

West Coast Regional Inshore Fisheries Group – Management
Committee Meeting



4th February 2022 at 2pm via Teams Conference Meeting

	NAME	ROLE
Chair	Simon Macdonald (SM)	WCRIFG
WCRIFG Attendees	Nick Turnbull (NT) Elaine Whyte (EW) Jennifer Mouat (JM) Neil Robertson (NR) Kenneth Coull Tommy Finn Gary Footer (GF) Clair McFarlane (CM) Bally Phillips (BP) Alex Adrian (AA) Elena Balestri (EB) Gordon Taylor (GT) Hazel Fuller (HF) Georgina Reid (GR)	MIFA Clyde FA/ CIFA NECRIFG RSSLF MWFNA CFA Fisher Solway Firth Partnership SCFF CES SFF Marine Scotland WCRIFG Notetaker Solway Firth Partnership
Also attending	Karen Galloway (KG) Kirsty Dearing (KD) Stuart Bell (SB) Helen Downie (HD) Chloe Aird (CA) Jim Watson Kirstie Dearing (KD)	Seafood Scotland NatureScot Marine Scotland Marine Scotland Marine Scotland Marine Scotland Nature Scot
Apologies	Duncan Macinnes (DM) Malcolm Morrison (MM) John Hermse (JH) John Robertson	OHRIFG SFF SSMO

1. Welcome, introductions and apologies
SM welcomed everyone to the meeting and advised there was no need for introductions and advised that the meeting was being recorded.
SM stated this and future meetings will be more streamlined following the previous management meeting.
2. Minutes and Actions from previous meeting (5 th November 2021)
SM asked if there were any comments from the last meeting held 5 th November 2021. NT advised he represents the MIFA.

No further comments were made regarding the minutes, and these were adopted as final.

3. Marine Scotland Update

JW gave an update for Marine Scotland –

*Marine Scotland are continuing to work in support of the fishing industry post-Brexit as well as the reprioritisation of work following the Bute House Agreement. Project teams have been set up within Marine Scotland to deliver these priorities. The Future Fisheries Management Strategy is still at the forefront.

*MPA management work – there will be consultation for this at the end of 2022 with implementation 2024.

* A project team has been set up for the inshore-gap (fishing vessel activity inshore water) and a consultation will be launched as soon as practicable in 2022.

*The consultation will also cover a review of scallop latency as well as vessel tracking and monitoring.

*December was a busy month with the focus on run up to end of year negotiations. There have been some issues with pressure stocks such as cod .

*January – the Clyde Cod Closure announcement required a lot of work.

* The razor fish scientific trials has been extended for two years.

*There will be a consultation on remote electronic monitoring (REM) as well as development of a new Future Catching Policy launched in Q1 2022.

* JW stated it was crucial that engagement between the RIFG network and Marine Scotland remained during these transitional times.

4. Subgroup Updates

Solway Subgroup

SM gave an update on the Solway Subgroup following their last meeting in Newton Stewart. The proposal put forward for a vessel-based fishery to Marine Scotland has been rejected due to current prioritisation of workload and budgets.

SM stated during the meeting there was a discussion on reintroducing a hand gathering cockle fishery due to plentiful stock levels.

GR gave an update on Solway Coast and Marine Pilot Project GF advised if anyone has any questions to email her at Solway Firth Partnership. KD from NatureScot asked if they had engaged with anyone at NatureScot on the proposal, GR provided names. SB will contact GR to get more information on the project.

SB advised the proposal is still of interest and also asked SM if he could have a copy of the minutes from the meeting in Newton Stewart.

.SB advised that Marine Scotland are currently unable to support the development of a vessel-based fishery for cockles but would be keen to see a smaller project that might work towards assessing abundance across the various cockle beds. The correct way to progress such projects is via the RIFG.

Aquaculture Workgroup

SM stated that the group have been meeting regularly and were established originally as a West Coast group but was expanded to include all RIFG Groups. At the meetings there is standing representation from different Aquaculture industries and Marine Scotland.

At the last meeting they had a presentation on a proposal for a semi-enclosed salmon farm on Loch Long, the first of it's kind.

5. Clyde Cod Spawning Closure

SM gave an update on the Clyde Cod Spawning Closure. Initially there to be one large area where fishing could not take place, and this covered a large part of the firth of the Clyde. It would be closed from 14th February till 11th April this year and again next year. Part of the closure included a muddy seabed, and this would affect the Nephrop fishery as well.

Following several meetings with ministers and phone calls, the area for closure has been reduced in size to three boxes and the Nephrop fishery will be able to continue. SM acknowledged, had the total closure gone ahead, this would have been a very difficult time financially for all boats especially crew, families, local community businesses and hauliers and processors.

