

**West Coast Regional Inshore Fisheries Group
Management Committee Meeting – Minutes**

27th March 2019, Atlantic Quay, Scottish Government Offices, Glasgow with V/C connections

Chair	Alastair McNeill, WCRIFG Chair
WCRIFG Attendees	Femke de Boer (SWFPA), Kenny Coull (SWFPA), John Hermes (Scallop Association, left during item 13), Alastair Hughson (Scottish Scallop Divers Association), John MacAlister (SWFPA and J.McAlister (Oban) Ltd), Willy John McLean (MNWFA), Kenny McNab (Clyde FA), Malcolm Morrison (standing in for Mark Robertson of Mallaig and North-West FA), Alistair Philp (SCFF), Neil Robertson (Ross, Sutherland, Skye and Lochalsh FA, left during item 9), Alistair Sinclair (SCAD) left during item 4), Harry Wick (NIFPO), left during item 9), Bill Wiseman (SWFPA), Elaine Whyte (Clyde FA)
Also attending	Kathleen Allen (Marine Scotland), Linda Blackadder (Marine Scotland), Bruce Buchanan (Marine Scotland, left after item 3), Diane Buchanan (Marine Scotland, arrived at item 5), Lily Burke (Marine Scotland), Ross Cumming (Marine Scotland), David Donnan (Scottish Natural Heritage), Joanne Holbrook (Marine Scotland), Madlaina Michelotti (WCRIFG secretariat and Clyde Marine Planning Partnership), Anne McLay (Marine Scotland Science), Duncan McInnes (Western Isles FA), Roger May (Marine Scotland, left after item 3), Chloe North (MRAG, left during item 9), Kyla Orr (SIFIDS Project Facilitator), Sinead Sheridan (WCRIFG secretariat and Clyde Marine Planning Partnership)
Apologies	Nick Turnbull (Mull FA)

1. Welcome, introductions and apologies
The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked them for coming. All attendees introduced themselves. Apologies were noted as above.
2. SIFIDS update
<p>Kyla Orr gave an update on the progress of the various work packages (WP) since the last meeting, noting that the SIFIDS project is due to come to an end in June 2019. The project had two data collection strategies: (1) low cost and low maintenance systems that could be utilised by the majority of the fleet and (2) systems that could be used by a reference fleet and utilised to inform fisheries management. Highlights of the update are as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>WP 2: On board data collection system.</i> This WP has potential to be used by a reference fleet to collect data for the fishery. - <i>WP 6: Online data visualisation tool.</i> This enables fishers to be able to view their own vessel movement and activity data online (other fishers would not be available to view data). - <i>WP2B: On-board catch scanner.</i> This technology determines the size and sex of crabs and lobsters in less than one second; images are then ID stamped with date, time and GPS location. This package has good potential to be used by a reference fleet. - <i>WP8: Vessel track analysis.</i> This WP developed a model to process vessel movement data and predict fishing activity. The model has been shown to have >96% accuracy and can identify the soak time of static gear. - <i>WP5: Smartphone app</i> – This enables fishers to report data themselves more easily, such as FISH 1 forms. There is an optional facility to collect GPS tracking data and record wildlife observations. The trial for this WP was developed using Android and funding is currently being sought to develop the app for iPhones to suit the needs of the majority of fishers. Fishers have suggested improvements to this WP based on the trial, such as being able to

view data online. This app was found to have many benefits, such as reducing paperwork and saving time.

Discussion

- How far away is the technology in WP2B from identifying finfish? This could be a useful application of the technology in relation to the discard ban. The technology has not been trialled on finfish under this project, but there is remote electronic monitoring equipment that can identify these species with cameras.
- Does the technology depend on connection to the internet? GPS tracking does not require an internet connection; data can be stored on a hard drive and backed-up when it comes into range of an internet connection.
- SeaFish is currently doing work around producing a MPA boundaries map for use by the industry. There may be opportunities for cooperation between the two projects.

