

West Coast Regional Inshore Fisheries Group – Management  
Committee Meeting



29<sup>th</sup> November 2022 14:00 via Zoom Conference Meeting

| NAME           |                                                                                    | ROLE               |
|----------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------|
| Chair          | Simon Macdonald (SM)                                                               | WCRIFG             |
| Attendees      | Stuart Bell (SB)                                                                   | Marine Scotland    |
|                | Chloe Aird (CA)                                                                    | Marine Scotland    |
|                | Nick Turnbull (NT)                                                                 | MIFA               |
|                | Elaine Whyte (EW)                                                                  | Clyde FA/ CIFA     |
|                | Malcolm Morrison (MM)                                                              | SFF                |
|                | Alastair Roberts (AR)                                                              |                    |
|                | Hannah Fennel (HF)                                                                 | SFF                |
|                | FO Portree                                                                         |                    |
|                | Allan McLean (AM)                                                                  | MIFA               |
|                | Harry Wick (HW)                                                                    |                    |
|                | Clair McFarlane (CM)                                                               | Solway Partnership |
|                | Kyle Paton (KP)                                                                    |                    |
|                | Joanne Riley (JR)                                                                  |                    |
|                | Bally Philip (BP)                                                                  | SCFF               |
| Clive Fox (CF) | SAMS                                                                               |                    |
|                |                                                                                    |                    |
| Apologies      | Lynda Blackadder<br>Jennifer Mouat<br>Jim Watson<br>Duncan MacInnes<br>Don Hardman |                    |

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| <b>1. Welcome, introductions and apologies</b>                                                                                                                                                      |
| SM opened the meeting and thanked everyone for attending.                                                                                                                                           |
| <b>2. Minutes and Actions from previous meeting (4th February 2022)</b>                                                                                                                             |
| 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. Correction from NT to change MFA to MIFA. |
| <b>3. Marine Scotland Update and Presentation by Karen Galloway, Seafood Scotland</b>                                                                                                               |
| SB gave update from Marine Scotland                                                                                                                                                                 |
| *Annual Fisheries Negotiations are under way taking up much of the resources.                                                                                                                       |
| *CFA meeting with Cabinet Secretary coming up. Issues around sourcing crew and visas in regard to overseas crew members.                                                                            |

\*Looked at Clyde Vision Paper and hope it can slot in with the current fisheries management strategy, with common ground.

\*MPAs and delivering of HPMAs is being worked on with Marine Scotland. Consultation next summer.

\*Questions regarding the stakeholder engagement process relating to progression of the HMPA network should be channelled through the relevant RIFG Chair in the first instance.

\* Marine Scotland currently recruiting six new Chairs for the RIFGs overall. The West Coast is to be split into North West RIFG and South West RIFG, plus a standalone Chair for Shetland.

\*Recent RAINE Committee meeting, SB found input from EW and BP very helpful in evaluating the RIFG network. There will be a substantive review of the RIFG network in eighteen months.

\* There is to be a strong focus on projects relevant to the RIFG and identification of specific areas of need.

\*FMAC network being retooled and started up again. RIFGs to have a greater role in the network and still to be determined to what extent.

Questions:

BP: Brought up about management plans and any ideas of progression.

SB: Stakeholder opinion on management planning varies around the coast. Determining the best approach for all fishing businesses will be integral to RIFG our future review of this network.

EW: The RIFGs are our voice and very much needed, with how the RIFGs fit into the marine plan.

SB: RIFGs will retain being the voice and wants it to be more meaningful. SB joined the last CMPP meeting to see how RIFGs fit in with the Planning Partnerships, recognising areas needing work.

EW: Marine Planning Partnerships are being formed all-round the coast, however there are concerns that commercial interests are creeping in that are not necessarily in the interest of fishing.

SM thanked SB for the updates.

#### 4. WCRIFG Updates

SM read out Lynda Blackadder update:

##### Crab & Lobster

- An assessment was planned for crabs for 2020 but this work was delayed because key staff were re-focussed on essential priority North Sea cod analyses and then other priority projects. The assessments have now been completed and the report is at final draft stage and will hopefully be available at the start of next year.

- Marine Scotland is currently running a short term (~3 month) voluntary Inshore Remote Electronic Monitoring (REM) trial, to identify suitable tracking, monitoring and REM technologies to provide advice to policy on appropriate reference fleets for scientific data collection under the Bute House commitments. The trial is specifically targeting creel vessels, with installations already underway.

##### Scallops

- As for crabs and lobsters, updated stock assessments and reference points were planned for 2022 but staff and resources were reduced and work re-prioritised. Staff are progressing with the data preparation required for the stock assessments and are focussed on completing this task over the next few months. Our aim is to have the assessments completed and available next summer.

- We continue to co-supervise a PhD project with Heriot–Watt University (2020-2023) – understanding the consequences of scallop dredging in relation to seabed habitat types, conservation features and other industry sectors.
- We are also co-supervising a SuperDTP PhD project on scallop stock connectivity in collaboration with Strathclyde University and Herriot Watt (Oct 2020-2023). This will improve the basis for stock definition for use in stock assessments.

### Razors

- The razor clam trial officially started in February 2018 and is currently authorised until January 2024. MSS has continued to collect a range of biological and fisheries data under the trial and will report on the progress and results for each of the biological and ecological goals. The work is building on existing knowledge of the species and aims to provide an improved basis for the future management any fishery.

CF gave update on razor fishery science: Survey completed in Firth of Forth around the time of start of Covid. Funding search is on to do further survey on Tarbert Bank in Harvest area 7 Looking for a vessel to help. The project has to be completed by the end of March 2023. There is a PHD student at SAMS carrying out research on aging of razor clams.

SM: 2022 has been a busy year, but restrictions easing with Covid, making face to face meetings more possible.

