**MEETING MINUTES**

**SWRIFG**

**DTG: 13 Nov 2023**

**Location: Glasgow City Centre**

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| **Attendees** | **Contact details** |
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| Mark Griffin Chair WCRIFG (MG) |  |
| EW CFA |  |
| AR CFA |  |
| KM CFA |  |
| NT MIFA - online |  |
| CF Scot Marine Science - online |  |
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| Apologies |  |
| SK WCSP |  |
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| **Minutes** | **Action** |
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| 1. Chairs Welcome and Introduction

The chair welcomed all. He highlighted a full agenda but priority for meeting was to discuss implications of Crab/Lobster assessment in advance of Ministerial meeting 16 Nov. |  |
| 1. Members introduction and update:

CFA. EW commented CFA has approx. 40 boats but that membership declining as boats leave industry. Members of CIFA. Mix of static, mobile and nomadic boats.MIFA. NT briefed that main issue was the status and future of the ‘Crab box’ project. Now in last year of project. Requested MD give guidance as to what is to happen next. Ideally a SSI or similar to legislate for this successful voluntary project. MG commented that the issue had been raised recently with MD who were considering their options.CF briefed the mtg on the 1 yr extension of the Razor Clam fishing pilot/project – based on success of the emerging fishery. | MG to pursue with MD |
| 1. Chair Policy Update:
2. Post HPMA Consultation. Results published 7 Nov – all should read. Largest response to a Govt consultation >5000. MG commented that most individual members had NOT responded. Associations must encourage individuals to respond as most consultations receive low numbers of response therefore the more fishermen/families/friends/communities respond the better the likely outcome.

EW commented:Online form too complicated and took too long to fill in hence minimal individual respondents.Lack of confidence in the govt and their interpretation/validity of the outcomes causing apathy.Suggested that in fishing related consultations there should be a specific section for fishermen to offer comment.MPA/PMFs. MG commented that the work on these was progressing with a target date of 2025 for implementation following final consultation.MG summed up this section by reminding the mtg that the Govt is looking at other/new methods of marine protection. Associations must engage with members and encourage all to participate in any future consultations. 2 hours of online time to influence the future of the industry is time very well spent.1. <12m Vessel Tracking System (VMS) consultation. Consultation closed 07 Nov. Expect very few responses. Govt have stated that initial capital and installation costs will be met or heavily subsidised. Operational costs, maintenance and annual user fees will probably lie with the boat owner. CF commented that units already installed in the scallop fleet had so far showed high levels of reliability and functionality. Generally thought that this is a positive use of technology to assist in marine planning/fisheries management.

EW and NT commented that main concerns were:1. Security and management of data. Public/competitors access would lead to loss of intimate fishing knowledge of successful grounds/locations and thus loss of income and potentially overfishing. Data from scallop boats (already monitored) being used against them on sensitive scallop grounds.
2. Linked to i above, concerns that NGOs and the like could use FOI to access location and vessel data for campaign purposes. Stressed Govt must implement a robust data protection protocol.
3. Monitoring will identify areas of mobile fishing operations but will not take account of the results of the AnchorLabs and potential for mobile fishing the water column over and above prohibited seabed areas.
4. CF commented that English experience and lessons learned would provide a good starting point for the Scottish implementation plan.
5. Govt Crab/Lobster assessment 2019. MG briefed on results of meetings and discussions with MD and individual associations. There was a general acceptance that crab/lobster stock in general was under pressure/declining although locally some areas were experiencing a steady season with larger individuals and an increase in smaller/younger stock. However, the lack of current and regionally specific data was causing immense frustration within the industry as no indication if recent voluntary stock mitigation/management measures were having any impact. Overall though, MG stressed that MD and the Govt were taking the results very seriously and were likely to explore options to mitigate the implications of the stock assessment. He suggested that the SWIFG should take the decision to implement as soon as possible a regional voluntary stock/fishing management plan to address the situation which might thereby influence, in advance, any MD/Govt propositions. This principle was generally accepted.
6. NT acknowledged the stock assessment and commented that he and his association had already looked at additional voluntary measures over and above those already in existence in the ‘crab box’ and locally.
7. He emphasised the requirement to co-ordinate effort across crab/lobster **and** prawn creeling to prevent overfishing and uncontrolled transfer of effort to other species.
8. NT asked if anyone knew where and if the results of a crab tagging exercise in the region were ever publicised?
9. KM spoke for CFA. Increases in the water temp had effected the lobster fishing in the Clyde. Formerly a summer target stock the lobster fishery was now producing better results in Dec-Jan. Some lobsters were generally bigger and he confirmed the preponderance of smaller lobster this year. In addition the shedding patterns were changing. This apparent change in behaviour re-enforces the urgent need for localised scientific research to understand why this is happening and the likely outcome.
10. MG Commented that SSGFA had made similar observations in the Solway fishery.
11. CF identified that it was obvious that more ‘science’ was required - and urgently, to identify and understand the consequences of the recent and quite rapid rise in water temp in the region.
12. He commented that there are several Scottish universities that are available to undertake these studies – just need Govt funding and direction.
13. NT ended the discussion by reminding the Chair that any measures undertaken to restrict/control Input and output MUST apply to non Scottish vessels too such as the NI/IOM/English ‘Super crabbers’ ( apparently there is a S Irish super crabber recently registered in NI now fishing off the Scottish coast?)
14. MG introduced the suggestion that a ban on the landing of ‘berried’ lobsters should be included immediately in any proposals from the associations.
15. NT suggested a study of the W Isles creel limit project as a source of data to influence SWRIFG planning.
16. MachAirWind farm. MG reminded the forum that the development by SSE of the MachAirWind Farm brought with it a large sum of money for community projects. The associations – particularly CFA and MIFA should look at potential infrastructure opportunities to support their regions.
17. Technology/projects. MG briefly mentioned several experiments recently undertaken in NI/England involving creel lights, square mesh escape panels, net lights at escape panels and impact of turbidity of water and undersize fish escapes.
 | All to encourage individual responses.MG to forward to MDMDMDMG to co-ord regional effort plan -AllMIFAMG to ask MDNatureScot/MD Science.MDMDAllAllAll |
| 1. Members Agenda Items. Due to time pressure this item was deleted from the meeting. The discussions in item 3 had covered most issues.
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| 1. Ministerial Meeting 16 Nov Forum Points . MG briefed the meeting on the 6 proposed agenda items for the forthcoming Ministerial meeting. The points had been collated by all 6 RIFG.
2. The meeting generally agreed on the 6 strategic issues presented.
3. The top 3 presented meeting agenda points were seen as the most important to the SWRIFG – Focus on Inshore Fisheries, Inshore stock science and data and MD resource deficit.
 | MG |
| 1. There being no further time available the meeting concluded at 2000. The Chair commented that he would debrief the meeting of the outcomes from the Ministerial meeting in due course.
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| 1. Date of next meeting was not set but likely to be early in the New Year.
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MJ Griffin

Chair SWRIFG