

## North West Inshore Fisheries Group

### MINUTE of MEETING

Held at Great Glen House, Inverness - Friday 15 January 2016

#### Present - IFG Executive Group:

Duncan MacInnes	DM	Acting Chair NWIFG (Part Meeting -Items 1-10)
Tom Bryan-Brown	TBB	Mallaig & North West FA
Kenny Livingston	KL	
Neil Robertson	NR	Non-affiliated fishermen's representative
Bob Rowe	BR	North West Responsible FA
Bill Wiseman	BW	Scottish White Fish Producers Association

#### Attending:

Kerrie Campbell	KC	Marine Scotland Fisheries Policy
Nick Lake	NL	Marine Scotland Fisheries Policy
Tamara Lawton	TL	Scottish Natural Heritage
Anne McLay (by video link)	AM	Marine Scotland Science
Ali McKnight	AliM	EFF Project Officer

#### Secretariat:

Kathryn Logan	Sec	Secretariat- Moray Firth Partnership
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#### Apologies – Exec. Group:

James Corrigan		North West Responsible FA
Robyn Dutton		
Duncan Finlayson		North West Responsible FA
Ian Gatt		Scottish Pelagic Fishermen's Association
Alasdair Hughson		Scottish Scallop Divers Association
Bruce Langlands		North West Responsible FA
Fiona Matheson		Orkney FA
Nick Turnbull		Mull Aquaculture and Fisheries Assoc.

#### Other Apologies:

John Bruce, Marine Scotland Compliance; Craig Burton, Seafish; Stephanie Dickens, Marine Scotland Science; Alison MacLennan RSPB

### 1. Welcome and Apologies

The acting chair, Duncan MacInnes welcomed those present. Apologies received were noted.

### 2. Minute of Meeting 18 September 2015

The minute was accepted as a correct record subject to the following amendment:-

**13(c)** Reference to larger mesh parlour pots should be **smaller** mesh

(Proposed NR, Seconded TBB)

### 3. Matters Arising and Update on Actions

#### 3a) Ref Minute 180915- Para 7b- Landing Obligation- Demersal Fishery – Quota Uplift

The chair advised that the reclassification of Category B/C vessels (over 10m) as Category A was likely to take place when the new licences were issued later in the year, with vessels requiring to source quota to land quota species. The chair provided a brief update on the quota management rules in relation to prawns for over 10 metre vessels joining the non-sector.

**3b) Action 1-180915:** Completed. A sub group was formed to deal with the proposed expansion of the BUTEC range and members had successfully cooperated to complete a formal response to the consultation. See below- Item 4.

### **3c) Razor Clams – Electro Fishing**

Para 12 180915 – FISA funded project – Razor Clam Sampling Methodology

The joint North West / Outer Hebrides project had been awarded FISA funding, but less than requested and the final outline had yet to be agreed with Marine Scotland. The actual sampling work would not start till later in 2016 when the water was warmer and the clams were more responsive to electrofishing.

Members queried the government’s delay in progressing proposals to develop an electro-fishery and applying to EU for the necessary derogation following the national meeting in March 2015 and general consensus on the way forward. NL advised that the Razor Clam Forum (due to become the Razor Clam Association) was progressing a consultation, but that local stock assessments would in any case need to be completed before a fishery could be agreed.

**New Action 1: NWIFG to ask MS for a timetable and to request an early consultation on razor clam electro-fishing.**

### **3d) Para 10 180915-Rig /Tanker Anchoring**

The Secretariat provided an update on the presentation given to the Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA) UK Safety of Navigation Committee Meeting on 09 October 2015 relating to safety issues for small fishing vessels due to the potential risk of capsizing if gear became trapped in anchor holes. The Marine Management Organisation was planning to liaise with the MCA, Marine Scotland and others to prepare a non-statutory guidance note to clarify matters in relation to the establishment or alteration of chartered anchorages. A formal request had been made for the IFGs to be part of the process.

### **3e) Para 13b 180915-Mackerel Quota Allocation – Pilot Extension**

It was confirmed that the two year pilot allocation of additional 300t mackerel quota to under 10 m handline vessels had been extended for a further two years.

## **4. BUTEC Range Expansion- MOD Consultation**

### **4a) Response to initial BUTEC Consultation**

Members commended the work of the NW IFG “BUTEC sub-group” (set up at the last meeting) and the information and support from Marine Scotland staff and others to develop a robust response to the BUTEC consultation. Thanks to financial support from Highlands and Islands Enterprise (HIE), a consultant had been commissioned to develop a socio-economic impact assessment. Although the MOD had allowed a short extension for submission of the report, that was still a very limited timescale. Members expressed their appreciation of what was achieved by the consultant, Steve Westbrook, and the fishermen, processors and others that provided information within the time available, but suggested that further information from the fishing industry could usefully be added to strengthen ongoing discussions with the MOD. It was agreed that the NW IFG should ask HIE if any further funding might be possible for follow-up work on the EIA if required.