3. Offshore wind/Marine renewables/ Licensing

Bruce Buchanan and Roger May, both from Marine Scotland provided an update on the work currently being undertaken to develop a sectoral marine plan for offshore wind, which will ultimately identify suitable areas around Scotland's seas for the development of renewable energy sites. They also provided a summary of the review of offshore renewable (ORE) decommissioning guidance.

The development of the Sectoral Marine Plan is at an early stage and the team would like to engage fishers in this work to contribute to the identification of suitable areas for offshore wind sites. A summary of the presentation given is outlined below:

- Scottish Government is committed to generating reliable and affordable energy. The aim of this work and the plan overall is to identify the suitable offshore sites for renewable energy production.
- This process began last year with the development of the Scoping 'Areas of Search' report. There was a consultation on this over the summer. This is currently being reviewed by Marine Scotland. This stage in the process identified areas of search based on an analysis of opportunity and constraint. The initial scoping exercise identified areas, these were then refined based on feedback.
- There will be a further consultation this summer with the intention of the plan being finalised next year.
- The plan will be subject to a Sustainability Appraisal which will assess the impact of the proposed sites on all sectors, including fisheries.
- Review and revision of areas of search will take place and the final Sectoral Plan will be approved by Scottish Ministers.
- With regard to ORE decommissioning guidance, powers for decommissioning offshore renewables were transferred to Scottish Ministers (from UK Ministers) in April 2017. Marine Scotland commissioned ARUP to undertake reviews of decommissioning. These reviews and the Department for Business Energy and Industrial Strategy guidance have been used to inform Marine Scotland draft guidance which is currently undergoing an internal review process.
- Marine Scotland are aiming to consult on decommissioning policy guidance later this year.
- Information will be circulated to the WCRIFG at a later date informing people about the consultation.

Discussion

- A number of members expressed that in the development of offshore energy, there is no level of fishing activity which has priority over renewables. Marine Scotland reiterated that

fisheries activity is considered through the Sustainability Appraisal and details of the potential for conflict is considered at the project level, where mitigation strategies can be considered.

- It was asked if MS have considered compensation for loss of earning based on loss of grounds and loss of extraction over a number of years. Overall this can contribute to loss of livelihood, ambition, community development and sustainability of the sector. MS noted that for onshore developments, Scottish Government guidance states that developers should pay £5000 per megawatt to the affected community. There is no similar guidance for offshore developments. The process of developing the Sectoral Marine Plan seeks to reduce the likelihood of conflict as much as possible, through the planning and consultation process. Initiatives such as the SIFIDS work can contribute to better data collection and identification of areas of importance for the fisheries sector. This can help determine if there is a long-term impact on the fisheries sector and if compensation is required for this – it can be relatively simple to compensate for disruption during construction, but harder to compensate for long-term impact. A long-term view is required as many developments can be in place for ~20 years.
- The Chair acknowledged that some members are involved in the steering group for this work, however if the WCRIFG would like to submit a group response, Chair can coordinate this.
- It is intended that the formal consultation stage will take place over the summer.
- A few of the areas of search are within the boundaries of Marine Protected Areas, how is this considered? It is not guaranteed that anything will ever be built within the areas of search, however if a development is proposed within the boundary of a MPA, the project would then undergo various assessments to determine the level of impact. This would influence whether the development would go ahead or not.
- An issue with the socioeconomic analysis is that it only considers the bigger picture and does not consider the long-term impact on individuals or small numbers of boats. For example, a small amount of time fished in one area does not add up to much overall, but can be crucial for that one operator.
- Developments can have a disproportionate impact; scallop grounds only use 16% of Scottish waters, however these areas of search may take up a large part of that. Small areas contribute to a tipping point for the viability of some sectors.
- This work should aim to consider the cumulative impact of these developments on fishers.

ACTION

- MS to feedback on the weighting of the opportunity and constraint factors, which are taken into consideration in identifying areas of search for renewable developments.

4. Proposed MPA Management Plans

Lily Burke, Marine Scotland – Planning and Policy department gave an update on the development of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) for Mobile Species. A summary is provided below.

