

Regional Inshore Fisheries Group Network

RIFG Chairs' Meeting Note

3rd October 2022, Via Microsoft Teams – 13:30 – 15:30

Attendees

Present		
Jim Watson	JW	Head of Domestic Fisheries Management, Scottish Government
Stuart Bell	SB	Inshore Fisheries Senior Policy Manager, Scottish Government
Helen Downie	HD	Inshore Fisheries Senior Policy Manager, Scottish Government
Chloe Aird	CA	Inshore Fisheries Policy Manager, Scottish Government
Gordon Taylor	GT	Inshore Fisheries Policy Officer , Scottish Government
Duncan MacInnes	DM	Outer Hebrides RIFG, acting Chair
Simon Macdonald	SM	West Coast RIFG, Chair
Jennifer Mouat	JM	North and East Coast RIFG, Chair
John Robertson	JR	Shetland Shellfish Management Organisation (SSMO), Chair

Not present	
Kate Rydzkowski	Orkney Sustainable Fisheries (OSF), Chair

1. MS Update – Jim Watson

JW welcomed everyone, and asked if there were any last minute additions to agenda. He then gave an update from Marine Scotland:

- DMac asked if impending announcements on spurdog could be added to AOB.
- Fisheries Management Delivery plan was published on 21st September. JW urges all Chairs to read.
- New economic link arrangements announced in September.
- FCP and REM consultations have concluded – responses are still being analysed. Outcome reports will follow once Ministers have sight. The static gear sector components of the FCP consultation will be of particular interest to this group.
- Inshore cap (New Management Measures for Inshore Commercial Fishing Vessels) consultation is imminent.
- MFS round 2 is currently progressing with a large number of applications received.

- We have written to UK government about the new immigration measures coming in in November – we believe this needs to be reconsidered.
- New National Marine Plan – initial discussions are taking place over the coming weeks.
- New Seafood strategy will be announced this week.
- HD raised awareness of the new Marine Litter Strategy being published - [Marine Scotland: A Marine Litter Strategy for Scotland \(www.gov.scot\)](http://www.gov.scot).
- On the economic link arrangements, DMac raised concerns about possible disproportionate effects on shellfish catchers.
- JM asked about the future role of FMac in inshore matters. JW responded that the inshore area will likely be one of the groups formed, in line the ‘hub and spoke’ model and more information would be supplied once this was better developed.

2. RIFG Chairs Roundtable

JR

- Wind farm cable laying is having a serious impact on the spatial squeeze. Inshore fishers advised offshore renewable industry on cable routes last year. It now appears that this advice has been disregarded and the proposed route goes right through Yell Sound and some of the best scallop grounds around Shetland. This has caused a lot of anger among the fleet. SFA and other groups intend opposing this and hope to enlist political support.
- Mandatory ban on berried lobster is now in force and was covered in the press as far afield as Ireland. Allegedly there was a large amount of landing of berried females immediately prior to the ban. Fishers believe the ban may equate to £5k reduced revenue each year. JR noted that Compliance had already been active in enforcing this rule.
- Seasonal closure on velvet crabs is causing issues. The fishers are leaving their creels in place during the closed season and placing stress upon the soft velvet crab. DMac commented that in the case of seasonal closures in the OH, Compliance worked with fleet on the run up to the closure to ensure gear wasn’t left in the water.
- JR summarised changes to the SSMO board, including new Chairman and two new board-members from the creel sector.
- MSC Sustainable Seafood Week featured videos from Shetland which brought positive social media stories around shellfish/inshore fishing.

JM

- Renewables continues to take up a lot of time. INTOG and Scotwind are both coming forward with proposals for cable routes.
- Commercial fisheries working group in the Moray Firth met and discussion are productive.
- JM is currently working with renewables industry to help them understand that there are significant impacts on the mobile gear sector as well as static.
- JM would like someone from Compliance to attend meetings in the future to discuss gear conflict.
- There is a new project being started up on environmentally sound uses of shellfish waste.
- Handline mackerel season this year has been less successful mostly due to market prices.
- Fuel and electricity prices are having a significant impact on small fishing businesses.
- There are concerns with the expense to fishers of complying with new MCA vessel coding requirements.