**New Action 2 – Secretariat to ask HIE if further funding might be available for follow up work on the Economic Impact Assessment if required**

### **4b) Proposed Working Group**

It was noted that the MOD has placed a notice in the local press that morning, 15 January, confirming that it would establish a working group to progress discussions through two local meetings. Members agreed that the IFG, through the subgroup, should seek to be represented on this working group, along with other fisheries associations that had submitted a consultation response, MP Ian Blackford,

HIE, Local Highland Councillors and local processors such as Keltic Seafare. It was agreed to suggest to the MOD that the first meeting should take place in early February and the second later in March to allow time between meetings to gather necessary data.

Members present who fished in the area advised that they did not wish to damage the good working relationship and practical, voluntary management arrangements built up over years with local staff working for Qinetiq, the company operating the BUTEC range for the MOD. However, there was some concern over the extent of construction work already underway and whether the new working group would have much leeway to influence changes.

**New Action 3 – Secretariat to write to MOD to request a place on the BUTEC working group , to suggest other invitees and to request that the two meetings take place in early February and late March.**

## 5. IFG Review

### 5a) rIFG set up

NL briefly recapped on the new regional IFG set up. The Outer Hebrides IFG area and representatives would remain unchanged and Shetland and Orkney areas would continue under their current arrangements, providing a similar function to IFGs. The rest of Scotland would be covered by two rIFGs, one covering the West Coast and one covering the North and East Coast. Recruitment of chairs for the two new mainland rIFG areas would be openly advertised around end January and the new chairs should be in post by 01 April for an initial period of 18 months, working up to three days per week. The rIFG chairs would then draw in administrative or outreach support as required within the available budget.

### 5b) Links between IFG and Regional Marine Planning

Member asked whether the IFGs would have a defined role in developing regional marine planning. NL advised that IFGs were recognised in the National Marine Plan as being a route to engagement and representation of fisheries. There were five marine region areas within the new West Coast rIFG, so the new rIFG structure with the option of geographic and topic sub-groups should provide effective feed-in, but that it was up to the fishing industry representatives to participate and support that work. The Clyde and Shetland were the first Marine Region pilots and were in the process of setting up Marine Planning Partnerships, which could differ in form to suit each area. The National Marine Plan would be due for review every five years, so in theory, if IFG representation was not effective, it could be changed.

The Chair advised that the Western Isles Council had recently prepared a paper on the way forward for regional marine planning that recognised the Outer Hebrides IFG. For the West Coast rIFG, Highland Council would likely take a lead role. Highland Council had not attended recent NW IFG meetings (although they received full information and minutes), so it would be essential for the new rIFG to develop stronger relations. The European Maritime and Fisheries Fund and local Fisheries Local Action Groups (FLAGs) could play an important linkage role, as FLAG chairs must be from the fishing industry and the group has to have over 51% fisheries representation. Highland and Moray FLAGs were to be combined to save administration costs and would have a total fund of just over £1m. Details would be circulated to IFG members as soon as available.

### 5c) Suggestions for New rIFG Sub Groups

The current South West IFG had three standing sub groups for the Mull, Clyde and Solway. It was suggested that the formation of new sub groups in the northwest area should be driven by fishermen

based on local need rather than a top-down process. These could be time limited and focused on specific issues, like the BUTEC sub-group, or perhaps to assist with the management of Marine Protected Areas. The chair advised of successful cockle and razor clam sub groups in the Outer Hebrides area. Any member or local fishermen with ideas about need for a local sub-group should contact the IFG secretariat or new rIFG chair.

