



Minutes of a General Meeting held on Tuesday 29th April 2025

Present

Phil Bennett, Chair, Habib Chowdhury (Maritime & Coastguard Agency) Christine Rosie, (Orkney Fish Producers Organisation), Hannah Fennell (Orkney Fisheries Association), Ivan James (Fisher), Nick Nourse (Fisher), Eoin Sinclair (Fisher), Kirsten Leahy (Scottish Fishermen's Federation – via teams), Melissa Thomson (Fisher - via Teams), Susan Taylor (Minutes).

1 Welcome & Introductions

Phil welcomed everyone to the meeting and the attendees introduced themselves. Phil introduced Susan Taylor as the minute taker.

2 Apologies

Apologies were received from Kevin McDonnell (Orkney Fish Producers Organisation), Andrew Livingston (Marine Directorate, Operations) Robert Sinclair (Fisher) and Neil Matheson (Fisher).

3 Minutes of the meeting held on 28th January 2025

Comments had been received about the accuracy of a statement made at the last meeting, but the minutes were correct as this is what was actually said at the meeting. If the information given was incorrect, this would be treated as a correction of information. The correction would be noted in this meeting's minutes and an addendum note would be attached to the previous minutes.

As no further comments received, the minutes were deemed as an accurate record of the meeting held on 28/01/2025.

4 Matters Arising not Otherwise on the Agenda

a. Comments were made about accuracy of the statement that "legislation, The Marking of Creels (Scotland) Order 2020, only applies to licensed fishing boats...". Kirkwall Fisheries Office had confirmed this, and Phil is awaiting a response from MD.

b. Action Points From the Previous meeting

- 1 *Completed:* Phil will attend the next meeting of the Commercial Fisheries working group on Monday 26 May
- 2 *Completed / ongoing:* Phil will be attending a meeting with Orkney Island Council's Marine Planning Department on Wednesday 07/05/2025
- 3 *Completed / ongoing:* Phil has met Kate and will be attending a Community Catch update meeting on Wednesday 30/04/2025 - Phil noted that OC are looking for more fishers able to join the scheme
- 4 *Ongoing:* Phil advised he is still trying to contact Orkney Harbours but with little response and had sent an email to Jim Buck, without response to date. Phil asked if anyone else had similar difficulties. Hannah advised she had been in contact with them.
- 5 *Completed.*
- 6 *Completed*

5 Maritime & Coastguard Agency

Habib discussed the implications of Amendment 4, surveys required for transfer of ownership of de-registered vessels. For vessels under 15', a pre-registration survey is advised. For vessels between 15'-24', the MCA should be contacted in the first instance. Habib advised owners to contact MCA by email as early as possible and before the annual due date. He also advised the meeting that there would be blocks of survey dates to speed up the process. Phil asked if the proposed blocks would result in a cost reduction and Habib agreed that this may be possible. Habib advised

the group that two members of staff (Katy and Tarik) had now left and that although recruitment was ongoing, appointments and training would take time. Habib was asked if there was a necessity for new owners to have surveys re-done if the vessel already had a valid survey. Habib advised that every time a transfer of a vessel took place, a survey would be necessary. A fisherman commented that this would be hard on new owners who would have a delay before they were able to make their vessel pay and asked surveys could be expedited. Habib agreed that all requests would be dealt with as soon as possible.

6 Scallop Fisheries

The meeting was advised that a new dredger was in Orkney but there had been no conflict so far. It was suggested that the vessel was owned by a local fisherman and that this would be less of a concern than if it had been someone from out of the area. A fisherman raised a concern of harvesting of under sized specimens and fishing in prohibited areas.

Phil advised the group that there had been no further meetings of the FMAC Scallop subgroup and there had been nothing mentioned about the review of the FMAC structure. Hannah stated that a report had been published two weeks previously.

7 National Creel Boat survey results

Phil gave a summary of the results of the survey:

- Orkney fishermen were the most supportive of the Introduction of Interim Measures but were among those least affected.
- Orkney Fishermen have been affected, some significantly so, but not to the same degree as other areas of Scotland. Hannah raised the point that although smaller inshore vessels were largely unaffected, the consequences for larger vessels had been severe and the results did not reflect this. Phil pointed out that the survey only showed the opinions of those who had responded to the survey.

National Themes Emerging

- There is a strong regional difference.
- Nationally, the preferred 'Input Controls' were a further restriction on super crabbers out to 12nm and the introduction of restriction on creel numbers
- There is no real appetite for "Output controls" (i.e. quota, catch limits or Min / max landing sizes)
- The "Management controls", favoured nationally, are for increased monitoring and enforcement and a regional management approach

There were no questions, and the group were invited to view the full presentation on the website.

