

Regional Inshore Fisheries Group Network

RIFG Chairs' Meeting Note

09th May 2022, Via Microsoft Teams – 1pm – 3pm

Attendees

Present		
Jim Watson	JW	Head of Domestic Fisheries Management, Scottish Government
Stuart Bell	SB	Inshore Fisheries Senior Policy Manager, Scottish Government
Helen Downie	HD	Inshore Fisheries Senior Policy Manager, Scottish Government
Chloe Aird	CA	Inshore Fisheries Policy Manager, Scottish Government
Gordon Taylor	GT	Inshore Fisheries Policy Officer, Scottish Government
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
John Robertson	JR	Shetland Shellfish Management Organisation (SSMO)

Apologies	
Kate Rydzkowski	Orkney Sustainable Fisheries (OSF)

1. MS Update – 13.00
<p>Overview (JW)</p> <p>Consultation on the Joint Fisheries Statement has now closed. This set out the draft policy aims and objectives as agreed by all administrations. The Scottish Government (SG) were involved in drafting this UK wide document, and the outcome of the consultation will be published in 2-3 months. We are also closely involved in the development of fisheries management plans.</p>

The Future catching policy (FCP) and Remote Electronic Monitoring (REM) consultations launched on the same day and are live. FCP will take a sector by sector approach, as SG recognise a one size fits all approach doesn't work. This will help improve sustainability, reduce waste and accountability, and help deliver a workable landing obligation. We look forward to considering responses from these consultations and feedback from the chairs.

Clyde Cod – The fishing grounds have now reopened, with both Mairi Gougeon and Allan Gibb attending the RAINE committee discussion on the closure. Committed to wash up session on 24 May 2022.

Wrasse- season opened 1st May 2022 – We are rolling over management arrangements from last season and welcome any feedback.

Fisheries pilots – The Outer Hebrides year 1 outcome report will be released this week. The pilot has been a great success to date, and been an excellent example of co-management in action.

Marine Fund Scotland 2021-22 – This annual fund has now closed. Details of this year's fund will be communicated soon through the Marine Funding team.

DM asked if SG were consulted on the Poseidon project, run by Crown Estate Scotland. JW advised that we are not directly involved but confirmed that colleagues elsewhere in SG are familiar with it. JM has contacted Poseidon to get invites for herself and SM to attend. DM agreed to circulate the information he has received about the project with RIFG Chairs and SG officials.

Update on Inshore Cap (SB)

Currently planning the public consultation, which will cover the inshore cap, review of scallop capacity and extension of vessel monitoring solutions to the inshore fleet. The consultation will be launched soon, SB thanked everyone who has been involved with this so far. Currently considering some small technical aspects, to enhance the document and give a better idea of what is in the pipeline. Advised it is the intention to have the Outer Hebrides outcome report made public before the cap consultation comes out. Hoping for release date of 11 May 2022 for Outer Hebrides report to be made available.

Update on MPA& HPMA (HD)

MPA & PMF Inshore areas – In talks with NatureScot to consider refinements to proposed PMF management areas. Feedback from industry and plotter data were looked at to see if we can consider smaller management areas to reduce adverse impacts on industry. Will be back in contact should we require any additional plotter data for sites.

Currently awaiting feedback from Ministers regarding a submission seeking a steer on some aspects of the MPA/PMF work, and will resume engagement with stakeholders

once we have formally heard back from them. In the interim, MPA and HPMAs colleagues are in the process of putting together a bulletin to share with stakeholders to ensure everyone is in the loop regarding development of these policy areas.

Red Rocks & Longay consultation on permanent MPA management measures now closed, outcomes will be announced in coming months.

HPMA's – Stakeholder engagement still ongoing and will use the feedback received to start draft policy framework and site selection criteria. Consultation planned around autumn 2022. An early draft on the consultation is being planned to share with Chairs around June 2022.

Actions

- 1. Duncan McInnes to share information about Poseidon project with RIFG Chairs and SG officials.**

2. RIFG Chairs Roundtable – 14.30

North/East Coast

Renewables – Scotwind round - Developers are carrying out some early engagement. The process for the West of Orkney site has started and is going very well. The developer team are open to discussion and want early engagement. They are looking for another meeting in 2 months and have a terms of reference for the group. Their scoping report is available now and expect other sites to follow soon.

Renewables mitigation paper - Developed by Scottish White Fish & SFF, this has been forwarded to the commercial fisheries working groups for Forth & Tay and Moray Firth. It is a complicated paper which talked about all the interactions and how they could be mitigated. Topics focussed on compensation and monetary factors, but hope to get this opened up to include other impacts. Meeting with developers is likely soon to discuss further.

Community Benefit - Sea Green (Firth of Forth) have given Arbroath community council funds to manage a community benefit scheme. Would like to see this targeted more to the fishing community.

