

Fisheries Management and Conservation (FMAC) – Inshore Sub Group – Meeting 2

DRAFT Note of meeting

23-AUG-2023 10:00 – 13:00

Online via Microsoft Teams

Confirmed		
Jim Watson	JW	MD
Stuart Bell	SB	MD
Cara Duncan	CD	MD
Carlos Mesquita	CM	MD
Lynda Blackadder	LB	MD
Malcolm MacLeod	MM	MD
Lily Braid	LB	MD
Mark Griffin	MG	SWCRIFG
Lucy Kay	LK	COAST
Alex Watson-Crook	AW-C	SIFT
Kenny Coull	KCo	SWFPA
Sheila Keith	SK	SFA
Jenny Mouat	JM	NECRIFG
Mark Griffin	MG	SWRIFG
Alastair Hamilton	AH	NWRIFG
Hilary Burgess	HB	SRIFG
Phil Bennett	PB	OHRIFG
David Donnan	DD	Naturescot
Hannah Fennell	HF	OFA
Elaine Whyte	EW	CIFA
Lucy Kay	LK	COAST
John Robertson	JR	SSMO
Alistair Philp	AP	SCFF
Andrew Brown	AB	SSA
Duncan MacInnes	DMac	WIFA
Calum Duncan	CD	MCS
Phil Taylor	PT	Open Seas

Apologies
Kevin McDonnell
Clive Fox
Elsbeth Macdonald
Elena Balestri

Welcome and Introductions.

Marine Directorate and RIFG update.

FMAC Inshore Subgroup Priorities / Action Plan.**Marine Directorate (Science) update on crab and lobster stock assessment report.****Update on Scientific Trial of Electrofishing for Razor Clams.****Break.****Improving the inshore evidence base (inshore vessel tracking and monitoring).****Developing input controls for static gear.****Fisheries Management Plans.****Update on inshore MPAs.****AOB.****1. MD and RIFG update**

- JW opened the meeting and noted addition of an item on MPAs to the agenda.
- No AoB points raised.
- CD – reminder that MCS consultation on ratings was recently circulated.
- Update from Marine Directorate:
 - There were changes to Ministerial portfolios prior to recess with Gillian Martin Minister for Energy and Environment, now having responsibility for Inshore Fisheries Brief. This is in support of the Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs, Land Reform and Islands, who retains overall responsibility for Fisheries.
 - Summer tour has seen several Ministerial visits and a number of you have met the three Ministers already.
 - We are delighted to get the Future Catching Policy (FCP) and REM consultation outcome reports published as well as the launch of a consultation on under 12 metre vessel tracking on the 14th August.
 - We have clear statutory commitments to meet, and have a strategy in place to guide deliver policy (FM strategy).
 - Note that resources remain very tight across Government, including Marine Directorate.
 - We have two live legal challenges, several FOIs and other correspondence – be aware that these all drain what resources we have to develop policy.
 - The RIFG network refresh was noted at the last meeting. We hope that the paper circulated gives an insight into their activities.
 - RIFG work is driven by the demands of each area – for example renewables in the northeast, but there are commonalities throughout. There are some common themes coming through, some clearly influenced by national policy – spatial squeeze, marine conservation;

sustainability, science and evidence improvements. We are also pleased to see some projects being progressed and others scoped out across country.

- AB commented on the RIFG paper as being very useful and asked for further information. JW advised direct contact with Chairs, through SB or via the RIFG website.
- AP asked about process on where the divides are between FMAC, the subgroups and the RIFGs. JW noted that RIFG will propel local-level issues into the national context at FMAC (including sub-groups).
- AW-C questioned what the forthcoming review of RIFGs might look like. JW said that we are committed to the review but still considering the details. We expect how RIFGs interact with MPP to figure in it and that this will be discussed in due course.
- SK noted that identifying commonality between RIFGs is difficult and so clear direction is required. Also, that outliers in the industry might use the RIFG to push fringe views that negatively impact wider fishing businesses. Therefore the RIFGs needs sufficient support. JW advised on support provided to the network to date but noted resource challenges.
- JM suggested contacting the Chairs directly.
- MG noted that RIFG non-legislative nature was a plus as a mediator and prevented certain agendas being pushed, as he had no capacity to influence the outcome.
- EW – There must be clarity where the RIFG is concerned to differentiate fisheries management from general marine management.
- PT – building on EW's point noted that we cannot have decision making ability without accountability. RIFG portal was providing transparency – that seems to have lapsed. SB advised he is now leading on the portal so will welcome input on what has been missing and how it can be improved.

ACTION: SB to coordinate with RIFG Chairs on updates to website, including outputs of this meeting.

2. FMAC Inshore subgroup priorities / action plan

- The inception meeting of this sub-group was held on 23rd February 2023 with a draft terms of membership, shared with members of the group on 9th March 2023. Updated ToR was shared ahead of this meeting on 15th August.
- JW outlined the key points from the Action Plan – noting the changes to the ToR and key issues and priorities discussed in February.
- AP – noted that 12 miles is appropriate, but was not comfortable with pelagics not being included, and gave current discussion - about squid fishing on the

east coast - as an example. JW – there is no one perfect definition of inshore, and a degree of pragmatism is required.

