

Outer Hebrides Regional Inshore Fisheries Group

Note of Pot Limitation Sub Group, Committee Room 1 CNES, 7 June 2019 at 1400

Present

Donald Nicholson and Duncan MacInnes, OHRIFG

Angus Campbell, Finlay MacDonald, Angie Campbell, WIFA

Diane Buchanan MS Policy, Head Inshore Fisheries Team

Stuart Bell, Senior Policy Officer, Inshore Fisheries Team

Ally Young, MS Compliance

Pete Middleton, Marine Resources, CNES

Femke De Boer, Scottish White Fish Producers, Telephone Link

Angus Campbell & Grant Foulton BFT Item only

Apologies:

Anne McLay & Lynda Blackadder, MS Science

Donald Morrison, Jo Holbrook, MS Compliance

Ali MacNeil, WIFA

Chairman welcomed everyone to the first Sub Group meeting expressing everyone's condolences to Donald Morrison and his family following the sad passing of his mother.

POT LIMITATION PILOT

Final Geographical Area

Diane Buchanan stressed that Marine Scotland was totally committed to ensuring the success of the pot limitation pilot, which had been developed by the industry to design local management arrangements which would improve local stocks. However, the size of the area fished by around 160 vessels was challenging and it was important that the design of the project could achieve the overall objectives of the projects.

Marine Scotland had been in contact with officials in Northumberland where a pot limitation scheme was operational for a number of years. They had reduced enforcement levels due to reduced budgets, as it had proven difficult to enforce the tagging scheme.

A number of fishermen from the Outer Hebrides had visited the Northumberland area and had observed significant numbers of pots having been confiscated and destroyed.

The size of the area had been reduced from the original application and members concluded that it would not be productive to reduce the area further. Any further reduction in size of the area would result in displacing effort to the areas not covered by the pilot. Catch per unit effort had reduced significantly over the years, resulting in vessels simply setting more pots to try and maintain landings, although price increases had improved profitability. Other sectors had reduced gear numbers in inshore fisheries and it was considered that similar action was necessary in the static gear sector, before more draconian measures would be required by delaying further, as had been the case in the white fish sector.

Numbers of active Vessels in area

Based on completed FISH 1 Forms 148 under 10 metre vessels had recorded landings from the pilot area, with a further hand full of over 10 metre vessels operating in the area. In addition, a number of new vessels had joined the fishery in 2019 leaving an estimated 160 static gear vessels operating in the proposed pilot area.

Members discussed how additional vessels could be restricted from gaining access to the pilot area and it was concluded that the practical solution would be introduction of a licence condition stating all vessels with eligibility for potting within the pilot area.

Consideration could be given to new entrants applying through the CNES/RBS Fisheries Investment Scheme, during the 2 - year pilot, due to the ageing profile of many current vessel owners.

Types of Tags and Suppliers

It was estimated that up to 180,000 tags would be required to manage and enforce the number of pots using a tag in each pot. Based on information from other areas that operated pot tags this would prove to be extremely costly and difficult to enforce.

Diane informed members that Marine Scotland had agreed to invest £1.5M in installing various monitoring equipment aboard all vessels in Scotland, with the scallop fleet being the first group to have equipment installed. She had attended a presentation on some of the equipment that had been trialed on inshore vessels as part of the SIFIDS project lead by St Andrews University. They were confident that equipment had been used as part of the pilot aboard static gear vessels could be developed to monitor pots numbers hauled aboard vessels by using satellite tags on ends of fleets.

Members present accepted that it would be more practical to develop technology to monitor pots numbers rather than the administration involved in tagging each pot. However, they noted that satellite tags would have to be used to identify ends of each fleet set.

Members suggested that each fleet should have a maximum number of pots depending on vessel size. Vessels exceeding such numbers could be monitored by numbers hauled between fleet ends. Smaller vessels would have a smaller maximum number of pots per fleet to reflect a standard number of vessel size.

Agreed maximum pots numbers for all gears were as follows:

- < 8 metre – 800 pots

- 8 – 10 metres - 1,200 pots

- 10 – 12 metres – 1,500 pots

- > 12 metres – 1,800 pots

One weakness identified was the delay in the introduction of Marking of Gear Legislation, Diane indicated the earliest expected implementation date was January 2020.

Future enforcement Procedures

Ally Young noted possible enforcement issues with regards to vessels operating within pilot area without having a licence. Members noted that that would be unlikely due to the time taken to shoot and haul gear and the high likelihood of such a vessel being reported by vessels operating legally within the area.

Members wanted clarification on the eastern boundary line which had been amended to reflect the boundary for the Outer Hebrides Regional Marine Plan.