Involved with a number of relevant groups including RIFG sub groups in North West, Kyle and Inner Sound, West Lochaber, Mull and Argyll, Clyde, Solway. Plus Clyde Marine Planning Partnership, Clyde 2020, RIFG Aquaculture Group, APPG Expert Panel, Sectoral Engagement Advisory Group, Fisheries and Offshore Renewables.

Devised and circulated Privacy Statement in a format for all RIFGs.

Meeting with Cabinet Secretary to discuss having the fishing industry given the status as Statutory Consultees in Aquaculture planning applications. Outcome suggested that this would not be happening, but to raise the profile of RIFGs in aquaculture to ensure that the RIFGs are consulted by applicants.

Spatial squeeze from offshore renewables becoming the biggest threat to the industry with a further 19000 new wind turbines planned in a number of developments offshore. Took this issue to APPG Expert panel to look at the fishing industry being granted status as statutory consultees in applications. This is now being escalated through UKG.

Issue highlighted with application for fin fish farm off Little Colonsay (west of Mull). The application submitted by Bakkafrost will cause major issues for local fishers plus issues for vessels from further afield involved in the sprat fishery.

NT gave update regarding negotiations with Bakkafrost. Local Councillor acting as broker between Mull fishers and Bakkafrost. Next stage is to put objection into planning. If no satisfactory outcome.

Issues highlighted of gear conflict in the form of creels wrapped in barbed wire being brought up in trawl nets. Police are involved. Fuel crisis, boats having to be towed into harbour because of running out of fuel and crew being laid off to allow for paying for fuel. Health and safety issues.

W1 Machair offshore wind farm development. Questions raised over the cable connecting to Hunterston in the Clyde. The cable is to run from the W1 site north west of Islay, down the west side of Kintyre peninsula and up into the Clyde to Hunterston. Issues over EMF

Sub Groups: North West subgroup meeting in Ullapool with SM and SB. Well attended with positive discussion on the way forward. Issues raised and discussed. Followed through with further discussions and project suggestions. Positive reactions.

Kyle of Lochalsh meeting for Lochalsh Sub Group. Area from Red Point in the north to Neist Point on Skye and Isle Oronsay on Skye to North tip of Loch Hourn. BP represented most of the fishers in the area.

Following day meeting in Mallaig. Poor attendance as the weather had improved and all boats at sea.

Clyde sub group: Creel limitation voluntary project started with limits similar to those of Outer Isles project, minus 100 creels per vessel. The project is to be expanded to cover scallop fisheries and gear trials.

Herring TAC has been reduced. The problem with the Clyde herring fishery is cost of transport of shipping landings to the processors.

Cod Spawning Closure. Major issue with the closure which would have affected the entire Clyde fleet and finished many small businesses. However, emergency meeting with the Cabinet Secretary and Marine Scotland resulted in the nephrop fishery to continue. Five boats were affected from crab and lobster fishery and suffered no income for three months.

Future Vision for the Clyde document released. This is a first class document with many ideas that could be rolled out to other areas.

Solway Sub Group: The cockle fishery project for a vessel based fishery was rejected. However, there is a strong appetite for a hand raked fishery limiting to twelve licenced fishers who will work the beaches on a rotational basis. An opportunity has been identified to carry out some stock assessment work that would contribute to the evidence base if development of a future cockle fishery were ever to be picked up. This project, led by Seascope, looks to trial removal of cockles from areas of extremely high density, redistributing them in areas of lower density, to assess this as a possible means of encouraging greater population size. The data will be shared with Marine Scotland who will carry out stock assessment modelling.

Other areas:

Raising the RIFG Profile. As had been suggested and advised, I made efforts to raise the RIFG network profile. This was achieved through many articles in Fishing News and other media. I attended the ASSG conference in Oban and had lengthy discussions with Mairi Gougeon MSP, Tavish Scott of Salmon Scotland, Amanda Bryan Chair of CES, Dr Michael Foxley and Anneli Hill of CES plus Eleanor Adamson of the Fishmongers Company and Chair of APPG Expert Panel. The purpose of these meetings was to create the awareness of the fishing industry to be consulted in applications for aquaculture sites.

Attended a RAINE meeting at Holyrood, representing the RIFGs. There was a cross examination of the RIFG network and its purpose. I was backed up by EW, HF and Sheila Keith from Shetland.

Questions:

CM Asked of any timescale for Solway cockles.

SM I am in contact with Dr Steven Gillespie and Grant Course for updates on their application for funding and plans.

NT Only one year left for Mull crab box project. There is a need to move this forward for the future. SB A case could be made for continuation of the licence condition underpinning the Mull Crab Box as it is a cost effective measure that benefits fishers in the area. However, in terms of 'moving this project forward', Marine Scotland would need clarity and dialogue about what this means and what is expected. Marine Scotland previous made efforts to discuss progression of this pilot with local fishers.

AM The box has worked well and needs continuity. There is also a case for creel limitations.

SM I have developed a creel limitation document which covers all areas. There is a need for creel limitation, but each geographical area has its own special needs and maximum numbers of creels.

BP Agrees there has to be creel limit capping, but not just for vessels, but for areas. Suggested local capping of vessels. BP wants to work on plan with RIFGs.

EW Fishers under much pressure. Creel numbers need consensus per area. A need for mutual science impacting fisheries everywhere.

SB In answer to BP, on numbers static gear and complexity on areas. Proposing capping vessels, not exclusionism in who may operate within 3 Nautical miles.

Summing up, SM: This shows the need for a strong RIFG network to be a voice for the fishers and develop projects and fisheries management for each RIFG area.

SM "It has been a privilege to Chair WCRIFG and I thank all attendees and members of West Coast Regional Fisheries Group for their support and input over the past challenging three years."

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