8 Evaluation of Regional Inshore Fisheries Groups

Phil discussed the results of the evaluation:

- The evaluation looked primarily at the 5-year period between 2019- 2023. (the history of the groups stretches back to the IFG pilots in 2009,)
 - What emerged from this process were ten key themes:
- 1 System: Clarity on the governance landscape of inshore fisheries management will help stakeholders know where to engage and where decisions are taken.
 - 2 Remit: The remit should be specific, achievable, and measurable. Key elements should include: a Chair-led forum for discussing local issues and potential solutions; ensuring inshore fishers' voices are heard by government; and supporting sustainability of the sector.
 - 3 Delivery: Tangible deliverables that align with the remit are essential to ensure value and best use of resources.
 - 4 Monitoring and reporting: Accountability should be delivered via a monitoring and reporting plan and regular published reports.
 - 5 Leadership: Direction should be set by the Marine Directorate and local leadership provided by regional Chairs. The Marine Directorate should maintain oversight of delivery, with Chairs taking initiative for local projects and enabling the voice of fishers to be heard by government.
 - 6 Engagement: Chairs should engage with all relevant stakeholders and prioritise regular interactions with inshore fishers. Removing barriers to the involvement of fishers should be a key priority.
 - 7 Membership: There is strong support for a forum designed for only fishing representatives, however, stakeholders recognise that the marine space is a shared resource so other marine stakeholders should be brought into management discussions. A more formal membership would improve transparency.
 - 8 Power: Groups should be enabled by the Marine Directorate to achieve their remit including encouraging locally led approaches that have the potential to become legislation.
 - 9 Resources: Chairs must be knowledgeable about inshore fisheries and empowered to initiate regional ideas and solutions to inshore management. Chairs should have access to science evidence to ensure it is incorporated into local discussions.
 - 10 Regions: The regions of the Outer Hebrides and Orkney were deemed suitable to have their own RIFGs. Clarity is needed on the role of a RIFG in Shetland owing to the Shetland Islands Regulated Fishery (Scotland) Order 2012. Mainland regions were deemed too large, with the North West RIFG and the North and East Coast RIFG suggested as needing new regional lines drawn.

Phil also advised the group that the RIFG SW Coast chair (Mark Griffin) had resigned, due to moving to a different location. This role would be care-taken by the NW Coast chair (Alasdair Hamilton) at least to the end of the current Parliament.

Phil was asked if there were any actions to be taken forward from the report. Phil advised that Marine Directorate had not published any action points they may be considering.

9 Interim Measures

Phil attended the Interim Measures Review, held on the 05/03/2025, where he presented the results of the **National Creel Boat survey results** to Marine Directorate & Fishing Representatives from across Scotland.

Phil also attended the “interim measures outputs” meeting on 22/04/2025 where there was a lot of discussion and Jim Watson summarised the meeting with the following points:

- There was a range of feedback received from different sources, and he was grateful to the RIFG chairs for their assistance,
- There had been mixed views expressed
- There was a lot of talk about crab and lobster stocks being looked at separately
- The issue of regionality would be looked at under the ongoing work of the IFMI programme.
- Effort management was referred to a lot as there was clearly too much gear in the water
- The next steps would be that:
- Marine Directorate would now consider all the information, ensuring they work "within the law" and consider economics due to the increased costs faced by the industry.
- Marine Directorate will draw up advice for the minister ahead of the second week in May, when a decision needs to be announced.

A discussion followed around gear being left in the water. A fisherman commented that there had been a significant reduction in the number of vessels therefore there should be a consequent reduction in the loss of gear. Phil advised that the review included other areas where this reduction may not have happened. Fishermen also highlighted unregulated part-time fishers. Phil stated that Kirkwall Fisheries Office has asked for any evidence of this to be submitted and Phil will feed back these concerns to him. Hannah raised the lack of formal consultation and that the measures are likely to roll over without stakeholders having the opportunity to challenge them. Phil will discuss this with Hannah at a meeting scheduled for Thursday 1st May.

12 AOB

a. Whelks

Phil asked why there had been no reported landings of whelks? Fishermen present, advised Phil that this was most likely due to a fall in demand.

b. Fish farms and marine planning zones

Phil advised the group following a consultation, planning zones will be extended to 12nm for aquaculture developments. Initially this was only out to 6nm as it was not envisaged aquaculture developments operate beyond this. However, with new developments in technology, this may well become possible.

c. Planning application (renewal of licence)

Phil mentioned an application for the renewal of licence for Lober Salmon Farm by the Dam of Hoxa in the Scapa Flow. Phil has been promoting the requirement for pre-licensing surveys instead of the limited check system currently in operation. A fisher commented on the dead state of the seabed after the fish farms have been removed, and Phil suggested that given the Scottish Government's appetite for restoration this would be a good time to put suggestions forward.

d. News article

A fisherman advised the group of a news article regarding a Scottish parliamentary question concerning the minimum legal landing sizes for lobsters. Phil thanked the fisherman and will follow it up.

13 Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting will be 7.30pm on Tuesday 29th July and will be held in Kirkwall at the St Magnus Centre due to the Nav School being closed.

Action Points		By Whom
1	Await, and feedback, response from MD regarding the interpretation of The Marking of Creels (Scotland) Order 2020	PB
2	Phil and Hannah to discuss issues of the lack of formal consultation, the likelihood that the measures will be rolled over, and the lack of opportunities for stakeholders to challenge them	PB/HF
3	Investigate a news article regarding a Scottish parliamentary question concerning the minimum legal landing sizes for lobsters.	PB