Crown Estate Scotland – Are putting together a Terms of Reference to go to tender for a community benefit scheme for offshore renewables in Scotland. Beneficial meeting held a couple weeks ago and hopeful Terms of Reference will be available soon.

Seaweed – Disappointed to not be included in recent workshop. Mara Seaweed have started consultations for a seaweed farm on St Andrews bay. The consultation hasn't been done in an open/transparent way, but now meeting on 10 May 2022 with the fishing industry rep to give feedback and discuss how engagement can be improved going forward.

Aid to Navigation Project – The units have been purchased and due to be delivered 09 May 2022. Project advancing nicely, with a group set up to get feedback and a report from the fishers that are using it. Early indications are positive within the 12 mile range.

SB – Development of the working relationship between MS and Police Scotland has been delayed due to priority work under the Bute House agreement. It is hoped that work on development of a permanent working group can be progressed alongside Compliance in due course.

Mackerel season - Starting shortly and hoping a group setup to support fishers.

Fuel costs – Fishers, especially with bigger vessels are struggling with fuel costs. JM provided briefing to Mairi Gougeon (MG) for her meeting with DEFRA on this topic and asked if there was any update on this. JW advised MG wrote to George Eustace seeking a cross nation approach and will advise if any reply has been received. Also advised that MG has set up a wider food security supply task force for the supply chain.

SB - Blue Marine Foundation have been closely involved with environmentally focussed fisheries improvement projects in England and with their involvement in the St Abbs area may be looking to replicate that influence in Scotland. A clear message to this group that the RIFG network is the correct means by which to communicate these kind of aspirations to the Scottish Government is essential.

West Coast

Clyde Cod – Managed to get a large part of the ground opened up again, however 5 boats still had to be tied up.

Rural Affairs, Islands & Natural Environment committee – Called up to give evidence, regarding the Clyde cod spawning closure. Took most of the day and involved 3 parts, which included stakeholders, academia and eNGOs. The outcome was that more detail on science is required on the Clyde.

Aquaculture working group – Meeting with SAMS in Oban and looked at their experimental seaweed farming. SAMS have agreed to sit on the aquaculture working group and represent the seaweed industry. A seaweed farming academy has started and will keep SM in the loop with this. Salmon Scotland have appointed Hamish MacDonald to represent the salmon farming interests within the working group. Attended Aviemore recently to complete a networking exercise. With applications for new sites and extensions of existing sites, feels that RIFGs should be statutory consultees for this, representing key- marine users within inshore area. Meeting with Mairi Gougeon soon to discuss further.

West of Mull – The Scottish salmon growers have a site planned, which is causing issues with the Mull and Iona fishers and some of the Mallaig and Clyde vessels. Half a dozen new jobs would be created, however this could lead to losing more vessels within the valuable fishing ground. Ongoing talks with all parties to continue as concerned economic costs may outweigh gains to region.

Solway Cocksles – Harry Hedley keen for a vessel based fishery to go ahead. Hand raking is also being considered, with licenses for 12 fishers and rotating the ground worked on. Will discuss further to evaluate which method would be preferable. DM questioned if cockle project work is worth pursuing. Got to be realistic with costs vs. relative gains. SB believes more science required for the cockles work, will wait on proposal coming in.

Gear Conflict – Had issues with creels being towed away, but this has been resolved with the help from the local fishery officer.

Marketing for nephrops – Went with Seafood Scotland to Expos in Boston and Barcelona. Looking to take trade outside Europe and into America. Lots of interest generated though may be supply issues if all orders were taken immediately.

Delta Airlines – Keen to open up hub in Edinburgh, with four flights a week to Boston, and seven into JFK. More market potential for North America. Offered to put them in touch with directors of Edinburgh Airport, Marine Scotland, and Scottish Enterprise and Edinburgh planners.

Clyde boat fishers – Problems with visas for foreign workers. This is leading to vessels not having enough crew to fish.

Privacy Policy – Draft privacy notice back from his lawyers and one issue to resolve. Should the policy be set up individually or as a group. Asks if address should be Victoria Quay as this is set as his home address at the moment.

NW engagement - SB asked if any development on contacting north west fishers and building closer engagement with these stakeholders.

SM planning dates at the moment, with Mallaig, Skye and Ullapool and asked SG officials attend, officials agreed.

West coast salmon tracking – underwater receivers in place to track migrating salmon with radio tags, issues with entanglement with submerged buoys.

Shetland

Shellfish Fisheries – Very poor year for creel men with velvet crabs and lobsters as continuing cold weather is impacting fishery.

License Issues – Fishers not had up to date certificates of registry from MCA to show, which has resulted in SSMO showing some leniency this year.

SSMO board directors – met twice and hoping to get directors who aren't scallop fishers and a chair who isn't a fisher at all.