SM

- Seascope project for cockle redistribution in the Solway Firth is in early stages and the steering group meeting was held in Newton Stewart last week.
- Clyde Marine Planning Partnership – there is significant eNGO input to this and it is important fisheries retain their place.
- Clyde Herring Quota – SM complains that this was not brought to his attention. JW pointed out that the fact we did not have a stock survey this year meant we needed to take a precautionary approach, but we are not saying that this will necessarily be our approach in the future.
- SM is attending fortnightly Pisces meeting (formerly Brexit working group).
- WC RIFG Stakeholder engagement meetings last week in Ullapool, Kyle of Lochalsh with discussion focussing on how best to subdivide the coast. SM provided a summary of key matters.
- SM was trying to suggest several regions to FishTek Marine for trialling of their 'disco' scallop pots.
- SM mentioned use of physical comms (posters etc.) around remote parts of the west coast to promote key RIFG matters.
- SM wants the fishing industry to become a statutory consultee. JW asked if there was a formal proposal in this regard coming.

DMac

- Pot limitation is reaching the end of its initial iteration. DM gave update on meetings/interviews with stakeholders, noting the positive response and also discussions with Mark James regarding possible future research – notably the ‘new’ scanning device.
- Crewing is particular issue right now, in particular with non-EU crew aboard mobile gear vessels. The understanding is that all non-EU crew have to leave by 1st November. There is an application mechanism in place but the process is very complex and the bar for understanding English is very high. Linked to this is the housing shortage – where if you are providing employment, you also have to provide accommodation. JW said that a joint letter from industry is going to UK government to raise concerns on this matter with particularly reference to transit visas. Angus Robertson wrote to Suella Baeverman last week and we hope for comment from the Home Office.
- Disappointing Mackerel season this year with poor prices and poor quality.
- Work is being done to improve interactions between fleet segments with one suggestion being increased use of AIS for static gear vessels.
- Stornoway Port Authority has signed up to Fishing For Litter.
- Blue Fin Tuna fishing trips are progressing with 8 licensed vessels currently advertising for sport fishers at c. £200 per day on a catch and release basis.
- DMac is involved with fuel efficiency reduction systems that might benefit the fishing, logistics and fish processing sectors. They are looking at running trials on a few different types of vessel. JW noted that the UK Seafood fund may be introducing a funding stream that would be well suited to this.
- Renewable industry cabling from Ullapool to Stornoway has been delayed by a further 3 years due to greater capacity now being required.
- OH RIFG note that brown crab landings continue to decline and initiatives such as the Pilot remain of prime importance.

3. Projects

JW noted the recent call for RIFG projects and asked for the group to provide an update:

- DMac – Noted that he had not submitted a project but wished to see further investment for vessels working in the Pilot area, hoping that this might expand to include prawn trawlers.
- SM – Referenced existing things he is working on.
- JR – Possible literature review on methods of assessing whether lobsters had been scrubbed.
- JM – Aid to Navigation project is ongoing. Also a trial of PingMe creel locating is being developed along with John Affleck.

4. Voluntary Creel Agreement in the Clyde.

- CFA and RIFG have worked together on gear this approach to mutually agreed gear limitation, but are cognisant that ultimately vessels need to be limited too.
- SM outlines the general terms of the agreement and said that he has also contacted Irish authorities to try and achieve compliance for visiting supercrabbers.
- Scallop dredging sister-project is still being outlined.
- The voluntary agreement area would make a good test bed for new innovations in tagging.

5. AOB

- DM notes there have been repeated calls for access to spur dog quota for the west coast over an extended time period now. On 12th October there will be a meeting. Advice is due out from ICES in the next few days on this.
- Meeting concluded at 15:45.