

Outer Hebrides Regional IFG Executive Committee Meeting

1030 – 1520 3 December 2021

Via Zoom

Draft Minutes

Present

Donald Nicholson	Chairman
Duncan MacInnes	Admin Support
Donald MacLennan	WIFA
Finlay MacDonald	WIFA
Angus Campbell	WIFA
Elaine Whyte	Clyde Fishermen's Association
Michael Park	Scottish White Fish Producers
Kenny Coull	Scottish White Fish Producers
Ian Gatt	Scottish Pelagic Fishermen's
Association	
Chloe Aird	Marine Scotland, Policy
Mark James	St Andrew's University
Stuart Bell	Marine Scotland, Policy
Helen Downie	Marine Scotland, Policy
Gordon Taylor	Marine Scotland, Policy
Ellen Huis	Marine Scotland, Policy
Domhnall MacDonald	Comhairle Nan Eilean Siar
Alasdair MacLeod	Comhairle Nan Eilean Siar
Julia Wouters	Marine Scotland Science
Lynda Blackadder	Marine Scotland Science
Donald Morrison	Marine Scotland Compliance
Nicol Strang	Marine Scotland, Compliance
Roddy MacMinn	Scottish Natural Heritage
Charlie Main	Scottish Natural Heritage
Iain MacLeod	MacDuff Shellfish

Apologies

Pete Middleton, Andrew Brown, Jim Watson

1. Welcome and Introductions

Donald Nicholson welcomed everyone to the meeting and was hopeful that face to face meetings would resume shortly.

2. Minutes of meeting 19 March 2021 and matters arising

The minutes of the Executive Committee of 19 March 2021 were approved by Donald Morrison and seconded by Finlay MacDonald.

Stuart indicated that it had not been possible to arrange an industry meeting with regards to spurdog due to other pressures on staff with EU negotiations and was would arrange an early meeting to consider what options could be considered for the future of this fishery. Both Elaine and Kenny stated that the problem was West Coast wide and expressed their disappointment that a meeting had not been held, as skippers continued to report increasing numbers on the inshore grounds resulting in high levels of discarding on a seasonal basis.

Action:

- **Stuart to arrange meeting with demersal staff to discuss West Coast spurdog**

All Western Isles based scallopers had signed up to having cameras installed, with concern having been expressed locally at the service provided by the appointed contractor, which seemed to be replicating the problems that had been experienced by skippers during the installation of trackers aboard vessels during the pot limitation pilot. It was agreed that the concerns highlighted by skippers would be considered.

Crawfish traps were nearly complete and would be issued to skippers on a geographical basis to ensure maximum coverage over the know crawfish grounds, with some issued to vessels that had been excluded from grounds due to prohibition on the use of set nets as part of the St Kilda designations

HSE had completed their consultation for commercial shellfish diving, an additional member of crew was required in the razor fish electro fishery, fourth person requiring to have all fishing one day safety certificates but not required to having diving qualifications, with additional communications and face masks required. Number of crew employed on scallop diving vessels numbers now based on size of vessel and risk assessment with additional recovery systems required on such vessels.

3. Outer Hebrides Pilot - Early Adopters Scheme

Chairman introduced Mark James, St Andrews University, for his presentation on the early adopters scheme.

Mark was leading a very experienced Team in developing the tracking technology that had been developed through the SIFIDS Project, with 40 vessels having been fitted with the trackers. They were considering the change if any in fishing effort, quantifying catch per unit effort, soak time and assessing economic implications for fisheries as a result of the pot limit. The maximum number of pots per fleet ranged from 100 – 125 for nehrops and 50 – 60 for brown crab depending on vessel size, with maximum pots per vessel based on overall length size ranging from 800 – 1800. The development of a App which vessels could send electronic data rather than Fish 1 Forms was

also being investigated, some problems were being experienced with some vessels using different types of mobile phones.

