

Regional Inshore Fisheries Group Network

RIFG Chairs' Meeting Note

23rd November 2021, via Microsoft Teams – 10 am – 12 pm

Attendees

Present		
Jim Watson	JW	Head of Domestic Fisheries Management
Helen Downie	HD	Marine Scotland
Stuart Bell	SB	Marine Scotland
Chloe Aird	CA	Marine Scotland
Gordon Taylor	GT	Marine Scotland
Duncan MacInnes	DM	Outer Hebrides RIFG
Simon Macdonald	SM	West Coast RIFG
Jennifer Mouat	JM	North and East Coast RIFG
Donald Nicholson	DN	Outer Hebrides RIFG
Carole Laignel	CL	Shetland Shellfish Management Organisation (SSMO)
Kate Rydzkowski	KR	Orkney Sustainable Fisheries (OSF)

Apologies - None

1. MS Update – Jim Watson – 10.00

Autumn annual negotiation are ongoing, with delegates currently in the Faroes.

The annual Fisheries Debate took place on 10th November. Announcements made during the debate, included economic link arrangements and the Scottish *Nephrops* Working Group recommendations which include strategies for market recovery and development

Update was provided on delivering the marine elements of the Cooperation Agreement. Consultation on the inshore cap will be in quarter 1 of next year. Data analysis and impact assessment is being undertaken and ministers advised. The inshore cap consultation will include a review of Scallop Latency.

In addition, consultation on the new Catching Policy, outlined within the Future Fisheries Management Strategy, will take place it is hoped in January 2022. The consultation will also include the static sector, so will also present an opportunity to ask questions on creel management measures. An early draft of the policy has been shared with FMAC.

The Inner Sound of Skye Pilot Judicial Review appeal of the January 2021 decision is scheduled for 3rd December 2021.

Unfortunately, due to resource constraints Marine Scotland are not in a position to undertake projects that lie out with those identified by the recent prioritisation exercise. The priority remains the commitments set out within the cooperation agreement and Future Fisheries Management Strategy.

2. Updates from Chairs – 10.20

Outer Hebrides

MarPAMM meeting at end of October - a sub-group has been formed to promote making the sea a better place to be and the link to the meetings to those who wish to attend can be made available.

Socioeconomic Impact Assessment (SEIA) for MPA's meeting – this was a positive meeting that highlighted MPAs can be managed and well controlled.

Marine Scotland Fund has created a lot of interest. The MS first time vessel owners fund has created a lot of interest and 8 people are waiting to get into the industry, with 3 of these being 1st time vessel owners. MS explained £100,000 cap is in place to make best use of the funds available.

The Cooperation Agreement has created uncertainty within the fishing and processing industry.

Labour shortage – There is a lack of affordable housing/accommodation and ongoing issues with foreign workers unable to get national insurance numbers. This means no benefits can be paid when workers are laid off.

Pot limitation pilot – Doing very well and next update at next meeting on 3rd December 2021.

Shellfish prices have been higher than they have been for a long time. Crab catches remain low which is contributing to the strong price. Low price for Nephrops continues to be a concern, although they have shown some recent signs of recovery.

West Coast

Aquaculture Working group met and included proposals for sites to be required to use a consistent standard of marker buoy.

Seaweed/Mussel Farm proposals – These sites are likely to cause entanglement issues in Firth of Clyde area.

Spoke with Kenneth Smith to discuss trials of stability monitors, for vessels to enhance safety.

Meeting with Aisling Duncan (Marine Scotland) to discuss MPA progression.

Sea Food Scotland Brexit meetings are ongoing, every 2nd Thursday, keeping up to date with logistical issues.

Currently planning next full committee meeting and have asked Allister Philp (SCFF) to present as has been unable to attend recent meets.

Updated west coast management paper and circulated.

Nominated for best chairperson award.

Cop 26 meeting – Looking at new ideas for packaging as an alternative to polystyrene boxes. Plans to contact packaging companies/aquaculture industry for environmentally friendly ideas.

Gairloch Herring closure - It has been agreed that the voluntary closure should continue.

WCRIFG Meeting – 5th November – Presentation from Seafood Scotland's Karen Galloway. Also presented Scallop management paper and creel paper discussed.

Solway cockle project - Application was rejected by MS. Applicant is looking to rewrite paper and resubmit.

Red Rocks Flapper Skate eggs meeting - Work is ongoing to see if this emergency MPA can be extended, as there is evidence some aggregations of eggs are outside perimeter of current area.

ACTION

JM requests clarity on foreign workers restrictions within vessels working inshore. SB will respond in due course with current policy legislation.

North & East Coast

Attended various meetings relating to offshore renewables developments.

Aid to Navigation project has approved for Moray Firth.

Gear conflict - JM expressed concerns again about this and mentioned one local fisher's recent £12k gear loss.

Blue Marine Berwickshire – This organisation are intending a ‘consultation’ on their intended approach for preservation of the Berwickshire coastal area.

Development of seaweed farming sites is still ongoing and Aberdeen Council have held a consultation on such developments.

Management plan is being updated.

Geofencing Proposal – It is expected that a further iteration of this proposal will be submitted to Marine Scotland.

Orkney

Current editor of Fishing News has proposed a 4 page spread on science work. KR will check all material before its released.

Pier infrastructure improvements - Proposal to incorporate a working lab and storage to allow them to do trials/experiments. Council have been supportive of this plan.

Creel camera project with Herriot Watt University – £200,000 project starts this month. Approached by Seafast who have submitted a £300,000 proposal. Footage is really good and will help with stock assessment.

Scottish Sea Farms are having an open door event via Microsoft teams, please contact KR for more details.

Follow up meeting with Seafood Scotland – They would like to sit on next week’s meeting with Marks & Spencer to get a flavour of the market.

Crab fishers are saying the quality still hasn’t reached its optimum level yet on the run up to Christmas. Crabs seem to be soft and hope these harden soon.

Shetland Update

Have held consultation on banning berried lobsters and pot limitation for Buckie whelks. The response will go to advisory group and then will collate responses.

John Robinson has accepted role of SSMO coordinator and will start his new role in January 2022. MS will provide an induction.

SSMO website – FAQ section has been updated.

SSMO board meeting on 2nd December went ahead and COVID permitting, an open meeting will follow in due course.

3. RIFG Network Improvements – 11.30

The FFM strategy and ministerial discussions/cooperation agreement dictate MS are looking for proper engagement with fishers in this period of change. Government are coming under more scrutiny and are looking to help RIFG's engage with our stakeholders through this new step change.

Furthermore we need to focus our resources on priorities and look to improve transparency of network. MS are looking for ideas from Chairs to improve engagement.

There was general discussion on this with suggestions including making better use of the RIFG website, promoting the platform and displaying progress on the priority work in line with the Cooperation Agreement.

SMART objectives could be incorporated into each of their respective fishery management plans to help with stakeholder engagement.

Mapping stakeholders across each RIFG area will strengthen stakeholder buy-in and this is an area that MS can help with via our network of fishery offices.

MS have asked for ideas from chairs by **30 November 2021**

4. AOB – 11.50

MPA Management - MS are arranging lots of stakeholder meetings. Conservation team have contacted SM and JM and have advised the Troon paper is ready.

MS conservation team will contact JM about attending a meeting in January that she can make

6. Close