**Minutes of a Meeting**

**SWRIFG Solway Firth Sub Group**

**09 November 2023 Newton Stewart Creebridge House Hotel**

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| **Minutes** | **Action** |
| **Item 1****Attendance**Mark Griffin Chair SWRIFGShaun McGuire Secretary SSGFADouggie White Rep WCSPJohn McGuire Skipper TT71Frazer Scott Chair SSGFAJames Brouls Skipper BA844M McGuire Member SSGFAPaul McGuire BA7Alan Watson Skipper/producerApologies:Tony PattersonJohn Aspinall |  |
| **Item 2****Membership Introduction/Update**SSGFA. SM covered the following points: * Predominantly static gear under 12m boats focussing on crab/ lobster and shellfish.
* Approximately 20 boats.
* Member of CIFA.
* Voluntary Code of Practice in operation between static and mobile gear boats within the Solway Firth. Successful and generally accepted operation - renewed for another year from 01 Nov 23.
* Voluntary static gear effort agreement of maximum 600 creels per boat and use of escape panels.
* Single Bass Licence holder
* Dynamic association looking for diversification opportunities.

WCSP. DW commented as follows:* 5 boats fleet
* Scallop fishing around the UK coast.
* New boat under construction to replace existing boat.
* Crewing difficulties due to lack of recruitment. Use of foreign crew and associated immigration issues.
* Fishing currently ‘variable’. Displacement of Manx boats creating greater pressure on other fishing grounds.
 | SM to provide updated Voluntary CoP members list to update 2023 notice. |
| **Item 3****Marine Directorate Policy and Information Update**MG Raised the following issues:* Post HPMA Consultation Outcome:
	+ Huge response over 4000 returns.
	+ Majority against the detail of the motion.
	+ Govt now seeking alternative means of marine protection.
	+ Most skippers and crews did NOT respond. This MUST change for the next consultation.
* <12m Vessel Tracking System (VMS) consultation.
	+ Closed 7 Nov 23.
	+ No responses to this consultation from the floor.
	+ Likely to be a level of Govt funding for initial installation. Running and ongoing cost will lie with the boat.
	+ Skippers and crews MUST respond to consultations.
* Govt 2019 Crab Assessment. A heated discussion followed.
	+ Data shows over fishing (above fMSY) for period of assessment 2016-19 for 11/12 regions in Scotland.
	+ Lobster in a similar situation.
	+ SM pointed out Solway NOT included in the data therefore did not accept the outcome affected his members.
	+ MG highlighted ICES assessments VIa/VIIa since 2006 also above fMSY (which does incl Solway).
	+ SSGFA have already implemented some voluntary effort measures such as creel limit of 600 in the water.
	+ SM requested data from 2019 as this would hopefully show the positive effect of mitigation measures taken by SSGFA.
	+ Issue of managing non Scottish boats such as the NI ‘super crabbers. At present no effective control of these vessels.
	+ FS expressed concerns about other vessels now fishing for crab/lobster over and above their licence – Razor fishermen now creeling within the Solway adding further pressure and destabilising the stock?
* Bass Licencing
	+ MG pointed out that there will be no further Bass Licences issued for the foreseeable future. However, further evidence of Bass numbers or stock density would be useful if future diversification into this specie is to be considered. Suggest AW and other members record any bass catches on video both sport caught or in nets/other.
	+ MG reported that the AW netting issue within a proposed MPA has now been elevated to senior Civil Servant dealing with MPAs with strong representation for only Bass licensee in Scotland.
	+ SF wished to clarify status of English boats with a Bass licence being purchased by Scots fishermen and then fishing inside Scottish waters.
* Diversification
	+ FS Commented that members would like to diversify into some prolific fish species and nephrops in the Solway.
	+ FS stated that previous allocated quota had not been used due to COVID but that quota removed and given elsewhere as result.
 | **All****All**MG to investigate.MG to discuss with MD as part of integrated package of recommendations.DittoAllMG to monitorMG to investigateMG to discuss with MD. |
| **Item 4****Association issues**Covered in meeting |  |
| **Item 5****Ministerial meeting Issues**Meeting time up so not covered at this point. |  |
| **Item 6****AOB**MG confirmed that all present had undertaken or booked their MCA medicals. All in the room stated that they had complied with the requirement. |  |
| **Item 7****Next Meeting**TBC |  |