

MARINE DIRECTORATE

Fisheries Management and Conservation (FMAC) – Inshore Sub-Group – Meeting #7

Note of meeting.

27 August 2024 1400 – 1600 - via Microsoft Teams

Attendees	
Jim Watson	Marine Directorate (MD) (policy) - Chair
Stuart Bell	MD (policy)
Ellen Huis	MD (policy)
Helen Downie	MD (policy)
Lynda Blackadder	MD (science)
Gordon Steele	MD (operations)
Cara Duncan	MD (policy)
Chloe Aird	MD (policy)
Jennifer Mouat	North and East Coast Regional Inshore Fisheries Group (RIFG)
Mark Griffin	Southwest RIFG
Alastair Hamilton	Northwest RIFG
Hilary Burgess	Shetland RIFG
Phil Bennett	Orkney RIFG
Hannah Fennell	Orkney Fisheries Association
David Gilchrist	Anglo Scottish Fishermen's Association
Alex Watson-Crook	Scottish Inshore Fisheries Trust
Elaine Whyte	Community Inshore Fisheries Alliance
Elena Balestri	Scottish Fisherman's Federation (SFF)
Kirsten Leahy	SFF
Andrew Brown	Macduff Shellfish
Duncan MacInnes	Western Isles Fishermen's Association
Phil Taylor	Open Seas
David Gilchrist	Anglo Scottish Fishermen's Association
Lewis Tattershall	Seafish
Clive Fox	Scottish Association for Marine Science
Kenny Coull	Scottish Whitefish Producers' Association
Rufus Danby	Scottish Whitefish Fish Producer's Association
John Robertson	Shetland Shellfish Management Organisation
Lucy Kay	Coastal Communities Network
Michele de Noia	NatureScot
Sheila Keith	Shetland Fisherman's Association
Caitlin Turner	Sustainable Inshore Fisheries Trust
Nina Valentine	Scottish Fishermen's Federation

Robert Younger	Scottish Sea Angling Conservation Network / Fisheries Management Scotland
----------------	---------------------------------------------------------------------------

Apologies	
David Donnan	NatureScot
Kevin McDonnell	Orkney & West of Scotland Fisheries PO

Agenda

1. Welcome, introductions & review of actions:
2. Marine Directorate update:
3. Razor clam scientific trial:
4. Inshore fisheries improvement project:
5. AOB
6. Close

1. Welcome, introductions and review of actions

- The Chair welcomed everyone, and noted the main focus today is to discuss next steps for the inshore fisheries improvement project. We will also give a wider update on MD work streams.
- Welcome Kirsten Leahy (SFF) who will be providing maternity cover for Nina Valentine.
- **ACTION** – SFA to share Rebuilding Scotland’s Fisheries Paper - **Complete.**
- **ACTION** – Fisheries members to encourage stakeholder groups to facilitate access to sampling locations - **Incomplete** and staff still having issues securing access to vessels for sampling.
- Members were asked to agree final minutes for 4th July meeting (#6).

2. Marine Directorate Update – Jim Watson

The Chair provided a Marine Directorate update covering a range of matters.

Interim measures

- Interim Crab and Lobster measures have been broadly well received though we are also alive to feedback from some stakeholders not in favour of them.
- Research is ongoing in the Solway to address data limitations and give us a better understanding of the fishery in that area.

- We continue to monitor 'super crabber' measures and will consider amendments if we feel these are appropriate.

FMAC

- We have moved FMAC into a more strategic space, establishing sub groups to help delivery key policy priorities. After almost two years it is right to review these arrangements, which includes processes, membership and structures.
- The Group were reminded that a survey has gone out to members, closing Friday 06 September; all were encouraged to submit a response.

Fisheries Strategy - 12 Point Plan

- It was noted that we regularly report on actions relating to the Strategy, but are currently delayed in completing the next full update report. We expect to publish in the next few months.

iVMS & REM

- It was noted that REM update was given at last FMAC meeting (26 June), an iVMS update at the last Inshore Subgroup meeting (04 July), and scallop REM presentation provided at scallop FMAC. Work is ongoing to conclude the inshore tracking and monitoring consultation, options are being considered and advice being prepared for Ministers. A substantive update will be provided once that work is complete.
- Scallop legislation is in force, pelagic provisions come into force in 2026. Feedback has been generally positive.

Marine Fund Scotland

- The MFS for 24/25 was vastly oversubscribed, so we were only able to support the highest priority projects
- We do not expect to re-open the MFS this year.
- 24/25 was the final year of guaranteed funding from the UK Gov, until the new UK Gov have a spending review.

RIFG review

- Interviews and high level analysis are complete, themes are being drawn out and report will be shared with Ministers before the end of 2024.

FMPs

- Early discussions are underway with Seafish to consider scoping work for NQS FMPs.

- A huge amount of effort has gone into developing FMPs, but delivery is challenging and an update on next steps will follow soon.

Recent Open Seas court ruling / NMP

- Following a request by Open Seas, it was noted that we are working across the Directorate to implement practical and proportionate processes to ensure we continue to take decisions in line with the judgment.

General discussion

- **Scientific evidence** – recap on work currently committed to by Marine Directorate Science, highlighted in previous meetings and the current work ongoing as part of the Solway Trial. We are expecting updated crab and lobster advice in 2024 and will share information on the Solway Trial in due course.
- **Coastal communities** – some attendees queried how coastal community groups can feed into fisheries management decisions and where this falls within Regional Marine Planning.

