

MARINE DIRECTORATE

Fisheries Management and Conservation (FMAC) – Inshore Sub Group – Meeting #3

NOTE OF MEETING

29-JAN-2024 10:00 – 12:30

Online via Microsoft Teams

Confirmed		
Jim Watson	JW	Marine Directorate (MD)
Stuart Bell	SB	MD
Ellen Huis	EH	MD
Cara Duncan	CD	MD
Carlos Mesquita	CM	MD
Lynda Blackadder	LB	MD
Annabel Arbuthnot	AA	MD
Lily Braid	LB	MD
Jo Holbrook	JH	MD
Clive Fox	CF	Scottish Association for Marine Science
Elena Balestri	EB	Scottish Fishermen's Federation (SFF)
Nina Valentine	NV	SFF
Alex Watson-Crook	AW-C	Scottish Inshore Fisheries Trust
Kenny Coull	KCo	Scottish Whitefish Producers' Association
Sheila Keith	SK	Shetland Fisherman's Association
Jenny Mouat	JM	North and East Coast Regional Inshore Fisheries Group (RIFG)
Mark Griffin	MG	Southwest RIFG
Alastair Hamilton	AH	Northwest RIFG
Hilary Burgess	HB	Shetland RIFG
Alasdair Macleod	AM	Outer Hebrides RIFG
Phil Bennett	PB	Orkney RIFG
David Donnan	DD	Naturescot
Hannah Fennell	HF	Orkney Fisheries Association
Elaine Whyte	EW	Community Inshore Fisheries Alliance / Clyde Fishermen's Association
Lucy Kay	LK	Community of Arran Seabed Trust
John Robertson	JR	Shetland Shellfish Management Organisation
Alistair 'Bally' Philp	BP	Scottish Creel Fishermen's Federation – Scottish Scallop Divers Association
Andrew Brown	AB	Macduff Shellfish
Duncan MacInnes	DMac	Western Isles Fisherman's Association
Calum Duncan	CaD	Marine Conservation Society
Phil Taylor	PT	Open Seas
Robert Younger	RY	Scottish Sea Angling Conservation Network /

		Fisheries Management Scotland
Michele De Noia	MdN	Naturescot

Apologies		
None.		

1. Welcome and actions of previous meeting. (JW)

- This is meeting #3 with the previous one being held 23rd October.
- Outputs from this group will be available via the [RIFG](#) website, which now has a 'national meetings' section for the FMAC Inshore Sub Group.
- There is one new member of the group, Robert Younger - representing Scottish Sea Angling Conservation Network & Fisheries Management Scotland.

There are further new membership requests which will be shared with the group soon.

- The group were asked to consider making our next meeting in person.
- Actions of previous meeting:
 - **ACTION 1:** SB to coordinate with RIFG Chairs on updates to website, including outputs of this meeting. **COMPLETED**
 - **ACTION 2:** JW/SB to progress Action Plan following feedback of meeting #2, including removing HPMA references. **COMPLETED**
 - **ACTION 3:** CM to update on stock assessment indices (when possible) and to make presentation available to group. **NOT COMPLETED.**
 - **ACTION 4:** All to provide feedback to MD on the merits of establishing a science working group. **NOT COMPLETED** – no feedback was received from the group on this following meeting #2.

Questions and discussion:

- PT requested clarification on updating the group action plan and Terms of Reference. JW answered that we had responded to feedback on these documents after the last meeting, that they are live documents, and were intended to be fluid as the group progressed.

Action

All group members to respond on whether they wish Meeting #4 to be in person.

2. RIFG update (SB)

A written summary of RIFG work since meeting #2 was shared with the group ahead of the meeting in order to inform questions and discussion.