- Scottish Government is obliged to designate Nature Conservation MPAs to contribute to the wider UK network. In 2014, 30 MPAs were designated with 4 additional ones proposed in 2014 for mobile species. Funding was provided in 2018 to progress the designation of the sites. Further to this, Loch Carron was designated in 2017.
- MPAs should protect the essential areas for key life stages of and significant aggregation of mobile species. The sites for mobile species include: North East Lewis, Shiant East Bank, Sea of the Hebrides and Southern Trench.
- Work undertaken so far includes data collection and modelling to support the designation of the sites and provision of management advice for these sites. A Sustainability Appraisal is

now being carried out. This will contribute to the Business Regulatory Impact Assessment, and both assessments will have consideration of the MPAs on the fishing sector.

- LB gave an overview of the reasonable alternatives considered in the Sustainability Appraisal. These covered options including: adoption of best practice guidance; limit some activities and; limit ADD use, vessel speeds, construction, surveying, fishing and renewable energy.
- The Sustainability Appraisal identified the positive cumulative effects of strengthening overall protection to the MPA features and of MPAs in general. Potential cumulative adverse effects from displacement of fishing in the Sea of the Hebrides pMPA and Sound of Barra SAC.
- A limitation of these assessments is that they are unable to measure future levels of activity. Consideration of the socio-economic activity has identified greatest cost impacts to oil and gas, power interconnectors and energy generation due to increased survey costs and to aquaculture due to ADD restrictions. Fisheries impacts are largest in Moray region due to restriction of bottom trawled gear.
- A public consultation on these proposals will be launched just after Easter; information will be circulated to the Chair. There will be local engagement over summer 2019.

Discussion

- Impacts to each of the sectors are calculated by taking into account potential additional costs over 20 years to the whole sector, e.g. for aquaculture this could include the cost of replacing ADDs with alternative deterrent strategies.
- Are positive benefits noted to the industries? LB noted that yes, the Sustainability Appraisal carried out an ecosystem services analysis, which highlights the benefits to sectors operating in those areas of the MPAs. However, it is difficult to predict what those impacts will be and measure non-monetary benefits. Conservation objectives for the MPAs have been updated, and these now include ecosystem services and benefits.
- The presentation mentioned seasonal closures for gillnets, would this extend to static gear as well? Static gear can pose a risk of entanglement to mobile species. LB noted that the current advice from SNH regarding entanglement in static gear is to follow best practice. SCFF is working with SNH and others to develop this and so it has not been fully adopted. Work is ongoing on a standard for MPAs.
- Consideration needs to be given to the fact that MPA management measures may restrict mobile gear. This can lead to an increase in effort in static gear (uncapped for Nephrops) and therefore increased risk of entanglement. A cap on creel numbers can mitigate this so implementing a cap is important. SCFF noted that they are in favour of this.

5. WCRIFG Scallops Investigation Report

MRAG in association with Inmara and ABPmer were commissioned by Marine Scotland to consider a Scallop Management and Conservation Strategy for West Coast Waters. Chloe North, from MRAG, gave an overview of the project and its outcomes. Kyla Orr, from Inmara, presented the results of the stakeholder engagement aspect of the work.

The project arose from concerns raised among WCRIFG stakeholders regarding current status of scallop fishery and potential for improving scallop management in the region. The aim of the project is to provide a strategic context for WCRIFG proposed management measures, recommendations, a resource to inform consideration of existing management measures and to shape future management proposals. This project created proposals for different management measures for different areas and focused on king scallops with towed dredges and some on hand diving.

The three proposals considered under the project are:

- (A) VMS on all vessels fishing, potential increase to minimum landing size (110mm), overnight curfew (8-8), 22 fishing days per month (Argyll)
- (B) 6-aside dredge limit, overnight curfew (8-6), additional data required (Mull)
- (C) Scallop divers to increase MLS to 120mm for hand gather scallops within designated MPA (Whole WCRIFG area)

Stakeholder engagement was undertaken through a survey to examine views on each of the proposals. This was open to those engaged in commercial fishing of shellfish in the proposal areas in the last 3 years. The survey explored: overall support for proposed measures, how measures may influence vessel operating profits, perceptions of stock status and ecosystem health, effort displacement impacts and views on implementation. 30 responses were received from a mixture of individual vessel owners and producer organisations. Over 40 vessels were represented with the majority from scallop dredgers. Respondents also represented mixed mobile gear, dive, creel and mixed static.

