boats.

Marine Scotland recognised the concerns and noted that they are using their current technology to look into this, and creel numbers doesn't need to be the only solution used.

2. Aquaculture Work Group

*SM advised he was at COP26 meeting with Scottish Salmon Producers Organisation who have rebranded to Salmon Scotland. The meeting was about current packaging and looking at new ideas and alternatives for polystyrene boxes. There is to be a steering group put in place involving the Aquaculture Industry, Fisheries Industry, and packaging industry.

MM gave update –

*Position statement has been agreed.

*Need to engage with the Scottish Aquaculture section and MS Aquaculture Section and ensure they know what the IFGs are there for.

*Awaiting Professor Griggs report.

SM had a meeting with Crown Estate Scotland to highlight that the fishing industry has been left out of previous consultations. A point was noted that money is made from Aquaculture and not fishing which is why the RIFGs have not been considered previously. The Aquaculture group want to ensure the RIFGs are considered as stated in the National Scotland Marine Plan.

A concern was raised that there are more problems now than previously. Previously there was engagement with companies around where they were putting a site. As the 2030 strategy has come out, those conversations have stopped. There is an increasing concern around how renewables and Aquaculture areas may impact coastal fishing in the future.

The Crown Estate are looking at areas in the East Coast for Seaweed Production. A discussion took place and examples were used of where areas have and have not been consulted on for seaweed farms and at a local level can be disadvantageous to RIFG members. JM will contact NT to discuss further. It was noted that whilst engaging can be positive there are some areas for example the Kilbrannan Sound, where seaweed production could take up most of the seabed and this would be an issue for the fishers. This should be taken into consideration during any consultation processes.

SM stated that the press release they were working on has been published

Applications for renewable licences state that fishing may continue post construction. However, there is no proof that this is happening. A concern was raised that Seaweed industries could use a similar model – need to ensure that this is backed up with science.

5. Scallop Management Paper

*EW advised members put forward suggestions in 2016/17 and a two page report was produced which went to the IFG. This went to consultants who conducted a national consultation, there were votes and a report was produced. This report was parked due to Covid and Brexit came along. EW requested that the Paper be implemented now and asked how this can be done.

*SM has had meetings with the Clyde Group, and it is noted that the landscape is changing e.g. HPMAs but members of the Clyde Group are extremely keen to get this started.

*It was noted that it is an amazing piece of work and could be used with all regions of the IFG. It would be great to have a similar Paper for crabs.

A question was asked around next steps and implementation. The Scottish Government has stated they will be working on controlling latent scallop capacity. SB advised EW to look at the proposals from 2016/2017 and how they look against the current strategies. EW acknowledged this but

advised the paper has been around since 2016/2017 and asked what the next steps are to get the measures within that paper, implemented and timescales. SB stated given the current priorities Marine Scotland has, he does not want to commit to a timescale but will have a discussion with EW and the key stakeholders on what the most important aspects of the paper are against what Marine Scotland are working on and having to deliver.

Next steps, SB, HD, JW (Marine Scotland) to attend Clyde Subgroup organised by SM. KC requested that the SWFPA would look to participate at any meeting with MS policy on a scallop management plan. SM to open the invite up to any member.

6. Solway Cockle Project

*HH advised since the last update not a lot of progress has been made. A few fishers have walked the sands – the cockle population seems to be very strong. Waiting on information from Marine Scotland but the project ticks all the boxes, is good from a COP26 perspective but it is not being implemented and has been ongoing for about 18 months.

* SM advised the project is to form a cockle-based fishery vessel in part of the Solway Firth using a method that is used in Poole that has MSC accreditation, a sled goes along the seabed with a water jet flushing the cockles into it. The bird life in the Solway is protected, using a vessel-based fishery minimises the disruption to the wildlife. SM asked SB where they were with the project. SB advised a hold has been placed until they receive an update from the Scottish Minister. HH asked if the issue is funding, they could potentially look for other funding opportunities.

A discussion took place around the reasons behind the delay including Brexit and Covid. HH advised the project is great for conservation. It was noted that there are frustrations from fishers who have been waiting years for these projects to be implemented and whilst Marine Scotland are going through prioritisation, it's a priority for fishers. These projects also make positive contributions to communities.