SB also gave a brief update on work with the RIFG network, including:

- RIFG review
 - This work was planned under the January 2023 review of the RIFG network.
 - Marine Analytical Unit are leading the review from January to June 2024.
 - It will consist of a desk study, interviews with some stakeholders and an online survey open to all.
 - Aims to evaluate network effectiveness, understand whether it is fulfilling its role and to use findings to review the current approach.
 - Information on how we communicate this will follow in due course.
- RIFG Operational Plan
 - Increased transparency and focus on meaningful work have been a big part of the 2023 refresh.
 - We are keen to delineate the concept of the FMP as it exists in the Joint Fisheries Statement from the RIFGs' Operational Plan.
 - Chairs have been working on an Operational Plan that will provide information about their scope, remit and function.
 - This will be a public facing document and will be made available in due course.

Questions and discussion:

- LK – requested more information about the voluntary code of practice for the Southwest.
 - MG gave an overview of the voluntary agreement he is developing and that he had communicated with some stakeholders regarding the voluntary nature of the agreement.
 - HF expressed concern at the approach of portraying a voluntary agreement as being legislation.
- There was general discussion about the use of voluntary agreements including:
 - JM expressed support for voluntary agreements and their expansion to cover things like the landing of berried females.
 - BP said that from an SCFF perspective, creel limits are already within the bounds of their policy. But this is restricted to three miles as they do not believe it would be easy to secure agreement with super-crabbers.
 - AH agreed voluntary agreements as being a good start point with benefits derived from their flexibility.
 - EW drew distinction between the previous voluntary agreement used in the Firth of Clyde and MG's more recent one. She stressed the importance of ensuring crab and lobster fishers are involved in discussion on such things.
 - There was general discussion about ongoing concerns with super-crabbers and challenges arising from vessels from different areas and different administrations nullifying good work done via local agreement.
- DMac gave a brief update on the Outer Hebrides Pilot and the role of tracking in improving the evidence base.
- There was general discussion about issues with fishing businesses obtaining crew.
 - AB asked whether the northwest region and Outer Hebrides were experiencing the same difficulties as in the southwest.
 - AMc noted similar challenges, in Uist particularly.

- DMac noted challenges even when going through the recognised Home Office channels to source crew; and that UK Government policy needs to be more than political point scoring on illegal immigrants.
- AB suggested we start to design a work visa so it's ready for the new political administration when it comes in.
- BP raised a number of points including the potential to make voluntary agreements permanent, differing minimum landing sizes and V-notching. JW noted that these points would be captured.
- JM – gave a brief update on renewables and their impact on inshore fishermen of the spatial squeeze.

No actions

3. Inshore fisheries management improvements (JW)

JW delivered a presentation setting out proposals for Inshore fisheries management improvements and a roadmap to deliver these.

Questions and discussion:

- BP welcomed the proposals and said that a cohesive engagement strategy would be a good plan. He noted that some possible mechanisms (like Days at Sea and/or closures) were potentially devastating but others like normalising the minimum landing size, creel numbers etc could be useful. Approaches like MLS should be consistent nationally and UK-wide.
- AB said this was great news and acknowledged MD for responding to what industry have been saying.
- There followed general discussion covering:
 - How to incorporate transient vessels.
 - The possibility of establishing a science sub group.
 - Communication strategy.
 - Consideration of what happens beyond 12 miles.
- JM welcomed the proposals and said that as wide a conversation as possible is needed to reach members who are not part of a network.
- EW agreed, and noted that assuring compliance and correct handling of latent fishing capacity will also be of importance.
- DMac said that this must be discussed with industry in detail.

Actions

- SB to communicate with group regarding meeting in around 5 weeks.

4. BREAK

5. Delivering ecosystem-based management (RY)

RY delivered a presentation on taking an ecosystem-based approach to inshore fisheries which was made available to the group. Summary points were:

- Ecosystems require a broad focus on ecosystem health
- Ecosystem-based management is a legal and policy requirement
- There is a process in place to deliver called the Marine Strategy
- Most recent assessment shows Scotland failing on GES
- A focus on benthic habitat shows a huge gap between current fishery practice and ecosystem-based management
- Do not believe the current programme of measures for benthic health meet the legal requirements of the Marine Strategy Regulations
- Advise the Scottish Government use this Group to assist in identifying measures to ensure Scotland delivers ecosystem-based management.