The most strongly supported proposal was having VMS installed on all vessels, followed by increased MLS for hand-dived scallops from MPAs. Responses on effort management were more mixed; 60-63% of responses supported some degree of effort limitation, while there was uncertainty regarding reducing MLS to 110mm. Bigger vessels (over 15m) that can travel furthest to fish (more than 100 miles), were most resistant to an overnight curfew and limiting days at sea. Vessels based in Argyll were divided on their views of limiting days at sea, whereas visiting scallop fishers from other marine regions were generally supportive of this measure. Several respondents felt that a 'blanket days at sea' limit was needed around the UK. 79% felt that it was more appropriate to apply identical measures across areas A (Argyll) and B (Mull) and this would be simpler to understand and enforce. A majority responded that measures should be implemented on a statutory basis, however there was more uncertainty and more support for measures to be voluntary relating to limited days at sea and on data collection.

In summary the stakeholder engagement indicated that:

- Measures should be implemented on a statutory rather than voluntary basis
- Measures should be applied in an identical way across inshore areas
- There was support for VMS across all scallop fisheries
- There was support for 120mm MCRS on dive-caught scallops from MPAs,
- Recognition of need for effort control, but divergent views on how this should be done

The recommendations from the project are:

- Effort control measures will be most effective at scale of wider stock, taking displacement into account.
- It is vital to ensure that management frameworks are in place to secure long-term sustainability. Licencing/permitting conditions approach would enable more strategic management and would support adaptive management.
- Consult on proposed measures that have good support and are deemed as effective and contributing to on-going management with a view to implementation.
- Coordinate with other initiatives, e.g. West of Scotland scallop Fisheries Improvement Project (PUKFI).
- Measures proposed may deliver some ecosystem benefits if they cap effort, but if the WCRIFG wishes to consider effort limitation for stock as a whole, need to consider wider areas. Proposals could be augmented to encompass wider strategic issues at both stock and ecosystem level.

The report is currently with Marine Scotland and will be released as soon as it is finalised. The Members agreed to provide feedback on the full, final version of the report once it has been circulated.

Discussion

- Overnight curfew would be most difficult to enforce currently in Scotland.
- With regard to the decline in landings from 2012, is this related to the number of vessels declining or landings? It was noted that the number of vessels has increased by a few. This is discussed in the report in detail.
- There is a need to carry out a scallop stock assessment. Data is collected all the time, but stock assessments are not carried out annually.

Action

- This work will likely be informed by the outcomes of the ICES scallop working group, an interim report of this group is to be published in October. Linda Blackadder to circulate to WCRIFG.
- Chair to circulate MRAG Report to WCRIFG Members once released by Marine Scotland

6. Actions from Minutes of meeting 30th October 2018

Minutes from last meeting were accepted as accurate. The action points from the previous meeting were updated as follows:

- (i) *SSEN operating procedure* – the SSEN team still drafting their policy, and so will come to a future meeting to discuss this.
- (ii) *Chair to encourage representatives of all sectors in the north-west area to engage with the RIFG* – a meeting was held in Ullapool at the end of last year and this facilitated reengagement with people who had not been involved with the IFG process before.
- (iii) *Minutes from SICG can be shared with the WCRIFG. Femke de Boer sits on the group and can update the WCRIFG as appropriate.* FB updated the group that the SICG has decided to form several sub groups to actively discuss all issues within the industry at the moment and to target action on these. FB noted that sharing of information across and between the SICG and the WCRIFG is important and would like to share the MRAG report with SICG when it becomes available.

Discussion

- Marine Scotland and the WCRIFG should take forward any future work and fisheries management proposals.