3. Razor clam scientific trial

- Report has been delayed due to staff resource being redirected to respond to a significant number of FOI / EIR requests.
- We hope to publish a Razor Clam Trial Scientific Progress Report soon.
- Since 2021 for Razors alone, Marine Directorate have been subject to 40 EIRs requiring over 32 individual MD staff, with an estimate of over 2700 hours of staff time used for responding.

General discussion

- Question regarding research into effects on non-target species.
- The possibility of expanding the trial to other vessels was raised. SAMS have a PhD student doing research on the impact on non-target species but the work is not finished therefore the report cannot be shared at the current time.
- Broad Bay was raised as evidence of management in the Western Isles where there remains a high abundance of razors.
- Handling FOI / EIR requests – the Government are open to feedback on how to share information and how stakeholders can submit requests for information.
- Marine Directorate are open to ideas, as to how to improve information sharing, but already do make a variety of information available as well as

utilising a number of established fora to share work being carried out.

- Fishing industry attendees expressed concerns regarding the Government being able to balance information sharing requests with the actual work of managing our national fisheries.

4. Inshore Fisheries Management Improvement (IFMI) Project

- MD delivered an overview of the FMAC discussion to date, reinforcing the two main threads of work:
 - 1. Use of interim measures.**
 - 2. A framework to support wider inshore fisheries management improvement.**

General discussion on use of interim measures followed, picking up some themes from the discussion paper.

- **Review** - Marine Directorate are clear on the short-term nature of our interim measures and remain committed to appropriate evaluation and review of these measures.
- **Timeline** - Interim measures have only been in place three months. once we have our updated scientific advice , we will work with stakeholders and review these arrangements in Q1 2025.
- **Engagement** - There was discussion about how views on interim measures would be gathered. Some areas of the coast have seen a mixed response to interim measures and there was a suggestion of national-level RIFG engagement to assist.

General discussion on a framework to support wider inshore fisheries management improvement

- **Discussion** - There was wide recognition that this is an opportunity to deliver real benefit to inshore fisheries via co-management but some concerns over the pace of the proposed project. To ensure we get it right, MD were encouraged by the majority present to slow down and undertake pre-consultation engagement to enable us to take stock of stakeholder views and lessons learned from successes elsewhere. However, there were differing views as to next steps, and that not all who spoke at the meeting favoured slowing down the process.
- **Next steps** - Given this weight of opinion, Marine Directorate are open to the possibility of utilising the opportunity for engagement later this year to hold a call for evidence. This would be an information gathering exercise seeking expert input from people, organisations and stakeholders with knowledge of inshore fisheries management. It would enable stakeholders to submit evidence without the constraints of tightly focussed questions, making clear the scope and focus of improvements to how we manage our

inshore fisheries, and providing an opportunity for stakeholders to shape development of this policy.

- **Evidence** – This approach would help to ensure that when we do consult on a framework to support wider inshore fisheries management measures, we do so with a clear view of stakeholder opinion and a strong evidence base. Although not unanimous, there was general support for this approach, but some attendees requested further information about what would be contained within the call for evidence.

General points raised

- A call for evidence would give stakeholders the chance to submit their thoughts and ideas in writing.
- Workshops could be useful ahead of eventual consultation.
- There was discussion regarding scope for an informal discussion within FMAC to see what a framework might look like, ahead of any wider public engagement.
- Fishers represented in the North West were generally supportive of our use of interim measures, but called for more views before rushing ahead into further consultation.
- Western Isles fishers will reflect on interim measures at the end of October, noting that large offshore islands should be looked at differently from the mainland. Stressing that careful consideration should be given rather than rushing ahead. Reflection should include the latest science.
- It was noted that it is difficult to talk to people about what they want when we do not know what's possible. We need to be clear what the scope of this work is, and avoid raising stakeholder expectations.
- There was support for the positive concepts within the Fisheries Management Strategy and continuing with what we have started.
- Discussion on how recreational fisheries get a voice was raised. The system should be able to balance their input with other interests.
- There is confusion about where fishing sits in the NMP2. To what degree and what capacity do local communities have to feed into fisheries management?

Summing up

- The Chair thanked all for contributing to the meeting today. The key take home points are that there is further discussion to be had by the group regarding the IFMI programme objectives, so that there is shared understanding. This is understandable given the complexity, technical nature and fundamental changes required to move from the current management structure to a new more agile and regional inshore management framework. It was noted there was consensus from the group on this point.

- It is important that we listen to such concerns, recognising our co-management approach and that measured change is more likely to lead to successful delivery.
- The group were asked if anyone disagreed with taking a step-by-step approach and moving towards pre-consultation engagement utilising a call-for-evidence, prior to any consulting on specific proposals at a later date. There were no disagreements with this approach.
- With regards to interim measures, once MD have received updated scientific evidence, we will communicate with stakeholders regarding evaluation of interim measures in Q1 2025 taking into account feedback on how we tackle this.
- The Chair advised that MD will communicate with Cabinet Secretary on our options for approaching the Inshore Fisheries Management Improvements (IFMI) Programme.
- MD will be in touch with attendees regarding future meetings of this group.
- Slides will also be shared via the RIFG website.

5. AOB / CLOSING REMARKS

- There was discussion about the aging fishing sector, with static and mobile fishers leaving the fleet, and the challenges of attracting new entrants. It was noted that there were some good examples to pull on, but there was no silver bullet. A focussed workshop on encouraging young people into the industry was suggested. This will be considered ahead of the next meeting.