In addition, they were analysing creel number data from up to 30 vessels Fish 1 Forms from 2019 and data from vessels larger than 12 metres to ascertain how catch per unit effort had changed over recent years. Information to date had clearly shown the seasonal drift of vessels from the pilot area to fish for lobster and brown crab to the West of the Hebrides from May to October. Most vessels were well within the limits set for each of the various size categories, as one vessel could be exceeding its maximum allowance, although that could be due to the vessel hauling the same creels twice in a day, although more detailed analysis could identify if that was the case.

It was further noted that both Brexit and Covid had had a significant impact on vessels movements during a certain period when many markets closed.

All present were impressed with the presentation and its detailed findings, according to members present reduced pots number were being used for lobster to the West of Uist of Harris due to the use of parlour pots, taking longer to haul as singles or doubles. One vessel with 420 parlour pots being hauled once a week, returned a very profitable income for the season. However, it was noted that there was a tendency for in fighting taking place in parlours creating more crippled lobsters which reduced their value with a prohibition in the Outer Hebrides to land crippled females.

St Andrews staff would continue to monitor the project until the end of the 2 year pilot in November 2022 and would have further visits to the area to meet up with fishermen to discuss their findings.

Chairman thanked Mark for his excellent presentation and thanked the industry for their positive contribution to making sure that the project was a success on how co-management could be developed between industry, science and government.

4. Outer Hebrides Pot Limitation Pilot – Analyses

Chairman introduced Julia Wouters, MS Science, who had been given a short term contract to undertake an analysis of Outer Hebrides Inshore Fisheries Pilot and within the overall OHRIFG area.

Julia highlighted a number of various discrepancies regarding completed Fish 1 Forms – live weights, some missing, some showing negative sums, others indicating zero, gear codes missing although most likely to be static for all non-mobile vessels, number of pots missing, some showing zero whilst others too small with 1 being shown or others too big with 44,000 hauled, those flawed entries caused problems for catching LPUE Other errors causing confusion between number of pots hauled and number of pots fished, date of landing not corresponding to the voyage end date, landing per unit effort showing in excess of 5 kgs per pot.

Members highlighted responses to the concerns raised with some vessels entering the same lat/long position daily for commencing and ending fishing instead of where they actually hauled the first fleet and hauled the last fleet of the day. The use of parlour pots which were only lifted possibly once or at the most twice per week was highlighted, resulting in less pots being hauled on a daily basis but high catches of lobster and brown crab being attributed to those pots, distorting landing per unit effort when compared to single chamber pots being hauled on a daily basis. It was agreed that an additional column for parlour pots would be most appropriate to being added on Fish Forms 1 to accommodate use of parlours, which were not permitted in pots with a mesh size of less than 60mm.

The storage of catch by most vessels for selling at weekends meant that some would only account for a total weight for a whole week rather than a daily weight. In the case of shellfish being stored for the Xmas markets it would be most likely that high weights would be attributed to lobsters from late November until Xmas and those may appear on the Fish 1 Forms, whilst they may have been caught several months previously. Skippers should note any anomalies in the comments section of the Fish 1 Forms if there was any specific reasons for incomplete Forms being sent in.

A note would be circulated to all skippers following the meeting and Donald Morrison said that in some cases when it was obvious an error had been made contact would be made with the skipper completing the form, although in some cases once errors had been entered on the sheet then it could possibly be entered into the internal system as well.

All larger vessels had now become accustomed to completing electronic logs on a daily basis and this had proven problematic in the earlier stages, they would not return to paper forms and static gear skippers should be encouraged to if at all possible shift to the submission of electronic Fish 1 Forms in future , with promotion of getting involved in completing the Catch App instead of the Fish 1 Form being necessary in the short term.

Chairman thanked Julia and Lynda for their presentation and hoped that skippers would in future improve the accuracy of the information they were providing on their Fish 1 Forms.

