

**WEST COAST REGIONAL INSHORE FISHERIES
GROUP (WCRIFG)**

REVIEW OF FISHERIES MANAGEMENT PLAN

DRAFT

MAR 2019

Introduction

The WCRIFG Fisheries Management Plan (FMP) is a rolling flexible document and can be amended at any time, with the agreement of members. The annual review provides an opportunity to check on progress and to make sure that the aims and objectives remain current. The FMP sets out overarching strategic aims together with general and local objectives.

A) Strategic Objectives

The FMP comprises overarching strategic objectives together with general and local aims. Strategic objective are as follows and it is believed these remain current and thus do not need to be changed:

1. Biological - to conserve, enhance and restore commercial stocks in inshore waters and the supporting ecosystem.
2. Economical - to optimise long term and sustained economic return to local coastal communities that are dependent on inshore fisheries, and to promote quality initiatives.
3. Environmental - to maintain and restore the quality of the inshore marine environment.

Actions & Outcomes

Actions described below under general and local aims are contributing to some or all of the overarching objectives.

B) General Aims

- (i) Work with and inform agencies such as Marine Scotland and SNH in the development of management plans for MPAs/SACs/SPAs to ensure that statutory processes take full account of inshore fishing interests in designation and management processes.

Actions & Outcomes

Chair participated in workshops/meetings regarding MPAs and has invited statutory agency personnel to management committee meetings to both inform and seek feedback from members. Chair participating in the recently reformed MPA Review Committee which will revisit the 2016 study, which was effectively a baseline picture, and determine positive and negative impacts of designations three years post management measures being implemented.

- (ii) Respond where appropriate to marine statutory consultations such as marine licences, aquaculture proposals, marine planning, etc, where WCRIFG

members submit details for responses or alternatively in line with WCRIFG position statements.

Actions & Outcomes

When RIFG Members have provided details with regards to consultations these have been made known to the appropriate agencies. Some fish farming organisations are giving the RIFG pre-consultation notifications and have amended proposals as the result of feedback. Position statements (Cables) is issued to all cabling proposals and has served to make organisations contact the Chair for more details. Thereafter, site specific issues can be raised, where appropriate.

- (iii) Encourage fishermen to bring forward and view local fisheries issues as part of a wider network of management including Marine Scotland, Marine Planning Partnerships and national forums such as IFMAC.

Actions & Outcomes

Some areas better than other at raising issues etc but where done, points made are applied as requested.

- (iv) Develop position statements that are consistent with the objectives of the National Marine Plan but also reflect the expectations of the WCRIFG. Position statements will be appended to this plan and will be used to advise parties proposing developments in coastal waters of WCRIFG's general stance though these may also be supported by site specific criteria. The following areas have been identified for position statements:

- (i) Marine Cable Laying contracts
- (ii) Coastal/Marine Pipeline contracts
- (iii) Marine & Coastal Construction contracts
- (iv) Dredging & Deposits in Marine/Coastal Waters
- (v) Port & Harbour Developments
- (vi) Inshore Recreational Developments
- (vii) Offshore Renewable Developments (wind/tidal)
- (viii) Fish Farming (all types)
- (ix) Sea Weed Farming
- (x) Non-native Invasive Species
- (xi) V-Notching
- (xii) Creel Escape Panels
- (xiii) Litter
- (xiv) Pollution

Actions & Outcomes

The marine cable position statement has proved useful and is used whenever proposals are made known to the WCRIFG Chair. Sufficient comments have been made with regards to fish farms to allow a draft

aquaculture position statement to be produced for the consideration of RIFG members.

- (v) Explore options for scallop management planning in west coast waters following voluntary closures imposed by WCRIFG in Loch Sunart in 2016. Concerns of ingress of large numbers of vessels and heavy impacts mean that measures are required as a priority to minimise effects and conserve resources.

Actions & Outcomes

Voluntary closure was successfully implemented in 2018 for one month from the 1 October. RIFG members have intimated that they would prefer that the Scottish Government amended the legislation to bring the opening of Loch Sunart in line with other west coast waters, namely the 1 November. Marine Scotland has indicated that the difficulty is finding appropriate Parliamentary time to consider the matter.