## **6. Further Consultation on Proposed Changes to Draft Marine Conservation Orders**

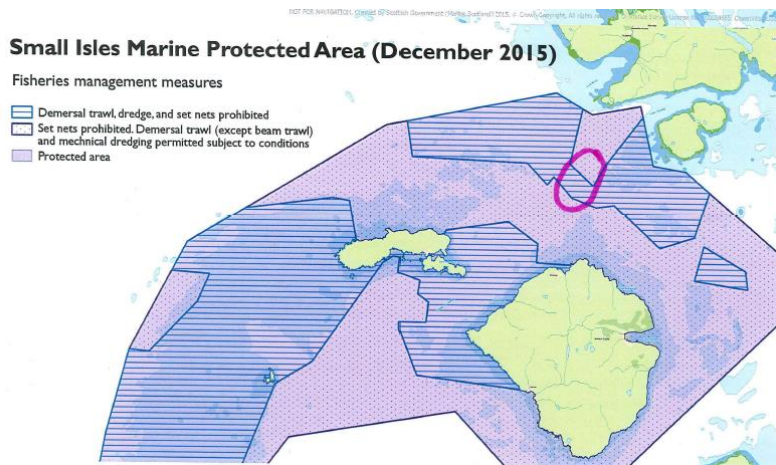
Marine Scotland had issued a further four week consultation on changes to the proposed management arrangements and restricted areas under Marine Conservation Orders for three Marine Protected Areas, due to close on 18 January 2016. (see: <http://www.gov.scot/Topics/marine/marine-environment/mpanetwork/MPAMGT/protectedareasmgmt> )

For the Wester Ross area, members welcomed the reinstatement of sheltered winter fishing grounds around the Loch Broom area, but queried some of the other changes. There was general concern that the maps presented showing revised closure areas lacked sufficient detail; the areas chosen appeared to be convenient lines on maps that did not necessarily reflect evidence of the presence of the protected marine features and that ignored operational practicalities for fishermen. The resulting changes were not expected to provide a “coherent network” with enhanced protection for the specified features, and would likely result in significant displaced fishing effort and additional gear conflict. Some areas closed to protect maerl beds were over 30m deep, whereas maerl was not thought to be locally present below 20m, and ROV surveys in the Torridon area showed no maerl below 15m. The main changes were also not expected to significantly lessen the overall financial loss to the industry, although the impacts on each sector would vary by area. Information put forward by the industry as part of the 2015 consultation had shown significant understatements in some of Marine Scotland’s estimates of economic loss to fishermen.

For the Small Isles MPA, members had queried the size of buffer zone proposed around some features, which was greater than the 100 metres used in other areas. The new proposals also closed off the Soay Sound tow, creating an isolated fishing area in the inner Sound where mobile vessels would be more likely to conflict with static gear and preventing a tow route through the outer Sound towards the Sound of Canna. The closed area was a scallop ground with no protected features.

After discussion, members present agreed that the NW IFG should submit a representation to the consultation which:-

- i. reaffirmed that members were supportive of the principles of the creation of a coherent network of Marine Protected Areas
- ii. proposed removing the closure in the outer Soay Sound (leading towards Canna Sound) as it was considered that there would be cross-sector agreement about this one measure. (see map below, with area highlighted)



- iii. reflect general concerns about the inclusion of new closure areas not fully consulted on and where evidence had not been provided re the presence of protected features.

The consultation closed on Monday 18<sup>th</sup> January 2015, leaving minimal time for a response or discussion with the wider membership.

**New Action 4: Secretariat to circulate the proposed response to the wider IFG membership for comment and to submit a note of the above concerns by the deadline of midnight, 18 January 2016.**

## **7. Crab and Lobster –Proposed Increase to Minimum Landing Size**

The changes to Minimum Landing Size (MLS) and management arrangements for crab and lobster consented for the Outer Hebrides area (see [www.gov.scot/Resource/0047/00477890.pdf](http://www.gov.scot/Resource/0047/00477890.pdf)) had also been considered by the South West IFG area. The proposals were broadly supported in the SWIFG area but there were regional variations in species size which could influence overall acceptance of all the provisions being consulted on. It would be beneficial in legislative and enforcement terms if such measures could be introduced across a wider area, so NW IFG members had been asked to consider if the proposals would be appropriate for their area too. Background information including a table of the different MLSs currently applicable in Scotland was presented by Marine Scotland Science. During discussion there was general agreement that the increased MLS and enhanced management measures could benefit the wider west coast area where this tied in with market demand, although animals further south tended to be smaller. Further assessment would be required.

An increased MLS would not necessarily lead to a reduction in fishing mortality if, for example, there was a corresponding increase in effort on the larger sizes. There was currently insufficient scientific and Catch Per Unit Effort (CPUE) data to provide a baseline to measure future stock changes (although attempts were being made through Marine Scotland and the North Atlantic Fisheries College to recruit volunteers to carry out additional recording based on 5x5 NM squares rather than the larger ICES reporting squares). To be effective, any new MLS measures would also have to apply to hobby / unlicensed fishermen. The Chair advised that the previous increase in MLS for lobster from 85 to 87 mm in all UK waters some fifteen years ago had brought most benefits to areas that were initially opposed to the measure.

Other considerations in the NW area were:-

- the increase in wrasse fishing and moves away from lobster fishing

-concerns about lobster spat being affected by the chemicals used by the aquaculture industry to control lice.