5. Razor Fish Scientific Project Update

Chairman introduced Eleen Huiss, who was leading on the razor fish scientific project and Eleen provided members with the update of the project which was in its fourth year, with permits being reissued on an annual basis, with its aims being to provide information on how a limited fishery using electricity could be managed within limited areas around Scotland of which 3 of those limited areas were in the Western Isles. HSE, FSS were in partnership with Marine Scotland in the overall project with annual updates being provided, however, the project had to be suspended for a 3 month period during Covid, additional sampling for water classification purposes being undertaken to re-open areas and additional H&S inspections to ensure compliance with

additional HSE requirements following a lengthy consultation process for inshore commercial diving for shellfish. All vessels fitted with REM, live samples taken to Marine Lab to enable further testing of sizes of maturity and spawning to be undertaken, data provided being cross referenced to ascertain actual foot print of actual fishing areas and catches from each area. A PHD student had been recruited by SAMS to assist with gaining additional knowledge from the pilot. Eleen would provide a link to the annual updates available for the scientific project.

The initial discussions between Marine Scotland and Nature Scot with regards to completing an Appropriate Assessment for the Sound of Barra had changed since EU Exit and MPA Management following the Bute House Agreement and completing the Appropriate Assessment was not short term priority.

FSS had agreed to permit hand gathering sampling for water classification for South Ford due to logistical problems in gaining samples from electro fishing method due to distance. The contractor wishing to gain access to the South Ford had been notified of this derogation but had not proceeded with the sampling. He had indicated that razors sizes in the South Ford were smaller than those in the Sound of Barra and had mis-understood that this derogation was not available for sampling in the Sound of Barra.

Action:

- **Ellen to provide link to the annual updates on the scientific project for wider circulation**

6. Sound of Barra Conservation & Management Advice

Roddy McMinn, Nature Scot, highlighted the key points within their latest management advice which they had to submit to Ministers in advance of consideration of future management of designated sites. Their advice would have to consider how any future management can achieve the conservation objectives of the site, with the additional needs for consideration of the social and economic impacts of any future management of the site. They have to highlight the current conditions of the site and a table to highlight how any fishing activities could impact on the site.

Their advice in 2015 was that scallop dredging could be zoned in some areas where such method would not have a negative impact on sensitive habitats within the Sound of Barra and that remained the Nature Scot advice.

Based on recent surveys there had been a deterioration in sandbanks and sea grass, due to the impact of tidal flows following the construction of the Eriskay causeway with similar damage to maerl beds in the Sound of Eriskay. There had been further deterioration in habitats to the East of Eriskay which seemed to be attributed to fishing activities resulting in the need to restore features being required within the site.

Council officials and WIFA had met with Nature Scot 2 weeks previously to discuss the Management Advice and had suggested that zoning, Island Proofing and installation of cameras and winch sensors to all scallopers operating in the Sound of Barra should be added to the paper being submitted to Government Ministers. Alasdair MacLeod, CNES, added that the Council had also added their submission to Nature Scot via Joe MacPhee following their meeting in early December.

Elaine Whyte said that they had suffered similar situations in Argyll and the Clyde through Marine Planning creating buffer zones which further restricted areas and that the cumulative impact assessment of all designations should be considered rather than each one in isolation. It was now necessary that the impacts of all MPAS created in 2016 should be fully assessed to ascertain the economic impact of industry before adding additional PMFs outwith MPAs and now HMPAs, coupled with seaweed and other aquaculture developments to the list of additional area restrictions which would be imposed as less commercial fishing grounds would be available for vessels.

Roddy MacMinn requested that the views expressed at the IFG meeting be sent to Nature Scot in advance of their final submission to Ministers.

Helen Downie said that engagement had ceased following the meeting in February 2020 and it was expected that those would resume in late 2022 for implementation in Mar 2024/ It was noted that the earlier meeting in Benbecula offered no engagement for considering any zoning and any options presented by industry were unacceptable with the only position that seemed to be on the table being a total ban on scallop dredging within the whole area. Roddy indicated that the local MarPAMM would not be offering management arrangements for the Sound of Barra.