7. 2nd Socioeconomic Review of MPAs

Kathleen Allen from Marine Scotland provided an overview on the process of undertaking a review of the socioeconomic impact of MPAs. This would provide an update to the 2016 report which considered the same topic but was not able to identify the impacts of the MPAs as it was too soon after they had been implemented. This report will consider the same three MPAs (South Arran, Wester Ross and Sound of Jura) as were considered previously, however if data from other areas is available then this will be taken into account. Anyone who wishes to take part should feedback through the Chair or directly to Kathleen.

The report will look at existing data, change in fisheries activity and also carry out case studies for the three MPAs to measure the impacts. KA noted that they would also like to consider wider impacts, such as those on processors, chandlers and knock-on effects on communities. There is no cut-off date for the submission of evidence, however the team are aiming to collect the majority of data over the summer with the aim of finalising the report by the end of the year.

The general view of the 2016 report was that a lot of views had not been taken into account. The Chair requested that all members take part in this work and encouraged them to feedback evidence

and facts to the team developing the updated report. The Chair will keep members of the WCRIFG informed of the progress of this work.

Discussion

- A suggestion/request was made for the report to consider the Lochs Duich, Long and Alsh NCMPA.
- The effect of the MPAs should be considered, as well as the impact of any increase in effort in surrounding areas as a result of displacement.

8. Torridon Herring Spawning Areas, Voluntary Measures

Herring spawning has been observed taking place around Gairloch in Wester Ross. A proposal by the SCFF was put to members to introduce voluntary measures to protect the area while spawning activity was taking place and while spawn was incubating.

Discussion

- Members broadly agreed that measures should be introduced to protect the herring spawn; however there was strong disagreement as to whether it should be applied to mobile gear only or all types of gear (mobile and static) and activity (diving).
- It was noted that the ICES advice on this issue notes that 'activities that have a negative impact on spawning of herring should not occur unless they had been assessed and shown not to be detrimental'. In addition, it was noted that a paper was recently put to the SWFPA on this issue; this would be discussed further by this group and outcomes could be shared with the WCRIFG Chair. It was generally agreed that an evidence based approach should be taken; spawning activity can vary annually and so any measures will require associated monitoring. It was also noted that drop-down camera work had just been completed in north Torridon, and work on this is due to be published soon; this can inform this proposal.

ACTION

- Chair to circulate full ICES advice and outcome of SWFPA group discussions.
- Request to MSS to consider proposal to implement formal ban for area for (1) mobile gear and for (2) all activities and gear types.

9. West Coast Fisheries Mapping exercise Paper 1 & Appendix

Item 9 was taken after items 10-12. Alastair Hughson updated the group on a meeting he attended recently at Fishmongers Hall in London to discuss issues relating to the UK scallop sector, including topics such as stock assessments and the environmental sustainability of the industry. At the meeting it was discussed that there were resources available through a PhD studentship or post-doctoral research position to carry out work in this area at a site in the UK. Various sites were discussed but an area in the North West of Scotland was identified as a suitable location to map scallop activity, study effects on habitats and carry out a stock assessment. The group would like to involve fishers, and they would need to disclose fishing areas. AH notified the group so that other members are aware this is taking place in case others are interested in getting involved.

Discussion

- Members raised concerns about how this proposal was being taken forward and that neither the WCRIFG nor Marine Scotland was involved in this meeting. It was clarified that this work was in the very early stages. Several areas for the study were considered at the meeting, and the decision to focus on the North West of Scotland area was only made at the meeting.
- The outcomes of this proposal would be used to inform a management plan. It was noted that Marine Scotland is already developing a management plan, in relation to the MRAG report. This work can therefore feed into that. There is also the ongoing PUKFI scallop work.

- It is not clear how this work is being funded (potentially as a PhD project, funded by The Fishmongers' Company), however this can be clarified.
- The Chair and Marine Scotland emphasised that where proposals such as this are being made, they should be brought to the IFG at an early stage for consideration.

ACTION

- Chair to get in touch with The Fishmongers' Company and find out more about this and propose that the project is taken forward, working with the WCRIFG.

