

## MARINE DIRECTORATE

### Fisheries Management and Conservation (FMAC) – Inshore Sub-Group – Meeting #5

16-APR-2024 10:00-12:30

via Microsoft Teams

<b>Confirmed</b>		
Jim Watson	JW	Marine Directorate (MD) - Chair
Stuart Bell	SB	MD
Ellen Huis	EH	MD
Lynda Blackadder	LB	MD
Matt Leslie	ML	MD
Jo Holbrook	JH	MD
Helen Downie	HD	MD
Mark Nicoll	MN	MD
Annabel Arbuthnot	AA	MD
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 / SFF
Andrew Brown	AB	Macduff Shellfish / SSA
Duncan MacInnes	DM	Western Isles Fisherman's Association
Calum Duncan	CD	Marine Conservation Society
Phil Taylor	PT	Open Seas (OS)
Robert Younger	RY	Scottish Sea Angling Conservation Network / Fisheries Management Scotland
David Gilchrist	DG	Anglo Scottish Fishermen's Association
Holly Kaiser	HK	Seafish
Clive Fox	CF	Scottish Association for Marine Science
Nina Valentine	NV	SFF
Kenny Coull	KC	Scottish Whitefish Producers' Association
John Robertson	JR	Shetland Shellfish Management Organisation

Alex Watson-Crook	AW-C	Scottish Inshore Fisheries Trust
Lucy Kay	LK	Community of Arran Seabed Trust
Paul Macdonald	PM	Scottish Fisherman's Organisation
Bally Philp	BP	Scottish Creel Fishermen's Federation / Scottish Scallop Divers Association
Sheila Keith	SK	Shetland Fisherman's Association

<b>Apologies</b>		
Carlos Mesquita	CM	MD

### 1. Welcome and actions of previous meeting.

- The Chair welcomed attendees and highlighted that the focus of the meeting was to outline proposals for interim management measures in line with the inshore fisheries road map.
- He also thanked the group for the positive and constructive discussions to date and noted the discussions around the coast through the RIFG network and Associations had given 100s of fishers and others the opportunity to input.
- Confirmed that outputs from this group are available via the RIFG website, which now has a 'national meetings' section for the FMAC Inshore Subgroup.
- Noted that there is one membership request in from Blue Marine Foundation, and that due process is being followed to consider this application.
- SCFF asked for the previous meeting's outcome report to be reviewed as they do not feel that their written submission had been accurately reflected.

### 2. Inshore interim measures – presentation followed by Q&A

MD provided background to the inshore roadmap and described how we have continued to engage with stakeholders following its introduction on 29 January 2024. These discussions have helped us to better understand concerns and potential issues, identify key themes and shape the proposed interim measures, which include:

- a. Prohibition of retention, landing and sale of egg-bearing crab and lobster by any licensed fishing vessel in Scotland.
- b. Prohibition on creel vessels of over 12 metres - with a track record of retained catches of crab and lobster, greater than 200 tonnes in any rolling 12-month period since 2020 - fishing within 6 nautical miles of the Scottish mainland (this will not include the limits around some outlying islands).
- c. Progression of voluntary measures and initiatives aimed at delivering

positive outcomes for inshore fisheries through the RIFG network to include:

- I. Encouraging groups of fishers to agree acceptable gear limits and spatial controls within their region.
- II. Encouraging methods of improving the reproductive potential of shellfish stocks, such as v-notching of lobsters.
- III. Encouraging stakeholder behaviours that assist compliance work, such as optimising quality of landings data submitted to Marine Directorate, reporting unlicensed activity, and promoting best practice among those businesses buying shellfish directly from vessels.

MD outlined how these interim proposals fit into the wider roadmap for improvements to our inshore fisheries and Fisheries Management Strategy 2020-2030, and described how they will be followed by consideration of a wider set of measures, which will be developed following further stakeholder engagement and brought to public consultation in late 2024. MD also recognised delays to publication of shellfish stock assessments and set out improvements to how our science and assessments are undertaken to inform fisheries management decisions, consisting of:

- a. Bringing crab and lobster stock assessments, based on existing data (to 2023), up to date during 2024.
- b. Considering other indicators of stock health that could be utilised on a more regular basis.
- c. Increasing shellfish sampling by exploring options including utilising routine compliance inspections, and fishers helping collect data to support future stock assessments.

Following the presentation, several key themes were discussed with stakeholders. The proposed interim measures were subsequently considered suitable:

#### Prohibition of landing of egg-bearing crab and lobster

- There was strong support from stakeholders for proposals to prohibit landing of berried hens and recognition of anticipated benefits to stocks. There was broad support from members for this approach to sustainability and for aligning with the “common sense approach” already taken elsewhere in the UK/internationally. MD recognised some concern in the Southwest and confirmed that Galloway Static Gear Fishermen’s Association will be engaged to discuss implementation of this policy further since there is no sampling data available for the Solway. Science colleagues will consider options to increase sampling in this area.