Finlay MacDonald stressed the importance of maintaining existing levels of effort in the Sound of Barra and that once an Islands Impact Assessment was undertaken it should clearly show the disproportionate impact that banning dredging would have on the local economy compared to a mainland location, as vessels would be displaced to mainland grounds increasing fuel consumption, freshness of product would be lost, with additional transportation costs for processors coupled with trying to get space on ferries during the peak summer periods, all adding to an increased carbon footprint for the environment rather than maintain the status quo.

Action:

- **Council and IFG to send response of additional measures for inclusion in final Nature Scot management response to Ministers**

7. Chairman's Report

Chairman reported that he had attended the regular RIFG Chairs meeting every couple of months and had been updated on the Cooperation agreement although the implementation thereof would be actual test of how much impact issues raised with have on already fragile coastal and remote communities that could suffer dis-proportionately. Well attended meetings had been held in Uist, Barra and Harris with representatives from St Andrews University to update fishermen on progress with the Inshore pot limitation pilot and the development of the Catch App, along with gaining support for St Andrews being able to research Fish 1 Forms from 2018 in more detail. He had attended the WIFA Annual General Meeting which had been attended by both the local MP and MSP. The meeting had been wide ranging with considerable concern expressed over the negative impact that the Bute House Agreement could have on future inshore fisheries with cap in effort and the need for consideration on impact on onshore processing. MSP was going to arrange a meeting between processors and the Cabinet Secretary. Parma University gave a presentation on their 3 year Matilde Project which is focusing on the impact migration on the local development of rural and mountainous regions, the Western Isles and Argyshire having been 2 of the pilot areas identified in Scotland. They have identified the shortage of housing as being a key barrier to enabling migrant labour to being able to work in remote areas, coupled with rigid UK immigration policy. The FLAG funding had been used very successful assisting a good number of marine related projects with a good geographical spread throughout the region.

8. Marine Scotland Update

Stuart updated members on Marine Scotland current workstreams with Team having been heavily involved in end of year talks, engaging with pot pilot, gear marking and more effort at addressing gear conflict issues through local fishery offices and trying to get towed gear back to rightful owner. Marine Scotland still active with FFMS and keen to sea expansion of sustainable fisheries through new entrants. Consultation papers expected shortly on a new Catching Policy to reduce discards through more segmented management of the fleet, with further consultation on REM with scallops, pelagic and larger demersal vessels being included in first tranche and some form of tracking being extended to smaller vessels. More consultation would be done through the RIFG network by having a more active voice on the shared marine space. The Inshore Cap would consider a baseline assessment on current levels of effort with various economic impact assessment being considered as part of the consultation and would provide a steer on where possible expansion could be considered on a regional basis. In addition, consultation on frozen scallop entitlements with range of options for future consideration would be issued later in the year.

Helen did indicate that there had been a short pause on MFS applications and had re-opened for future applications with some good projects being considered. She had been involved in discussions on future MPA, PMFs outwith MPAs and HMPAs to ensure that fisheries were considered within future management. Industry were told to provide maximum plotter data to ensure that an accurate reflection of where commercial fishing was taking

place. The timetable for HPMA was expected to be 2026 and would consider a more ecosystem approach, considering blue carbon and spawning areas. It was expected that further discussions would be held in autumn 2022 for designated areas which had no management measures in place. Marine Scotland had engaged with industry to improve the methodology previously used for Economic Assessments with the MAU engaging in more detail as to the cumulative impacts of the various earlier closures on industry.