**C) Local Aims
Clyde**

- (i) Through the Chair engage as a member of the Clyde Marine Planning Partnership (CMPP). Objectives of membership are to ensure that the social and economic importance of fisheries together with key natural and infrastructure resources required to sustain fishing activities are clearly defined. Ensure that WCRIFG objectives contained in this plan inform the development of plans and activities pertaining to CMPP and Clyde 2020.

Outcomes and Actions

The WCRIFG chair, together with CFA, represents fisheries on the CMPP. Input has ensured that documentation produced by CMPP is consistent with the aims and objectives of the WCRIFG FMP. CMPP refers any major fisheries related issues that arise through the forum to the WCRIFG Clyde Subcommittee. THE CMPP project officer is a member of the WCRIFG Clyde Subcommittee to maintain good links between the two forums. Under the banner of the WCRIFG, CMPP, CFA and Strathclyde University have worked in collaboration to develop a Clyde Scallop stock assessment project subject to successfully obtaining support funding. The CMPP pre-consultation draft has been m

- (ii) Ensure that that all fisheries proposals/issues raised by or via the CMPP are reviewed by the WCRIFG Clyde Subcommittee before progressing to the CMPP.

Outcomes and Actions

CMPP refers any major fisheries related issues that arise through the forum to the WCRIFG Clyde Subcommittee. THE CMPP project officer is a member of the WCRIFG Clyde Subcommittee to maintain good links between the two forums. Under the banner of the WCRIFG, CMPP, CFA and Strathclyde University have worked in collaboration to develop a Clyde Scallop stock assessment project subject to successfully obtaining support funding.

- (iii) Through the Chair the WCRIFG will participate as a member of Clyde 2020 subgroup of CMPP with the aim of ensuring that all fisheries issues are scrutinised by the WCRIFG prior to progressing via the CMPP.

Outcomes and Actions

WCRIFG Chair, together with CFA, represent inshore fishing on this forum. Clyde 2020 is a subcommittee of the above CMPP and the comments reported under CMPP are pertinent to Clyde 2020.

- (iv) There are a number of areas that require addressing but there needs to be prioritisation and a recognition of the resources required to take issues forward. It is believed that within the Clyde considerable areas have been lost to fishing as the result of other developments. Mapping of these together with areas that remain active fisheries grounds will provide a useful resource to demonstrate impacts that there have been on the industry i.e. fishing grounds lost and highlight areas where it would be undesirable to see future impacts/losses. To begin to achieve this and other aims as listed below technical support is required. This might be obtained by using RIFG outreach support or seeking to employ a person supported by grant funding

- (v) Scallop stock assessment

Outcomes and Actions

Proposals submitted by a work group comprising, WCRIFG, CMPP, CFA and Strathclyde University for a Clyde scallop stock assessment study, sought EMFF support from the central fund. The work group was advised that the fund had been fully subscribed and, as an alternative, the University is exploring if it is able to access University Research funding to support the project. Acquiring suitable funding will determine if this study progresses.

- (vi) Crab tagging as part of a collaborative project being led by Orkney. Objective is to tag brown crabs to study movements, spawning etc

Outcomes and Actions

Crab tagging in west coast waters began in October 2018 and complements work begun in Orkney by providing a fuller picture of

migration. It is not believed that crab tagging is currently taking place in the Clyde.

- (vii) Investigate the system of a mixed fishery returned by enabling boats to vary catches to take the strain off of single species – e.g. go from prawns – herring - mackerel – squid
- (viii) Prawns – increase minimum tail size
- (ix) Promotion and marketing – promotion of Clyde caught products, problems getting Clyde catches to market so look at infrastructure and transport in order to get catches to market efficiently, reduce or even eliminate variability – potential links with Argyll and Ayrshire economic forums
- (x) Investment – help boats diversify, help get young people into the industry, build new types of vessels e.g. three man ringed nets ideal for Clyde
- (xi) Investigate fish feed levels in the Clyde which are believed to be low. Is this the reason stocks are so low?
- (xii) Investigate the impact of creels on benthic habitats particularly where areas have become saturated with creels.