SM asked if anyone had any questions on the announcement. The following comments, points and discussions were noted-

EW stated that this was affecting approximately 50 of their members and there were others that were not part of the CFA. EW stated that the last few weeks had been extremely difficult with people under a lot of stress and this was not the way to work. The CFA have tried to keep the science going and have been open to working in partnership and keen to have the trials starting again. Some lobby groups have received funding from the Government and Nature Scot to do their own research however the CFA have skippers and boats that they have offered previously and funded. EW stated that there needs to be trust in the IFGs and other groups were still getting the green light for projects. JW acknowledged the points stating that the discussions for the Clyde Cod closures were taking place across different parties and had parliamentary interest. Marine Scotland put out slides and background information. The policy objective was to try and not disturb the cod during the spawning period. There was a 4/5 week consultation during September and October last year. JW stated that Marine Scotland are policy officials who will publish pros and cons and then deliver on the policy objective. Now in a situation where they can allow fishing to continue whilst still protecting the cod. Activity in the area will be monitored and a meeting will take place at the end of the closure period to reflect on it.

BP asked about the moratorium and the business and regulatory impact assessment (BRIA). The online toolkit states that stakeholders must be identified and consulted with prior to proposing changes. BP stated that SCFF had been identified as one official identity but the sub groups should have been consulted individually. JW stated the BRIA had been published online alongside the SSI and the analysis was done as part of the Clyde Closure. JW advised unable to respond to the point as does not have the document at present but will pass the concerns back to the team that are leading on it.

NR stressed that if the IFG are looking to grow our influence on matters and policies, then conversations need to take place at a greater level sooner. As an industry people need confidence and to know where they can fish. NR acknowledged what Marine Scotland are dealing with however if the IFG want to be a credible voice in fisheries management, they need to be given jurisdiction.

TF stated it was agreed over twenty years ago the closure would be assessed every year but there had been no trials done. It's the fishers that see what is happening with the fish in these areas and suggested that rather than meeting at the end of the closure – to do the trials this year to prevent this from happening again and ensure there was science ahead of the decision for next year. EW asked what baseline will used to identify the science.

JW thanked people for their comments and acknowledged lessons will be learned. The science comes from the advisors in Aberdeen. JW stated he would feed the points back internally.

BP stated that some of the science comes from MASTS and agreed more needed to be done. BP will send the last report from MASTS to SM for distribution.

EW asked if anything could be circulated around the process before the meetings on the 12th and 23rd February. JW stated the SSI states the proposal comes into effect 12th February with the closure happening on the 14th. The parliament/ committee is in control of the timing.

SM acknowledged the points raised and confirmed the science needs to be done to understand what is happening. JW advised in the short term during the closure period there will be more monitoring of vessel activity and catches. The reflective meeting will be an opportunity to raise and pick up on what aspirations for additional science can be introduced for the remainder of the year. A fisher highlighted if monitoring is being done, there will be no boats in areas so best to do it at another time.

NR suggested that a template is made going forward as this has been imposed on the fishing community for two decades and the science is needed. NR stated the need for the IFG to take control of this going forward with support of Marine Scotland to ensure that this sort of closure does not happen again.

JW advised all good points, and these will be fed back to project team.

6. AOB and Date of next Meeting

SM asked if anyone had any other business –

KG gave an update on Seafood Scotland initiative – “Beyond the Boat” project which looks to help businesses diversify in hospitality or tourism space – similar to the project that has been done in the farming industry. A coaching toolkit is in the process of being put together which will help businesses – seafood shacks through to teaching creel repairs. KG asked if anyone had any ideas to get in contact with her.

KG spoke about the Seafood business improvement programme from which they have received £100,000 funding. This is about skills enhancement for the industry looking at on-shore activity, the catching sector- training and courses for land-based activities, succession, finance and laptop based activities. Two spring events coming up – one in Boston in March and then Barcelona at the end of April.

BP stated he felt that the Red Rocks Longay flapper skate MPA process was handled similarly to the Cod Closure and that individual stakeholders were not identified, they were not seeing an impact of management measures. BP stated there should have been stakeholder groups identified, options delivered and then put out to consultation. BP asked why both these processes were not followed. HD advised it was the Marine Conservation team handling this project. Creel fishing was not put in the paper. They looked at what level of creeling would be achievable without damaging the flapper skate eggs.

KC stated they support the comments regarding conversations and having discussions with stakeholders. Initially there were three areas being looked at – creel, scallop diving and recreational diving. The white fish association were supportive of the plans as it didn't demand other sectors to be banned. It wasn't an MPA and there is no rule against handling flapper skate eggs.

HD advised their understanding of the urgent MPA process type 1 is that it must happen quickly and in an ideal world the team looking at the flapper skate policy would have engaged with all stakeholders.

HD advised that an email has been sent from SM this week regarding Joint Fisheries Statement

BP asked that Gairloch herring spawning closure is added to the next meeting as an agenda item. SM agreed.

Next meeting to be arranged in May, however due to the consultations happening over the next few months meeting may be brought forward. SM advised will continue to keep fewer items on the agenda.