

MARINE DIRECTORATE

FISHERIES MANAGEMENT AND CONSERVATION (FMAC)

INSHORE SUBGROUP

Discussion on next steps to improve inshore fisheries in Scotland – July 2024

Background

We met in [January 2024](#) to discuss a transition towards more agile management of our inshore fisheries that is regionalised and supported by more frequent scientific advice to help balance economic, social and environmental outcomes. Shortly after this meeting we shared a [discussion paper](#) to support development of this concept and consideration of potential management approaches. This paper included the following objectives:

Project objectives

1. Evaluate the potential for introducing national interim measures for the 2024 crab and lobster fishery.
2. Progress complementary transformational projects such as inshore vessel tracking, reviewing our RIFG network and delivering improvements to our scientific evidence base.
3. Consult on a broad package of inshore management proposals in late 2024, informed by input from FMAC Inshore Sub-group.

Progress against project objectives

1. Evaluate the potential for introducing interim measures for the 2024 crab and lobster fishery.

In [March 2024](#) we came together for members to report on and consider the key themes and ideas arising from their stakeholder engagement. Following this meeting, we announced national interim measures for the 2024 crab and lobster fishery at our meeting in [April 2024](#). These were:

- A national prohibition on landing of berried crab and lobster.
- Controls on fishing activity by the largest creel vessels operating inside six miles of Scotland's coast.

2. Progress complementary transformational projects such as inshore vessel tracking, reviewing our RIFG network and delivering improvements to our scientific evidence base.

Independent analysts have considered the responses to the inshore tracking and monitoring consultation which ran in late 2023. We are currently considering their findings and evaluating options, with a view to putting advice to Scottish Ministers.

We are in the process of reviewing our RIFG and expect a report will be prepared for Scottish Ministers in the autumn.

With regards to improving our available evidence base, Marine Directorate Science advisors have set out plans to:

- Update crab and lobster stock assessments, based on existing data, to provide updated advice to Scottish Ministers to inform management of these fisheries.
- Consider other indicators of stock health for crab and lobster that could be used on a more regular basis.
- Work with industry to increase shellfish sampling by exploring options, including utilising routine compliance inspections, and fishers helping collect data to support future stock assessments.

3. Consult on a broad package of inshore management proposals in late 2024, informed by input from FMAC Inshore Sub-group.

On 04 July 2024 we discussed our next steps including potential for public engagement in late 2024. During the meeting, we set out possible areas for this engagement to explore, including:

- Developing a strategic framework for inshore fisheries management that could include an administrative mechanism enabling access to inshore waters and accounting for regional distinctions
- Seeking views on national measures, for example reviewing unused fishing permissions such as shellfish entitlements, in order to better assess the risk posed by unchecked future growth in the inshore fleet size and / or capacity.
- A call for evidence seeking broad input from stakeholders on inshore fisheries and the improvement of management.

Emergent themes from FMAC Inshore Subgroup meeting on 04 July 2024

- **Concept** - There was recognition that our tools for delivering nuanced management are limited and that a nationwide approach to fisheries management is often not appropriate. There was support for developing a strategic framework to enable delivery of more agile, regional management that reflects pressures and fisheries priorities in different areas. It was recognised that this offers an opportunity to future proof our fisheries to ensure sustainability whilst concurrently responding to wider marine issues such as climate change.
- **Timeframe** – Concerns were raised about our ability to develop proposals sufficiently to consult on later this year, given the complexity of the proposal and wide-ranging considerations surrounding its delivery. Some felt stakeholders would be unable to effectively feed into the development of proposals in order to deliver a true co-management approach.
- **Outcomes** – It was recognised that we must be clear when defining measures of success to evaluate both the framework and regional management, with agreement that socio-economic and islands impacts must be considered alongside environmental impacts. We must be clear what

successful outcomes will look like for different fisheries/ regions.

- **Objectives** – We must be clear about the objectives of this policy alongside our fisheries priorities, which should include wider objectives such as those outlined in [The Fisheries Act 2020](#), our Fisheries Management Strategy 2020-2030 [12 point action plan](#), and [Scotland's National Marine Plan](#).

What next – action for members

We expect FMAC Inshore Sub-group to reconvene in late summer 2024. During this meeting we would like group members to come prepared to discuss views in answer of “**what does an agile, regional approach to inshore fisheries management look like?**”. It may help to consider this in the context of social, environmental and economic principles.

We recognise views expressed by members that a public consultation in late 2024 is ambitious. We would therefore like to use the next meeting of the FMAC inshore subgroup to take stock of stakeholder opinion about both the policy and proposed engagement process.