9. Cooperation Agreement

Main concerns highlighted by industry were as follows:

- Cap on effort within 3 miles to existing levels were considered to be disproportionate in areas which have lost significant number of licences over last 5 years and had contracted significantly and were needing investment for existing fishermen in addition to new entrants, with processing plants requiring local supplies to maintain production levels to cater for increasing market demand requiring quality product landed on a 1 -2 day basis. Purchase of new vessels would be hindered unless access to productive grounds could be guaranteed to supply local markets.
- Review of latent scallop entitlements, many vessels had entitlements frozen and some would have utilised entitlements had they been allowed to activate entitlements as funds for investing in their business became available, with increased prices having been paid for such entitlements.
- The uncertainty created by the Agreement was preventing investment in the industry and furthermore, Banks were becoming more cautious in lending to an industry that was clearly being contracted with little opportunity for expansion in the foreseeable future.
- Introduction of Highly Protected Marine Areas where all fishing would be prohibited covering at least 10% of waters by 2026, would result in all fishing activity being squeezed into smaller areas, reduced catches expected by vessels, increased potential for gear interaction. The use of REM on mobile vessels and tracking devices on smaller vessels should reduce the need for closing larger areas to commercial fishing activity.

Iain MacLeod, MacDuff Shellfish, stressed the high level of investment that had taken place at Goat Island and it was vital for the future success of the factory that increased levels of nephrops and scallops are landed to justify the level of investment. The factory would have to increase production levels within the next couple of years and the company was keen to support fishermen with purchasing additional vessels, as was the case with CNES. All the marketing that had been done to date had been positive with customers looking for increased volumes of Hebridean 1-2 day old nephrops being packed in Stornoway. Members stressed the importance of the new factory having continued landings of nephrops from a fishery that had good potential to return increased volumes with significant

amounts of under-caught TAC being available on the West Coast. Considerable levels of public and EU funding has been awarded for the construction of the factory and Scottish Government should ensure that the business case that was made at the time should be still be valid to ensure that sufficient supplies continued to be available to the fleet throughout the region to supply the volumes identified in the business case for the construction of the new factory.

10. BFT Socio-economic impact assessment

Grant Fulton had circulated the latest updated socio-economic impact assessment report prepared on behalf of Marine Scotland but was unable to attend the meeting.

Members agreed that despite a small tonnage having been allocated to the UK, it was best to adapt a pre-cautious approach option with a catch and release scientific pilot pursued by a maximum 10 derogated vessels that would have crew trained in various types of tagging. The poor weather experienced from October onwards had prevented vessels from being able to fish the exposed grounds where BFT shoaled during that period resulting in now many being located. Any FLAG funding underspent would have to be re-allocated to other projects to ensure a total spend of the budget.

11. Cockles Next Steps

Latest update from Council indicated that registration documents had been issued for Class B beaches and were satisfied that cockles were going for depuration or further processing. Cockles from Class A waters are finding their way to the continent and are covered by export health certificates issued off island. Some of the Class A cockles are sold for the UK market. In excess of 400 registration documents had been issued in 2021 primarily for A waters. This number was on par with previous years but they think that the percentage of cockles being accompanied by registration documents were much higher this year due to greater scrutiny further down the supply chain.

Angus Campbell said that MacNeil Shellfish had invested in depuration at their premises in Glasgow to reduce travel time to market, prices for large cockles around £5/kilo, with large sizes being harvested from South Ford. They would prefer a Monday/Tuesday rather than a weekend ban as this would suit market demands and mean that cockles would be harvested closure to weekend collections and seasonal closures could be accommodated from June – September inclusive to coincide with periods when travel was most difficult. All harvesters were now required to become a registered food business and catches would have to be attributed to each for export, this was now the case for all winkle pickers. As regards collecting evidence of volumes and value he said that all that information was stored by a number of agencies and should be relatively simple for Marine Scotland to collate that information so that it was available locally to provide the economic return to support future applications for survey work.

Next Steps

- **Proceed with night time curfew**
- **Consider best approach to obtain cockle landings**
- **Consider a Monday/Tuesday closure rather than weekend ban**
- **Consider a seasonal closure of June, July, August and September**

12. First Time Vessel Ownership Scheme

Marine Scotland had announced grant assistance for first time vessel owners with a cap of grant award set at £100K. However, interested applicants had experienced problems with being able to source a vessel which the seller could agree not to sell until they had been notified that they had been successful in being awarded assistance.