Questions and discussion:

- LK said that this approach is about the ecosystem as a whole, and if we can recover it, that it will benefit everyone.
- BP – many stocks are at tiny fractions of their historic biomass. If we can even slightly improve the available biomass it will ultimately enable the increase of fishing opportunity over time.
- JW said that RY's points deserve an airing on the wider FMAC group and Marine Directorate is also aware of the need to improve communication to stakeholders particularly with regards to joining up the policy dots and progress with the programme of measures.
- EW – we need to treat indigenous fishing communities as part of the ecosystem and be clear how they are impacted by the policy we make. RY acknowledged, saying that this approach does not separate mankind from nature and wants to ensure that we are able to extract the resources we need without disadvantaging nature. JW stressed that it was important to recognise the balance between the objectives in the Fisheries Act and no one objective has precedent over the other.
- AW-C – asked about whether multi-species FMP development will be happening. JW advised that Seafish have been commissioned to undertake some scoping work to help inform our approach to Non-quota species FMPs in Scotland. This will commence after the Nephrops FMP work in the second half of this year.

No actions

6. Improving the inshore evidence base (BP)

BP delivered a presentation on improving the evidence base which was made available to the group. The presentation concluded with two requests for the FMAC Chair:

- That we discuss and gauge support for the inclusion of the over 12m demersal trawl sector in the proposed VMS rollout .
- That we discuss and gauge support for the creation of a working group to progress the development of a framework for inshore FMP's for further development by the RIFG's

Questions and discussion:

- JW advised of plans regarding engaging Seafish in scoping non-quota species FMPs and invited comment on whether to engage on this before their work had concluded.
- BP – I don't think we should delay any of this. I think we start the process now starting with management of crab and lobster effort and how we can create opportunity and protect jobs.
- KC – ICES provide advice on stocks and are building an ecosystem-based system of management. Also Nephrops stocks are not in the poor state being portrayed here. The distribution of the stocks have changed but that is not necessarily to do with mobile gear activity.
- JW noted the positives with recent evidence suggesting recovery of some key stocks.
- EH responded to points made about position reporting by larger fishing vessels. She drew distinctions between Vessel Monitoring Systems (VMS) and inshore vessel tracking of the type discussed in our recent consultation. The Fisheries Management Strategy Delivery Plan says that in the longer term we will consider the potential adjusting the rate of reporting via VMS, that work would be progressed through FMAC. However, for the purpose of this group – the priority should be the rollout of vessel tracking to *circa* 1,700 < 12 metre vessels to improve the inshore evidence base.
- DMac noted the technical example of the OH Pilot and how tech has moved on since the EU requirement for VMS.
- EW noted that we don't want to squeeze people out, we want to adopt better management.

Actions

JW to seek clarification on timescales for Seafish scoping work on FMPs, and consider options for engaging with this group.

9. Update on scientific trial of electrofishing for razor clams (CD)

CD provided a brief update on the electrofishing for razor clam scientific trial.

- Extension to razor clam trial- authorised until 31st January 2025. The extension aims to strengthen the evidence base and inform future decisions about capacity for a sustainable razor clam fishery in Scottish waters, including developing fisheries management measures.
- Year 5 annual report is currently being completed and will be available online soon.

Questions and discussion

- CalD noted that razor clams are part of next tranche of stocks to be consulted on for the Good Fish Guide.
- CD confirmed to AW-C that all management measures would remain the same and that discussions are underway regarding a seasonal closure.

No action

9. AoB

AoB items was removed from agenda due to the overrun but it was agreed outstanding matters would be addressed next time.

No action

12:40 Close