Mull & Argyll

- (i) Develop a strategy to sustain and secure a profitable industry to ensure local control of fisheries through establishing projects or practices consistent with sustainable commercial fisheries management.

Outcomes and Actions

See (ii) below

- (ii) Explore the potential for the development of locally based sustainable fisheries management measures including gear conflict resolution in waters West of Mull. The objectives are (a) to implement measures that will help conserve and enhance scallop stocks by controlling effort and, (b) protect, conserve and minimise gear conflict in a defined crabbing area. Demonstration and research for a 3-5 year period will allow data to be gathered and help inform future local fisheries management.

Outcomes and Actions

The above proposals have been pursued under the guises of a pilot project (crabs) and a scallop study (see General Aim (v) above). The Crab pilot began in October 2018 until 31 January 2019 when a

maximum of five static gear vessels, each deploying a maximum of 300 creels, had sole access to a 'box' west of Mull for the purpose of harvesting brown crabs. Scallop vessels were excluded from the 'box' for the four-months period, but thereafter, have full access. The aim is to review the outcomes of the four-months trial in Spring 2019 in order to make any tweaks before rerunning the project from the 1 October 2019. Early reports are that the trial has been a success.

Details on the scallop proposals for the area west of Mull are given under General Aims (v) above.

- (iii) Explore options to maximise the potential to acquire EMFF funding to support issues in objectives (i) & (ii) above

Outcomes and Actions

Support for the proposals in (i) & (ii) above have come from RIFG outreach support and not EMFF.

- (iv) Crab tagging as part of a collaborative project being led by Orkney. Objective is to tag brown crabs to study movements, spawning etc.

Outcomes and Actions

Crab tagging began in October 2018 and will add value to the ongoing study begun in Orkney. Crab tagging will also complement the pilot project mentioned in (ii) above as local fishermen currently don't know where crabs from the 'box' migrate to in spring each year. Fishermen beyond those involved in the crabbing pilot are tagging crabs and thus information from other parts of the WCRIFG area will be gleaned as a result. At the time of production of this review, 53 WCRIFG tags have been returned.

Solway

- (i) Explore the potential for an industry led feasibility project to re-establish the Solway cockle fishery under strict management criteria. Opportunity for an industry led project which would entail as study in a defined area of the Solway cockle fishery for the purpose of determining measures that might lead to the sustainable management of the cockle fishery. The study would allow for some commercial hand collection in order it is self-financing though, depending on what other measures the project applicants wish to include in the study, there may be potential for EMFF support.

Outcomes and Actions

Consultants have been engaged to explore the potential options for the management of a cockle industry led trial and they are expected to report their findings in the coming weeks. The WCRIFG Solway Cockle Work Group will meet once the report is available to consider its findings and how a cockle harvesting trial may be conducted.

- (ii) Review the findings of the Solway IFG projects report (lobster v-notching, DNA testing (Lobsters) and, creel escape panels) and explore opportunities for further developments.

Outcomes and Actions

The pilot project identified some useful findings but given the size of the project and the relatively small number of participants, indicated that further follow-up work was required. The consultant's report is available on the WCRIFG Web site.

- (iii) Explore options to maximise the potential to acquire EMFF funding to support issues in objectives (i) & (ii) above

Outcomes and Actions

The support for (i) above came from RIFG outreach and not EMFF.

- (iv) Undertake an annual review of the Solway Code of Conduct (Gear Conflict) in consultations with signatories prior to the opening of the scallop season. This process now in its ninth year has been largely successful in minimising potential gear conflict and Solway based WCRIFG members are keen to see the Code continue.

Outcomes and Actions

No issues relating to gear conflict were report during the last couple of scallop seasons. Amendments to the Code to include a chart and coordinates with regards to the Luce Bay MPA have helped to ensure that vessels visiting the Solway are aware of the designated waters. The Solway Subcommittee meet each September to review the Code and it is updated accordingly before issuing in advance of the 1 November.