Two local interested applicants had submitted applications for a twin rig prawn trawler and a static gear vessel, with delay having been that Banks would not provide bridging facilities as grant funding if awarded would not be released until receipt of vessel having been paid was provided to Marine Scotland. Comhairle Nan Eilean Siar had agreed to provide short term bridging facilities to successful applicants, resulting in applicants having a fully funded application in place for final submission.

The Council's Fisheries Investment Scheme was in high demand with 8 live cases approved, some for first time vessel owners and others for newer vessels, but catered for unspecified vessel applications, to provide additional flexibility to applicants. The Scheme had been very successful since launched in 2013, with 50 applications approved for a total spend of £8.535M from RBS, CNES, Private Sector, Applicants and other Public, with 130 jobs having been created/safeguarded, with a bad debt of £12K during that period.

Members welcomed the Marine Scotland first time vessel ownership scheme and stressed the importance of any future scheme being able to cater for an unspecified vessel application process.

13. Pot Limitation Scheme

Members considered the most appropriate geographical area for extending the current pilot and concluded that the area North of 58°40 N where vivier vessels had a long established record could be considered differently from the area to the South of that line for consideration once evaluation of the pilot had been considered.

Vessels operating South of that line should be compliant with the maximum pots limits currently applicable to vessels operating in the pilot area, the area covered would extend to 12 miles offshore to the West of the Hebrides.

Members noted that the vivier vessels had left this area due to diminished catches and had moved to the North Sea and that recovery of the shellfish stocks could only be successful with a maximum number of pots per vessel as detailed in the original management plan with agreed pots as follows:

< 8 metres	800 pots
8-10 metres	1,200 pots
10-12 metres	1,500 pots
>12 metres	1,800 pots

14. Western Isles Landings 2020

Scottish Fisheries Statistic had been published recently and clearly shown the decline in landings due to Covid-19 and impact of Brexit. The situation in the Western Isles reflected similar trends to the rest of Scotland with the following main points to note:

- Brown crab showed the largest decrease in volume of landings at 47% with a 59% reduction in value of landings and a 25% reduction in price per tonne.
- Nephrops decreased in volume of landings by 13% with a 30% reduction in value of landings and a 16% reduction in price per tonne, higher fall in tails
- Lobster decreased in volume of landings by 11% with a 19% reduction in value of landings and a 10% reduction in price per tonne.
- Scallops decreased in volume of landings by 9% with a 27% reduction in value of landings and a 10% reduction in price per tonne.
- Velvet crab decreased in volume of landings by 19% with a 7% reduction in value of landings and a 14% reduction in price per tonne.
- The overall reduction in the value of landings into the Western Isles in 2020 was down by 39% which was significant despite some trawlers having been sold during that year

The dramatic decline in brown crab landings reflected the urgent need for some form of effort management in that fishery which had seen the catch per unit effort decline dramatically over past years.

15. MarPAMM Update.

Chairman welcomed Charlie Main with the MarPAMM SEASOH project having begun in early 2019 and would be finishing in Sept 2022, with them planning to launch a 12 week public consultation in February 2022 to gather

views on project recommendation for MPA Management. Fishing industry expressed views had often centred on a general need to sustain local communities economically, maintain local access to sustainable fishing opportunities, the need for sensible management, sound scientific evidence on which to base sensible, reactive decision-making and the involvement of the industry in decision-making.

The list of recommendations discussed being as follows:

- 1. Establish co-management groups to deliver MPAs management and associated monitoring, research and review. These groups supported by programme of community engagement and sustainable financing model. MPA management decisions and impacts remain fully transparent and accountable to people of the Outer Hebrides.**

There was general acceptance that CNES, industry, Nature Scotland and Marine Scotland should be involved in any future management of sites, taking into consideration the specific needs of Island communities through Island Proofing and ensuring that a full Islands Economic Impact assessment was considered in line with the Islands Act 2019.