#### Control of ‘supercrabbers’

- There was unanimous and strong support around the coast for controls on ‘supercrabbers’ in our inshore waters. While there is not a clear definition of

these vessels, they are generally observed to be large and to retain catches far in excess of typical inshore boats, and their nomadic nature can undermine local voluntary agreements. There were some questions about the potential impact of these vessels, MD evidence suggests these vessels are few in number and work both onshore and offshore, officials confirmed that we will engage further to better understand the impacts on these vessels where possible. OS suggested input controls would be more suitable and DM felt that the local creel limits used in the Outer Hebrides would be appropriate for prohibiting these vessels if that mechanism were used.

#### Voluntary measures

- There was general discussion on use of the RIFG network's project framework for voluntary initiatives that would improve sustainability, such V-notching of lobsters
- Enforcing controls on unlicensed fishing businesses – We can work with fishers to improve reporting to enable us to better identify and address unlicensed fishing businesses.

The following key themes were considered but were deemed not suitable as short-term interim measures and would require further discussion before any could be implemented as a management measure:

- Minimum and maximum landing size changes
- Review of latent shellfish capacity
- Closed seasons
- Regionalised management approach
- Catch limits / output controls
- Creel limits / input controls

Following implementation of interim measures, we will further discuss further measures with a view to bringing these to public consultation later this year.

#### Further discussion points

V notching – Members were generally supportive of this measure, it was noted that this has already been undertaken on a voluntary basis in the Outer Hebrides. Some members expressed concerns regarding a skewed sex ratio in the landings and would welcome further discussions with science colleagues about possible options (voluntary sampling, observer programmes, and camera trials were highlighted).

Enforcement – Some members asked for additional information about how measures would be enforced. MD confirmed that operations officers would add on checks to landings, at market, processors, etc. Furthermore, MD work in the promote/prevent space and will push messaging by talking with fishers to ensure

all are aware of measures coming in. There will be an increase in shellfish patrols especially in the early days of the measures.

Science – Officials reiterated intent to undertake a programme of work to improve our sampling and data through working with Compliance officials, RIFGs and fishers, and will review if there are alternative ways we can complement our sample data. We will also consider how existing data may be better used to inform fisheries management (e.g. length-based indicators and survey-based indices). Members expressed support for measures to improve our understanding of the status of our fisheries. BP and SK asked SG to consider how other fisheries (e.g. dredging, trawling, gill netting, etc.) impact on crabs and lobsters, as we seek to improve our inshore fisheries.

Spatial management – PT expressed concern about whether key themes sufficiently address wider environmental considerations, particularly as spatial management has not been proposed for interim measures. MD highlighted that the focus here is on interim measures, and that this is something we are considering more widely in the longer term.

Implementation - Members queried how and when interim measures will come into force. MS confirmed that we will consider internally the best mechanism available to us and intend to implement in May.

Overall, members were very supportive of the package of interim measures, and were keen to have ongoing dialogue and help develop broader measures to improve inshore fisheries.

### **3. Marine Fund Scotland (MFS)**

MD introduced MFS and confirmed that this is the final year of the funding allocated to SG on the back of the UKG 3-year spending review, with no further funding currently confirmed after this point. MD highlighted application process and gave an overview of the type of projects which could be considered, highlighting that this list was not exhaustive, and any questions should be directed to MFS team.

The total value of the fund is £14M per annum, a split of capital and resource funding, with the current first round closing to applications on 09 May 2024. There will be a second round later this year if the remaining funding permits. MD highlighted that there are new WTO rules on fisheries subsidies which place restrictions on what can be funded. MD confirmed that MFS could be directed to

address inshore issues as long as the project meets the objectives and requirements of the fund.

MD acknowledged frustrations surrounding the single year timeline for projects to apply, complete and claim funding, however there was currently no opportunity to provide multiyear funding.

Open Seas highlighted that they were pleased to see MD adopting the new WTO requirements.

#### **5. Update on the RIFG review:**

MD outlined that the last evaluation of the RIFG network was completed in 2015, and so this review seeks to give us a refreshed understanding of the network and make recommendations about how they might be improved to support delivery of high-quality fisheries management in the future.

Researchers from the Marine Analytical Unit of MD have completed around 30 meetings with fishers so far plus an additional 12-15 with other organisations (both representing fishers and other interests e.g. environment). Expect fieldwork and online survey to be completed in the next fortnight, so far around 70 responses have been received to the online survey and officials hope to get closer to 100 by close. Officials are open to meeting with other organisations and invited members to flag any further organisations that may be helpful to interview. Members requested meetings with CCN, COAST and SE Link, as well as suggesting other potential stakeholder groups e.g. sea angling representatives.

#### **AoB**

- SG confirmed that we will communicate with CIFA following the meeting on matters relating to the inshore fisheries pilots.
- MD thanked members for their positive response to science request for volunteers to trial camera Artificial Intelligence (AI).
- SCFF requested that MD create a working group to develop a framework to support drafting of regional fishery management plans, and highlighted their preference to develop cross-species areas based Fisheries Management Plans (FMPs). MD outlined that this is premature at this time until we have received the outcome of other workstreams (e.g. RIFG review, Seafish FMP scoping report).