- PT – suggested the actions fully reflect the ToR. The ToR under ‘scope’ regarding the 12-point delivery plan, contains HPMA. It is unclear how we are responsible for how that is delivered. JW stressed that what the group raised at the inception meeting and what this group deemed to be a priority is reflected in the Action Plan. It was accurate at the time, but clearly changes in light of the announcement regarding HPMA will need to be reflected.
- LK was not clear how the action plan will be developed. JW noted that we take feedback from this meeting and flesh out the plan and share that with members.
- HF asked for the group to be involved in developing the Action Plan.

ACTION: JW/SB to progress Action Plan to include specifics and timelines (where possible).

JW/SB to advise on how updates to ToR (for example removing HPMA references) should be made and how the group can feed into and input to this.

3. MD Science update on crab and lobster stock assessment.

- CM presented slides on the recent crab and lobster stock assessment report (brown crab, velvet crab, lobster) – available on RIFG website.
- The presentation covered assessment units, landings, sampling data, stock assessments, survey indicators and resultant advice.
- Questions from group:
 - AP – effort has possibly almost doubled over last ten years and also there should be differentiation between inshore and offshore. He suggested that MD set up a working group to look at this specifically? To consider what are the factors affecting mortality, and what management changes should be considered to ensure collapse does not occur?
 - JW asked for a show of support on creation of a working group in the meeting chat.
 - AB – evidence suggests that landings of crab are going down all round the coast and the need to take action is great. Is there anything that can be done to get more up-to-date stock information, so we can get a better grip on trends?
 - CM said that an update on the survey indices is important in order to support anecdotal evidence about the health of brown crab stocks. It was noted that Marine Directorate Officials present share these concerns.
CD – Acknowledged that MCS draft ratings are impacted by the lag in stock assessment data.

- DMac – Observed that brown crab appears in worse health than the other two species. Despite a significant increase in MLS, lobster and velvet crab health appear similar to last assessment. DMac mentioned the presence of Irish vivier crabbers to the west of the Hebrides. CM said that some information on these fisheries will be coming soon.
- CM noted that the internal review system for stock assessment data takes considerable time to complete.
- PT – management measures to address these stock issues has not been demonstrated by the Pilots. JW disagreed with this point, noting that the Pilots have informed the policy we are now developing and our approach to the use of vessel tracking for example.
- The group welcomed scientific advice presented by CM stating that fishing pressure on crab and lobster in many areas should not increase further.
- PT – the group is mandated via its ToR to help deliver on the 12 point action plan. We need to also observe the political commitments made such as consulting on applying a cap to inshore fishing activity. How can the group help the Marine Directorate deliver on this?
- JR (from meeting chat) - Shetland is lucky enough to have no major concerns over its shellfish stocks. There is much to learn from the benefits we enjoy, having local control devolved from the Government to the Shetland Shellfish Management Organisation. The SSMO does its own annual stock assessments through local scientists at the University of Highlands and Islands, costing £200k a year. We work from data from the previous year, so we have almost all our 2022 data ready. The scallop stock is growing. Brown crab, velvets and lobsters are stable. None are fished above their reference levels.

ACTION: CM to update on stock assessment indices (when possible) and to make presentation available to group.

All to provide feedback to MD on the merits of establishing a working group.

4. Update on scientific trial of electrofishing for razor clams.

- Presentations from CD (a policy overview of the trial) and LB (on scientific objectives) are on the RIFG website.
- AP – thanked staff for the work on this trial. An excellent example of what can be achieved and a possible route for diversification.
- EW – we are keen to hear when there is a decision about whether the razor clam fishery goes forward, and also noted that there are a number of CIFA fishers who would like to take part in a future trial. CD stressed that there

are no assurances or guarantees the trial will go ahead, and that we are not considering any expansion of the trial at this time.

- AW-C asked what is the decision-making process for whether the trial continues? CD reiterated that derogations end in January 2024, and next steps will be dependent on scientific advice. Any such decisions would follow the usual process of consultation.
- AW-C (meeting chat) - are there further details available on the PhD? LB provided the link to the SAMS website.

5. Improving the inshore evidence base (inshore vessel tracking and monitoring)

- SB summarised the key points from the consultation launch from the 14th August.
- That we are focussing our efforts on the tracking and monitoring consultation for the time being and will consider sequencing of this alongside other policy commitments.
- Our Fisheries Management Strategy clearly dictates what we will do within limited resources.
- Tracking is a vital link in plugging the evidence gaps in our inshore fisheries.
- Our approach has been informed by lessons learned in the wider UK, in the OH Pilot and other limited trials in the past year.
- There is a clear distinction between proposed use of simple tracking devices for most of our fleet and inshore REM for a limited percentage.
- This policy will enable fishers to demonstrate good practice, improve evidence base and help ensure compliance with legislation.