- (v) Collaboration project with D&G FLAG to deliver on (i) above and investigate the value of cockle re-layering. A proposal is being developed whereby re-layering of cockle spat take place as a study to evaluate if this methodology provides a viable opportunity to stock cockles and allow commercial hand collection to be sustained. It has been suggested that re-layering and the commercial study in (i) above be managed as a joint project combining both aspects within a single study.

Outcomes and Actions

A partnership including the WCRIFG Chair & comprising D&G FLAG, SNH, RSPB, SFP and the University of the SW has developed a proposed project. The subject is currently under consideration for EMFF under the central fund and subject to a successful bid will begin later this year. If EMFF is not obtained, the partnership will need to consider if other funding options are possible.

- (vi) Explore the potential to develop a small fin fish/mixed fishery in the Solway that would allow a local catch to be taken by small inshore vessels for processing in locally land based facilities.

Outcomes and Actions

This matter remains under discussion and will be investigated further.

West Highlands & Skye

- (i) Explore the potential for the development of a locally managed inshore fishery in the Inner Sound incorporating gear conflict management measures. The objectives are to control fishing effort in the Inner Sound by controlling effort in relation to static and mobile gears to protect and ensure that a high value fishery is sustained. Demonstration and research over a 3 - 5 years period will allow data to be collected to determine the value of implementing local controls. The study will help inform future fisheries management.

Outcomes and Actions

Following feedback from Marine Scotland on the WCRIFG report no further action has been taken under the auspices of the WCRIFG.

- (ii) Explore options to maximise the potential to acquire EMFF funding to support issues in objectives (i) above or other developments which evolve during the life of this plan

Outcomes and Actions

See (i) above

Outcomes

A number of initiatives and a pilot project have meant that progress towards achieving a number of aims and objectives have been or are currently being addressed.

Mull Crab Pilot Project

The Mull crab trial began last October and during the four-months trial until the 31 January, five static gear vessels had access to the crab box. Each vessel deployed no more than 300 creels each. Early feedback suggests that the trial has gone well but a review will be conducted in April. Following the removal of creels from the box at the end of January, mobile sector vessels have access to the area. It is intended to repeat the spatial separation trial this coming October.

Crab Tagging

Since October 2018 several crabbers have been tagging brown crabs including people involved in the Mull pilot trials. Crab tagging will complement work begun in Orkney some years ago but now ongoing in all RIFG areas. At the time of compiling this report, 53 WCRIFG tags have been returned and these, together with others still to be received, will help build a picture of crab migration patterns.

Proposed Scallop Management and Conservation Strategy West Coast Waters

MRAG consultants have been working on the above strategy which included the circulation of a questionnaire to all RIFG members in January. The Consultant's draft report will be delivered to the WCRIFG management committee at the meeting on the 27 March 2019.

Proposed Scallop Stock Assessment Trial, Clyde

Under the auspices of the WCRIFG but in partnership with the CMPP, CFAA and University of Strathclyde, proposals were prepared for the above stock assessment trial. The initial application to EMFF was delayed when Marine Scotland requested a business case report which resulted in the proposals missing an applications submission deadline. The result was that the work group was advised that the EMFF fund which might have supported the proposals was fully subscribed. Currently, alternative sources of grant funding are being sought but financial support is successful acquired, the trials are unlikely to proceed.

Proposed Solway Cockles Industry Led Hand Gathering Trials

SSQC Consultants are currently working on the production of a report expected in Spring 2019. The report will outline the consultant's findings in relation to the cockle

industry's appetite to work collectively and take responsibility for managing a cockles' hand gathering trial. Having been shut to commercial activity for over a decade, there is potential to explore community management of the fishery in a way that ensures sustainability and security of the stocks. Once the consultant's report is available, its findings will be shared with the WCRIFG Solway Cockles Work Group. Subject to the development of a plan or management measures, any practical proposals resulting from the report will be brought before the WCRIFG Management committee. The Solway cockle fishery has been closed to commercial harvesting activities for over 10 years.