- 2. Develop a better understanding of socio-economic implications of MPAs management decisions in the Outer Hebrides and engage early on with stakeholders to define and plan for a just transition.**

Members present highlighted the previous flawed system that had been used to measure socio-economic implications in the first tranche of designations in 2016 when large areas of grounds had been closed which had no features that required protection, as was the case in deeper grounds outside the Wester Ross MPA. Furthermore, the economic values quoted in the consultation paper bore no resemblance to what had actually been landed from the site. In the case of Mingulay Reefs, static gear vessels had lost muddy grounds on which there had been no coral present, with flawed statistics used for consultation showing economic returns of £20K from an area which there had been accurate information that the 2 static gear vessels had fishing in the region of £200K but were prohibited from continuing to fish with pots in an area where no coral had ever been present on the muddy grounds fished.

- 3. Better integration between MPAs and holistic / wider management of the sea. Ensure that local communities are able to realise the economic benefits of well-managed resources and MPAs. Examples include Community led quota initiatives, marketing opportunities, or use of new technology.**

All scallop vessels had now been fitted with REM which showed exactly where vessels fished and no further closures should be considered until Marine Scotland had gathered accurate feedback on where and what value all vessels achieved on inshore grounds being considered for future closure as

was the case with the Sound of Barra, that had been discussed for over 20 years. The fishing industry had suffered greatly from the first tranche of MPAs and it was for Government to accept that errors had been done in the methodology which had been used to implement the first tranche of MPAs and lessons had to be learned before any further closures should be implemented. Tracking devices had been fitted to 40 vessels operating in the OHRIFG pilot and there would be ample opportunity to analyse all the information on pot effort being applied within the pilot area.

Chairman noted the recommendation of harnessing the benefits of natural capital assets with planning developments and industry activities, highlighting that communities had been involved in managing the marine environment for generations with whales and dolphins having been around for years. However, seals were out of balance with their marine environment as no management of numbers had been in place for well over 40 years, with wild salmon stocks in decline and likely that an over abundance of seals had contributed to that decline, yet nobody seemed to acknowledge certain species which were clearly out of balance with the marine environment. Similarly, Broad Bay had become a marine desert since disturbance of the seabed has ceased with an over-abundance of starfish in the area, haddock had never returned to the Bay yet shoaled in large quantities in waters to the North.

Chairman thanked Charlie for her presentation and it was expected that industry would respond to the consultation, however, it was noted that it was expected that Marine Scotland Conservation Team would be consulting later in the year and industry would respond to that consultation, as they considered that dealing directly with Marine Scotland was the most appropriate way forward in discussing future management of marine designations.

16. West of Scotland Herring Hunt Project

Edinburgh Napier University were leading on a three-year project "West of Scotland Herring Hunt" from the Clyde to Cape Wrath and the Hebrides. They were collating evidence on identifying and conserving spawning habitats and if spring-spawning herring are present in near shore waters and in what quantities.

Members noted that herring had been located at many locations in winter and early spring throughout many east coast locations, with prawn trawlers catching some in nets in early summer off Point and Barra. Members reported a run of good quality herring currently being caught in West Loch Tarbert, in late November with reasonable quantities on the grounds.

It was noted that herring had not been recorded in local landings for many years and it was important that as management measures were being developed for future marine designations for mobile species to the East of the Hebrides south to Argyll that continuation of drift net for herring fisheries should remain a method that should be permitted, as there had never been any interaction between herring nets with the mesh size used having had any by-catch of marine mammals or other species as the fishery had been mainly a night time fishery.

It was agreed that contact would be made with the University and they would be directed to fishermen in the area where herring had been caught on a seasonal basis over the years

17. Date of Next Meeting

Chairman thanked everyone for their attendance and closed the meeting at 3.15pm and hoped that the next meeting would be in person as relaxation on Covid restrictions were being lifted.