DM asked HH if an assessment had taken place. KD advised there needs to be an appropriate survey completed in the Solway as there are a lot of bird species. This would need to have cockle stock levels and species of birds. Marine Scotland have not yet carried out the assessments due to resource and the prioritisations but will update the group as soon as the information is available.

A conservation took place around concerns that Marine Scotland are encouraging people to use the IFG as a voice for Marine Scotland but Marine Scotland, whilst some projects have been delivered, are not delivering on ones that the IFG are bringing forward and this is causing frustration with members of the IFG and this has been the case for 16/17 years. Marine Scotland stated that projects have been implemented and acknowledged the concerns. A question was asked how the IFG can help with the prioritising of decisions taking place. SB spoke about the priorities including the current cap work and ensured EW that this is a scoping exercise and full engagement of stakeholders will take place. SB advised EW to continue feeding into the IFG. HD stated the inshore team are currently awaiting updates - there is the Corporation Agreement, a review of workstreams where the Ministers will look at what does and doesn't go forward. The prioritisation process is a 6-month process.

7. Closures

1. Sound of Mull

SM apologised that the notification of the Sound of Jura closure was late in going out, however the closure period was now completed and open again.

A question was asked to Marine Scotland with regards to the three-year extension to the Mull Crab box, what their plans were for gathering additional biological data as this is the justification for the extension. SM advised the extension to the pilot was agreed after the last IFG meeting. SB responded advising the first couple of years of the pilot resulted in some quantitative and qualitative data – Marine Scotland released some reports in the first couple of years of the pilot. There was an issue with releasing some of the quantitative data due to anonymisation – there were positives with the pilot and worth continuing to gather further data. HD is leading on the project, and they are considering their approach and whether this will feed into the stock assessment.

2. Closure of Herring Spawning area Gairloch discussion

SM asked if all members of the call are happy that this includes all fisheries not just mobile gear but static gear as well. There were no objections to this.

EW advised there has been a consultation on the cod closure in the Clyde. There is concern that fisheries management has been running by campaign. A fisher advised he can recall when this closure began – in 2000 fishers had requested it to protect a healthy stock of cod, around 50 fishers lost their livelihood. This became a closure and did not need consultation however now it does. A question was asked why this needs to go to consultation. KC advised that they have made Marine Scotland aware of this previously. Mallaig and Northwest and Scottish Whitefish have both responded to the consultation. The aims and objectives are to protect spawning aggregation of cod at the nursery time. There is a belief that groups who are opposed to mobile fishing are sending the consultation document out to their members under false pretences and not that of the actual aims and objectives.

A fisher advised he is aware of the pressures on Marine Scotland however it is recognised that cod do not spawn on the mud, and therefore it is not detrimental to have prawn trawlers working those areas of mud.

KC suggested the IFG put a response in if there is an agreement that the IFG support Marine Scotland's proposal. This went to a vote and all members of the call (Marine Scotland exempt) voted yes.

8. Northwest Sub Group proposal for Community Managed fishery Inner Sound

SM advised he has circulated the email received with from Bally Philip SCFF. It was agreed this would be rolled over to the next meeting as Bally had not made it to the call today.

9. AOB, Date of next Meeting

SM asked if there was any AOB

A fisher asked Marine Scotland if the funds were being used correctly, with regards to the Modernisation of the Inshore fleet, as the majority of the fleet is 40/50 years old. The young fisher start-up scheme stipulates that you need to buy an old boat – should the funds not go towards hybrid boats. SB acknowledged the point and advised will take this away. SB advised Marine Fund Scotland is progressing towards more environmental approaches to fishing and running fishing businesses. A lot of proposals that are coming in are looking at more economical vessels, use of ice making facilities on board – ensuring that fishers can run a sustainable business and works towards the future.

A fisher spoke about the challenges faced when choosing the next step in his career due to the uncertainty of what proposals could potentially come in.

SM thanked everyone for attending the call. It was agreed the next meeting would be 21st January 2022