Proposed Solway Cockles Relaying Trials

Proposals to relay cockles in an area of the Solway have been developed in partnership with D&G FLAG, SNH, RSPB, Solway Firth Partnership and, the University of SW Scotland. An EMFF application was submitted to the central fund by the December 2018 deadline and the decision is expected this spring. The current proposals are research and other than having a cockle fisher on the steering group in an advisory role, there will be no commercial activity. However, if relaying in phase 1 proved successful, a second phase involving hand gathering, would likely be an outcome. Progress on this trial is fully dependent on the receipt of adequate grant funding support.

Loch Sunart Voluntary Closure

The voluntary closure introduced by the WCRIFG on the 11 scalloping areas in Loch Sunart from the 1 October 2018 meant that both the features of the MPA and scallop stocks were protected during the period to the 1 November. WCRIFG members have expressed concerns about continually seeking the voluntary closure and favour the Scottish Government amending the legislation thereby bringing Loch Sunart into line with other west coast waters in terms of the 1 November start of the season. The WCRIFG has been advised that any formal amendment requires Parliamentary time and is not likely to happen until a suitable slot can be found such as the consideration of other fisheries legislation.

Solway Code of Conduct

Now in its eleventh year, the Solway Code of Conduct was reviewed in September in advance of the start of the 2019 scallop fishing season. Amendments to some of the personal details were made to ensure people's details remain current but otherwise, it was agreed that the code remains fit for purpose. As far as is known, no breaches of the code have taken place in recent seasons.

WCRIFG Participation on other forums, meetings etc

The WCRIFG Chair participates as a member or chair of other forums for the purpose of ensuring that the aims and objectives in the Fisheries Management Plan inform or influence the development of other plans or processes.

Clyde Marine Planning Partnership (including Clyde 2020)

The WCRIFG chair is on the CMPP and is a board member together with CFA. The chair is also a member of the Clyde 2020 as is CFA. CMPP has developed guidance documents and most recently a pre-consultation document. WCRIFG has input as appropriate as these developments have evolved whilst the pre-consultation document is currently the subject of public consultation.

Solway Firth Partnership

The WCRIFG Chair is also Chair of SFP though this dual role is coincidental. However, another member of the WCRIFG Solway subcommittee is also an SFP Board member, a situation that pertained prior to the RIFG's establishment. WCRIFG involvement with SFP ensures that the latter forum normally refers any fisheries related issues to the WCRIFG to consider (or the IFCA on the English side) and subsequently advise SFP accordingly.

FLAGS

The WCRIFG Chair is also the Chair of the Dumfries & Galloway FLAG and the Argyll & Ayr FLAG, respectively. Each of these FLAGS operate differently and the D&G FLAG has almost fully subscribed its allocation of EMFF to projects. Concerns of fishermen that few projects being considered in the earlier application rounds pertained to fishing interests but, more recent rounds have seen proposals that are of direct or indirect benefit to the inshore fishing sector. A&A FLAG has still to allocate a large amount of its funding though given extensions agreed by Government to the process as the result of Brexit, there remains time to see the funds fully utilised.

Sectoral Marine Plan for Offshore Wind - Project Steering Group 1& 2 - SEIA and Scenario Mapping Project Steering Group

Two separate steering groups which have RIFG representation including the WCRIFG Chair. Other fisheries representatives also on these committees including the N&E RIFG Chair. The steering groups are exploring ecological and socioeconomical issues/risks respectively in this developing mapping process for future potential offshore renewable development areas. There have been two meetings thus far and the process remains ongoing.

MPA Socioeconomic Review Group

The committee is a reformation of the one which undertook the first review in 2016. The committee's work has only begun and will continue through 2019 leading to a final outcome report. The review will revisit sites and interviewees in the first study. The WCRIFG Chair represents inshore fishing on this forum.

The FMP remains a flexible working document and whilst the opportunity has been taken to undertake this second annual review, WCRIFG members are encouraged to propose further aims and objectives as and when matters arise.

Chair WCRIFG

Mar 2019

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