

## **Paper 2 - WCRIFG Management Committee Meeting 20 August 2019 – Limiting Creel Numbers**

Several members have asked for the topic of limiting the numbers of creels deployed to be placed on the agenda of the WCRIFG for discussion.

Concern has been raised, mainly by static sector fishermen, of the potential for areas to become saturated with creels which in turn could lead to conflict or other issues.

Suggestions made in this regard include limiting the number of vessels deploying static gears within 'hot spots' and/or limiting the number of creels each vessel is allowed to deploy. This scenario would need to consider access by mobile sector vessels where they already have access and what restrictions may apply in this regard?

Presently, the WCRIFG Mull Pilot project has made provisions to curtail activities by means of restricting both vessel numbers and creel numbers within a defined area. Other project proposals still under consideration have also suggested similar restrictions. However, the restrictions in terms of creel numbers (300 per vessel) in place in the Mull pilot may not be appropriate elsewhere or for species other than Brown Crab targeted in the trial. In other areas of WCRIFG waters e.g., the Solway, there are not huge increases in vessel numbers or sizes of vessels seeking to deploy creels taking place and unless there was to be a significant ingress, the fishery is probably sustainable with the number of creels currently being used. The Code of Conduct also facilitates good relations between the sectors and thus no measures are probably required in relation to the static gear fishery in the Firth.

It seems likely that any resolve will not be served by imposing national limitations but more probably by local management controls specifically to areas where there are current or increasing concerns. Limitations would have to take into account issues such as the species being targeted by creelers, whether dealing with a static gear fishery only or have mobile vessels access too, the probable number of vessels that would be allowed, the total number of creels each vessel might be allowed to deploy and matters such as deciding which vessels are allowed access as opposed to those excluded e.g. fishing history in the area etc etc?

It is the Scottish Government's intention to introduce new inshore fisheries legislation which, in time, may provide controls which are currently unavailable to deal with the deployment of creels as outlined above. However, it is likely to be some time before any new legislative measures are available. People have intimated that action is needed now and hence WCRIFG members are asked to consider what steps could be taken, using options such as voluntary agreements, pilot trials or other means as interim measures.

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