6. Developing input controls for static gear

- FCP outcome published on the August 14th and showed majority of respondents supported development of input controls on static gear.
- We are now considering next steps as a result of this and expect to develop a set of proposals and consult late 2024.
- Co-management will be key and our RIFG Chairs will be beginning discussion immediately. These outputs will flow through the RIFG allowing the discussion in a national context at FMAC.
- Spatial data from FISH1 forms and paper logbooks (2017 – 2021) has now been published on maps.marine.gov.scot (NMPi), representing the best

available mapping of inshore fishing activity around Scotland and the first study of its kind since ScotMap in 2014.

- It represents locations of fishing operations that have been self-reported provided by fishers, expressed as the value of catch for different sectors:
 - [Fishing - Scottish Under 12m vessels - Annual average value \(2017-2021\) of Pots and Traps \(£\)](#)
 - [Fishing - Scottish Under 12m vessels - Annual average value \(2017-2021\) of Bottom Trawls \(£\)](#)
 - [Fishing - Scottish Under 12m vessels - Annual average value \(2017-2021\) of Dredges \(£\)](#)
 - [Fishing - Scottish Under 12m vessels - Annual average value \(2017-2021\) of Rod and Lines \(£\)](#)
 - [Fishing - Scottish Under 12m vessels - Annual average value \(2017-2021\) of Other gears \(£\)](#)

- The data is experimental, and we are happy to receive feedback via at marine.gis@gov.scot.
- 2022 data will be published in September.
- Questions from the group on items 5 and 6:
 - AP – Will technology follow through to larger vessels demersal / offshore vessels? SB – the inshore consultation is about vessel tracking for the majority and REM for a small proportion of under 12m vessels for additional scientific and compliance benefits. This is the sector with the most conspicuous evidence gaps. Vessel tracking is already on over 12m vessels and we are committed to mandatory REM for all scallop dredge and large pelagic vessels in Scottish waters. We have said that we will consider use of REM for ‘other fleet segments’ in discussions with FMAC and through the Future Catching Policy. We should expect modernisation to be a constant theme in the coming years.
 - AP – SCFF support creel limits but do not believe this should be in isolation. SB – agreed and pointed to the FM strategy where we have set out our priority projects. A suite of measures surrounding creel limits would most likely contain other complementary projects.
 - AB – output controls as well as input controls would make sense. There was agreement from officials that this group is ideal forum to discuss whether complementary measures such as output controls would be of benefit.
 - PT asked about where would REM be deployed on small inshore vessels? SB said that would be subject to further consultation and discussion, but that we had been clear that we considered vessels fishing close to sensitive features or area, or prosecuting vulnerable stocks would be examples of how inshore REM may be deployed.

7. Update on Inshore MPAs

- LB spoke on inshore MPAs and his presentation is available on the RIFG website.
- EW asked whether use of Anchorlab could enable vessels to continue fishing close to sensitive marine features. LB answered that even with monitoring there is a necessity to protect the features within and there always be a trade-off between protecting and area and allowing fishing to coexist.

8. Fisheries Management Plans (FMPs)

- JW gave a brief update on FMPs, providing some background, progress to date and next steps.
- He reminded all that the Fisheries Act (2020) places a requirement on the Fisheries Policy authorities to prepare and publish Fisheries Management Plans (FMPs).
- That the Joint Fisheries Statement (JFS) sets out a list of FMPs and deadlines for publication and the lead authority for drafting them.
- The SG is leading 21 plans to be delivered by the end of 2024.
- He stressed that FMPs are documents that set out policies and measures to help manage fishing at sustainable levels. And that the plans, together with policies taken forward by the Scottish Government (and other fisheries administrations), will help us achieve or contribute to the achievement of the fisheries objectives set out in the Fisheries Act.
- In a Scottish context, Scotland's Fisheries Management Strategy sets the overall strategic framework for fisheries management in Scotland. The FMPs are another element in delivering the Strategy in Scotland, and improve transparency and confidence in sustainability of Scotland's fisheries management.
- We propose that FMPs provide high-level signposting to existing policies and measures (e.g. monitoring and enforcement, technical measures, plans for Future Catching Policy, etc).
- And noted that Defra have published consultations on 6 frontrunner FMPs, which include NQS. We are really keen that the plans are not a top-down product and we are keen that there is a strong element of co management.
- The 21 FMPs have to be in place by the end of December 2024 and we want to have a public consultation in Spring next year.

- Following some internal thinking we propose inviting Seafish to help lead the production of the two Nephrops plans and to scope out the future work on NQS FMPs.
- Seafish have been involved in the development of the frontrunners and have invaluable experience and can add a lot of value.
- At the FMAC meeting last week we discussed establishing a sub-group for FMPs for the coming months while the 21 plans are fleshed out.
- If there is interest in participating in the FMAC sub-group please get in touch with FMP@gov.scot or Kerrie.Campbell@gov.scot

9. AoB

None.

Next meeting suggested for December or January. JW welcomed views on whether to have a face-to-face or on-line meeting.

13:20 Close