Funding – Shetland Islands Council are their biggest funder and are being more becoming increasingly reluctant to support SSMO. Majority of grant goes to scientific data and three jobs are tied up with this. Council think they could cut back so JR drafting further justification within funding application form. MSC accreditation will be lost if they cut back on scientific data gathering. JM asked JR to loop SG in if we can offer supporting justification to help secure funding.

SSMO image – looking to improve and strengthen policies and communication.

Marine Stewardship Council – Passed recent audit to keep accreditation for another year. Will do a promotional push on Shetland scallops and brown crab this summer. Waitrose pushing for REM cameras and sensors to be fitted to all Shetland boats before purchasing any more scallops. Big push to get as many boats fitted as possible.

Aquaculture – Fishers feeling swamped from applications for larger aquaculture farms. Crown Estate Scotland applying for large seaweed farm covering 20 hectares.

Shetland Fisherman's Association are pushing Shetland Island Council for a moratorium on fish farm licenses.

Outer Hebrides

Marine Fund Scotland – 2 successful applicants – 16.5 metre - twin rig and under 10 metre static gear vessel. Total cost £700,000 with MS support of £190,000.

Staff shortages - Macduff Factory are facing staffing issues. Until recently staff were working long hours – 12 hours a day over 6 days a week. Have now reduced quota on boats to manage capacity. Some vessels are now tied up as they're struggling to get crew. DM and DN engaged with Palma University who have been researching migrant route for fishers coming to the Outer Hebrides.

Outer Hebrides Pilot – Meetings held in Barra with representatives from St Andrews University in attendance. Looking to get additional vessels signed up to the catch app, with further meetings to follow in May 2022.

Parlour Pots – No way of recording these on Fish-1 forms.

Mackerel Season – vessels are moving to the west of the islands in anticipation of this fishery starting.

Gear Interaction – Working with Marine Scotland Compliance to improve awareness among fishers of closed areas, as some are unaware of closures in certain areas.

Fuel increase – Everyone affected and DM will talk more on potential fuel cost savings with Hybrid – Hydrogen engines.

Shellfish prices have been good.

Scotwind – Two sites have been granted to a Canadian company – Northland Power. 5 km and 35 km out to west of island.

Marine Conservation Society – Crab and lobster are on their red list, doesn't feel this accounts for efforts in place by RIFGs. SG are meeting with Callum Duncan from MCS to discuss our management plans.

JM will send over MCS data to SG, and advised of monkfish downgrading to 5.

Finally Donald Nicholson confirmed that he has handed in his notice to retire as RIFG Chair. MS thanked him for his 10 years' service.

3. Future ways of working – Helen Downie – 14.30

We agreed at last RIFG Chairs meeting (January 2022) on actions to improve our ways of working. These include SMART objectives and quarterly meetings as well as increasing transparency of how the network is managed.

CA and HD have met with some chairs to get a better understanding of regional priorities. Will meet with other chairs soon. Still to finalise objectives and will communicate once talks conclude.

JW - FFM strategy output – Looking to bolster the RIFG network. Keen to tie in better with national model (FMAC) and provide a forum to discuss national inshore fisheries matters.

4. Carbon Emissions Awareness – Duncan MacInnes – 14.40

Fisheries Innovation Scotland - 06 April meeting with SG officials in attendance. There has been a 50% increase in fuel costs with nephrops/scallop sector suffering the most and least able to afford costs. Static gear sector less impacted however some of the vessels are affected.

New builds – Norway are looking at different methods to improve new builds. Will need to plan more space on vessels for the energy/engine that are driving them.

Ecomotus – Presentation by their engineers on electro/hydrogen pumping into existing diesels engines.

Example of a static gear vessel – 'Emma Jane' in England using this system, reporting a 15% saving on fuel and 60% reduction in CO2.

Marine Fund Scotland – Potentially accessing grants for examples such as smaller vessels that can be run with battery.

Future vision - Infrastructure for harbours to charge vessels and accommodate energy changes to all.

Example is being used on Glasgow buses and feels the marine environment would benefit and will need to get a better idea of costs involved.

5. AOB – Undersize Lobsters/Future RIFG Chairs meeting with Cabinet Secretary – 14.50

Undersize lobsters

DN stated these are being reported, due to increase in hobby fishers and selling on to hotels and vivier buyers in their area.

DM added extension of network of Marinas has provided opportunity for hobby fishers. Recent example of hobby fisher with 20 pots selling – needs no MCA inspection, no licence and no training. Looking to protect inshore waters and wishes to address this immediately before it escalates further. Feels hotels and guest houses should be made aware of illegal selling practices through compliance.

SB –Communication is important and a good option for genuine recreational fishers unaware of regulations. Another good practice is to speak to hotels and guest houses as they need to be registered as buyers if they wish to buy directly from fishing vessels.

Meeting with Cabinet Secretary

JW – Planning to set up meeting with Chairs and Cabinet Secretary during the summer, possibly in Edinburgh face to face. Would appreciate the chairs letting the inshore team of any upcoming meetings they have.