10. Pilot Project Consultation – Inner Sound

The consultation on the Inner Sound Pilot Project is ongoing until the 11th April. All views, feedback and contributions should be fed back through the consultation. The Chair noted that if the membership wanted to feedback, the WCRIFG could submit an organisational response. It was noted that at a recent subcommittee meeting in Kyleakin, this consultation was discussed but the group failed to reach consensus. Members may wish to submit individual responses.

ACTION

- Chair to advise Marine Scotland that WCRIFG could not reach a consensus on this proposed project.

11. WCRIFG Position statements

The Chair advised that a position statement on aquaculture has been developed and the existing statement on cables reviewed. These were circulated to members prior to the meeting.

- (i) Subsea Cables (Paper 2)
- (ii) Aquaculture (Draft) (Paper 3) – The Chair noted that this will be a useful mechanism for providing feedback to aquaculture developers.

The Chair welcomed feedback and comments on these via email. A work group will review the aquaculture statement and a final draft will be circulated via email for agreement.

ACTION

- Chair to establish Aquaculture workgroup
- Members to feedback any proposed amendments to either statement to Chair

12. WCRIFG Fisheries Management Plan Review Paper 4

The Chair noted that this item will be followed up via email and addressed at the next meeting.

13. Future Fisheries Management – National Discussion

Diane Buchanan provided a summary of the Future of Fisheries Management in Scotland Discussion Paper that has been released by Marine Scotland. The discussion paper seeks to start an in-depth, nationwide discussion with stakeholders to help inform and develop Scotland's Future Fisheries Management Strategy and has been driven by the UK's exit from the EU and because the Sea Fisheries Strategy needs to be updated. This discussion paper will inform how future management strategies are developed.

The discussion paper covers issues such as:

- Protecting Scottish fishing interests and ensuring access is not traded away.
- Fishing sustainably, within scientific limits.
- Effective use and distribution of quota, maximising technology and encouraging innovation.
- Increasing accountability and confidence, moving away from a one size fits all approach and delegating functions.

- It also contains a number of proposals around issues such as implementing MSY rather than arbitrary targets, having a more workable approach to discards, support for new entrants, options to manage future gear conflict, should there be a more formal role for RIFGs alongside an expansion of remit.

Discussion

- Chair encouraged members to respond individually. If anyone would like to comment through the IFG, please send comments to the Chair.
- The Chair has circulated a link to the Discussion paper in the meeting papers. All compliance fishery officers have been sent a pamphlet of the discussion paper, so it is available this way too.

14. WCRIFG Chair's Update

The Mull and Argyll crab tagging pilot project ran from October to January and it will do so again this year with a review to be carried out before September. The pilot involved five static gear boats in an area west of Mull. The five boats were limited to 300 creels each; the fishers involved have indicated that they considered it successful.

Discussion

- It was suggested that the top third of the pilot area was fished all season and the bottom third was not fished. In addition, report suggests that there were as many creels outside the area as inside.
- Concerns were raised about the aquaculture developments taking place inside the Canna MPA and the development of the aquaculture industry.
- A suggestion was made to have an IFG working group to coordinate/communicate with the aquaculture industry and to establish best practice guidance with the industry, similar to the arrangements established for cable laying.

ACTION

- Chair to coordinate aquaculture and invite a SEPA representative to a future meeting.

15. WCRIFG Members' Updates

Due to shortage of time, this item was not covered.

16. AOCB

Gear conflict with oil industry

It was noted at a recent meeting in Kyleakin that there have been gear conflict issues related to the movement of oil rigs. The developers published the track outlining the area which needs to be cleared of gear for a period of about 3-4 weeks as a safety measure and to avoid gear being entangled as oil rig infrastructure was moved. This led to a number of boats being inconvenienced and a loss of earnings. It would be useful to establish a code of conduct with the oil industry to ensure this does not happen again.

Discard ban

There was a request to an agenda item to the next meeting around the decline in finfish landings and lack of implementation of the discards ban. It would be useful to have some discussion as to why landings are decreasing. It was noted that this is a national issue and would be more appropriate for discussion to be held at the IFMAC meeting.

17. DONM

The date of the next meeting will be set via email. The meeting was closed at 15.30.