Industry would require a presentation on the SIFIDS detailing the technology that would be used on vessels operating within the pilot area.

High risk vessels most likely to be exceeding agreed pot numbers would have to be identified, so that their activities could be more closely monitored.

Funding for Project

Pete said that all the Outer Hebrides FLAG budget had been fully committed on already approved projects and approvals of expressions of interests. An allowance had been set aside for some future scientific blue fin tuna tagging with Kilda Cruises.

The main costs identified previously had been purchase and administration of tags. Those costs had now been transferred to be allocated against a budget which has already been identified within the £1.5M for proportionate monitoring equipment aboard static vessels.

Additional enforcement monitoring would be targeted at high risk vessels based on self – policing by vessels at sea identifying possible breaches of pot numbers within the pilot area.

Next Steps

- Identification of eastern boundary line with neighbouring WCRIFG
- Presentation to industry of technology that would be installed aboard static gear vessels
- Identification of possible high risk vessels
- Agree maximum pot numbers on fleets based on vessel length
- Urgent implementation of marking of gear legislation
- Maximum pot numbers as per pilot application
- Identify and quantify funding for any additional administrative costs

FLAG FUNDED PROJECTS

Pete updated members on uptake of projects and funding within the Outer Hebrides FLAG.

£400k had already been approved for projects whilst a further £107K had been allocated to expressions of interest projects resulting in full uptake of allocated budget.

Cockle surveys, fish traps and an allocation committed to further scientific tagging of blue fin tuna.

He was unsure whether other areas had underspend that could be re-distributed to areas which had full expenditure.

MAPPING PROJECT

Diane had met with John Goodlad and Prof Mike Kaiser, Heriot Watt University with regards to funding that had been previously identified at a Scallop Conference in London through Fishmongers Hall. They had suggested that funding be allocated to Scotland and someone had identified undertaking some mapping of scallop grounds in the Outer Hebrides.

A number of West Coast representatives from CIFA had attended a meeting with Pro Kaiser in Glasgow. Representatives present did not support the mapping proposal discussed in London and suggested that further discussions were held with West Coast interests to identify other projects which would be of benefit to inshore interests. There was little value in duplicating work that was already covered by other parties.

The scallop sector had already signed up with the Outer Hebrides MarPAMM project, had met with Mairi Gougeon, Environment Minister, to discuss future zoning of scallop fisheries. Furthermore, CNES and industry had met with the Environment Minister and senior Marine Scotland officials and had been supportive of engaging local stakeholders with the MarPAMM Steering Group.

Marine Scotland and SNH were already zoning the Sound of Barra to identify areas where electro fishing for razorfish could be pursued commercially with the SAC and this had industry support.

Marine Scotland had already mapped scalloping areas through VMS data from over 12 metre vessels and there was no local industry support in becoming involved with Fishmongers in further mapping.

BLUE FIN TUNA SCIENTIFIC TAGGING

Chairman welcomed Angus Campbell, Kilda Cruises and Grant Foulton, Development Officer, Harris Development.

Angus had been involved in the previous blue fin tuna tagging programme in 2014, whilst Grant had been involved in fisheries enforcement with Isle of Man and Ireland and been involved with ICATT.

ICATT had approved up to 15 Irish angling vessels to participate in a scientific blue fin tuna tagging programme for 2019. Skipper and crew of those vessels had to be trained in catch and release tagging of BFT, with anglers being charged for angling trips. Ireland were in a similar position to the UK by having zero quota allocation for BFT and ICATT had clearly stated that Ireland and similar countries could become involved in scientific tagging of BFT.

Diane said that Marine Scotland were of the opinion that they could not participate in a catch and release tagging programme due to having no quota. Marine Scotland considered that the EU would look at Scotland negatively in being involved in a targeted fishery for which they had no quota albeit for a catch and release scheme. Grant indicated that the EU would not treat Scotland differently from Ireland, with the UK already involved in a scientific tagging programme through Exeter University.

Angus said that he had already shown an interest in being involved in the tagging programme in the South West but the distance to travel to those grounds were prohibitive. His current vessel was much cheaper to operate due to lower fuel consumption and could become involved at local level if he could charge anglers for a catch and release scheme.

Pete did indicate that an allowance for scientific tags had been included in the FLAG projects but he would have to be given clearance by Marine Scotland that such a project was legal in similar terms to the Exeter University and Irish Project.

Diane said that she would discuss the opportunities for scientific tagging with Gordon Hart and the Marine Laboratory or other scientific partners to ascertain whether a Scotland scientific tagging project could be approved through the EU.

Diane would provide feedback to members on progress made with scientific partners.

Chairman thanked Angus and Grant for their attendance and contributions closing meeting at 1615.