It was agreed that the MLS proposal should be referred to the new West Coast rIFG for consideration as part of the fisheries management plan which was due to be prepared by end of 2016.

**New Action 5: New West Coast rIFG to be asked to consider the proposal for increases to the MLS for crab and lobster and enhanced management measures for crab and lobster.**

## **8. Gear Conflict**

NL briefly outlined the main recommendations in the report of the IFMAC working group looking at gear conflict, issued on 08 Dec 2015. [Post meeting note - see [www.gov.scot/Publications/2015/12/4724](http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2015/12/4724) and the letter from Marine Scotland with more information- [http://ifgs.org.uk/files/6914/4965/8211/Gear\\_Conflict\\_-\\_081215.pdf](http://ifgs.org.uk/files/6914/4965/8211/Gear_Conflict_-_081215.pdf)] Different issues would require different solutions, but spatial separation and better recording of gear locations were seen as key to prevent occurrences, as well as improved deterrence against deliberate acts of gear vandalism. Subgroups could potentially be set up to consider tailored solutions for local areas. AliM advised that possible reduction in gear conflict was one of the main benefits of using AIS identified by fishermen taking part in the EFF funded AIS project.

## **9. Creel Effort Assessment**

Between January and March 2016, Marine Scotland would be carrying out an assessment of the number of creels deployed in Marine Protected Areas, through one to one interviews, local workshops and information gathering. The level of fishing in some areas was not considered to be sustainable, and increased effort was being reported to maintain catch levels. Some Associations limited the number of creels that member vessels could deploy, but that did not help if vessels from other areas could come into the area. The Marine Strategy Framework Directive requires member states to adopt appropriate management methods to achieve maximum sustainable yield (MSY), so some limits might have to be introduced in future. There were around 300 latent shellfish entitlements that could go to new vessels. Fishing entitlements, detached from vessels, are held at local Fishery Offices and lapse if not attached to a vessel within ten years. The East coast area had more reports of unlicensed fishermen deploying significant numbers of creels. Given the recent downturn in the oil industry, there were concerns that numbers of redundant workers would turn to fishing, increasing competition and likelihood of overfishing.

It was agreed that clear information on creel numbers and effort was required for the North West area, and fishermen were encouraged to provide information to Marine Scotland.

## **10. "Evidence Gathering in Support of Sustainable Scottish Inshore Fisheries" – EFF funded project**

**10a)** AliM gave an update on the successful outcomes of different work packages, including AIS, use of cameras and new technology to support and verify self-reporting, marketing etc.

**10b)** More volunteers from the North West were required for the ongoing data gathering project using "RFID" tags on creels (or creel ends) to assess effort, soak time etc., and using 5NM reporting squares instead of the normal ICES 30NM reporting squares. A weekly and monthly report was required, but every effort was made to minimise the amount of time fishermen had to spend on recording whilst at sea. Anyone wishing to find out more should contact the EFF coordinators.

**10c)** The EFF project coordinator contracts had been extended to end March 2016 for follow up work to help ensure that this information could be used to inform other projects and work in the future

**Note: The Chair had to leave the meeting at this point, and Nick Lake took over as chair for the remaining items.**

#### **11. Discards Strategy-Landing Obligation update**

There was little news to report. Latest information was on the MS website: see <http://www.gov.scot/Topics/marine/Sea-Fisheries/discards/onshoreguidance>

#### **12. A.O.B.**

##### **12a) New King Scallop Management Proposals**

Implementation of measures to increase the King Scallop MLS to 105mm (except in the Irish Sea where this was 110mm) plus other measures including restricting the number of dredges to 8 per side had been delayed due to lack of time to install cameras on vessels. The legislation would be presented for approval after the forthcoming election in May 2016.

##### **12b) Proposed Fish Farm Application – Portree Outer**

Details of the proposals for an additional fish farm in Portree Outer had been circulated to all members, as requested by the consultants who wished to liaise with local area users prior to submitting an actual application. Some concerns had been relayed by local fishermen. The developer had given assurances that all anchorages would be contained within the area marked, so that fishermen would know the full extent of any restricted area. This had been a concern in relation to previous applications: because the cost of the planning application related to the footprint of the area to be used, there had been instances where only the cage area was shown rather than the full area required to accommodate anchor points.

Members would receive another opportunity to comment once a formal application was submitted. Some members suggested it was not worth objecting to applications for fish farms as there appeared to be a presumption in favour of development. However NR advised that local groups had successfully halted unacceptable proposals by submitting substantive responses and recommended anyone with concerns and information to respond.

**End.**

The meeting concluded at 13.55 hours