**West Coast Regional Inshore Fisheries Group**

**Management Committee Meeting – Minutes**

10th November 2020, Zoom Conference Meeting

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| Chair | Simon Macdonald |
| WCRIFGAttendees | Robyn Dutton (Ullapool Shellfish Association), Allan Maclean(Mull FA), Nick Turnbull (Mull FA), Duncan MacInnes (Western Isles FA), John MacAlister (SWFPA), Neil Robertson (RSSLFA), Femke DeBoer (SWFPA), Kenny Coull (MNWFA), Elaine Whyte (Clyde FA / CIFA), John Hermse (West Coast Scallop FA), Malcolm Morrison (SFF), Clare McFarlan (Solway Firth Partnership), Tommy Finn (CFA) |
| Also attending | Chloe Aird (Marine Scotland), Anneli Hill(SG), Mairi Fenton (Herriot Watt - PHD Student), Michael Crowe (Bullfish Markets), Lynda Blackadder (MSS), Jim Watson (MS), Michael MacCorquodale (Bullfish Market), Kirstie Dearing (Nature Scot), Anne Mclay (MSS) |
| Apologies | Harry Wick (NIFPO), Stuart Bell (MS), Natalie Palmer (Moray Firth Partnership) |

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| 1. Welcome, introductions and apologies
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| The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked them for coming. All attendees introduced themselves. Apologies were noted as above. The Chair acknowledged online meetings are the new normal and will continue for future meetings.  |
| 1. Minutes from the previous meeting; 14th Jan 2020 - Actions
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| The minutes from the previous meeting were recorded as accurate. Elaine Whyte requested an update on how the creel proposals from the Creel Working Group has proceeded, stating they offered numbers after the previous meeting.  |
| 1. Marine Scotland Update; (Jim Watson)
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| Jim Watson (JW) provided a brief Marine Scotland policy update, as below; **EU Exit** * There is currently preparation being undertaken at various levels for EU Exit, engaging on the international stage and ensuring domestic arrangements are in order. This includes liaising with DEFRA, and other Administrations on licensing and quota matters. For example, a UK Govt consultation on apportioning any additional between Fisheries Administrations had recently closed, with a consultation on how to share additional quota in Scotland due shortly.
* Significant uncertainty remains regarding a future fisheries agreement, and associated trade and access arrangements.

**Covid-19*** Covid-19 is still impacting on many fishing businesses and the wider seafood sector.
* Analysis of vessel grossings for the shellfish sector this year to date is running at about 50% of the value compared to the average of the last 3 years.

**Other Business*** The Scottish Nephrops Working Group has been allocated £1million and will report early next year.
* On 1st October a summary of responses to the Future Fisheries Management national discussion paper and a policy intent paper was published. A Future Fisheries Strategy Document will also be published in the coming weeks, which will set out Scotland’s strategy for the next ten years. There will be opportunity for all to engage.
* The new RIFG Platform will be launched on 8th December, with training materials being provided to Chairs.
* Inshore Fisheries Pilots -The Mull Pilot has been extended for another year and the Outer Hebrides Pilot was launched last week. Ellen Huis is now leading on the Inshore Modernisation programme.
* The outcome report of the Wrasse Fishery Management Consultation, which took place earlier this year, will be published in the coming weeks.
* The Electro-Razorfish trial has recommenced and will be reviewed in the coming weeks.
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| 1. Fisheries and Exiting the EU
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| * Simon Macdonald hopes to host a meeting on EU Exit in early December.
* Simon advised everyone ensures boat registration and other paperwork is up to date and in line with the requirements in order to be registered as a food business, even if they are indirectly landing into Europe.
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| 1. Bullfish Market ( Michael MacCorquodale)
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| Michael outlined his presentation on Bullfish Market (attached) and invited fishermen interested in trialling the platform to contact him, through the Chair. Trial participants will have the opportunity to ensure the site is fit for purpose. The group asked a variety of questions about the platform. Michael outlined the following points to answer:* You have to be registered in order to access the site. This allows Bullfish to carry out appropriate due diligence.
* The platform is designed to protect the supply chain that already exists and protect jobs.
* Michael is in discussion with Marine Scotland Policy and Compliance.
* The end goal of the platform is to have the site able to complete and send a Fish1 form through the click of a button.
* A person has been recruited on a full-time basis to ensure GDPR regulations, EU law and UK law adhered too.
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| 1. Sub Group Updates
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| Solway;* The Code of Conduct has recently been updated to reflect the change of contact details. If you would like the updated version, please contact Simon. A press release has been launched in the local papers.

Clyde; * The Clyde group has put forward their suggested creel limit numbers to Simon.
* The group is also considering creating a code of conduct, after the RIFG platform goes live.
* Simon encouraged anyone who sees D.Vex to report it. It has a particularly harmful effect on bivalve molluscs, oyster and mussel farms.

Mull;* The Mull Crab box pilot will run for another year. After that year, Nick Turnbull has aspirations to extend it further.
* The group raised the concern of the box potentially causing conflict if too many vessels are attracted to the area, potentially leading to overfishing.
* Nick Turnbull advised they will keep the pilot under review.

Proposed new Groups for the North West;* Simon Macdonald wishes to split the North West area into two subgroups as there are different issues faced by different parts of the coast.
* Simon hopes to have an update for the next meeting.
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| 1. Work Group Updates;
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| Creels;* Discussions have taken place in each area and it is clear everyone has a different take on creel limits.
* One fisherman has reported being squeezed out due to the number of creels on the ground.
* Simon Macdonald advised the general feeling in each area was the Vivier Crab Vessels should be excluded to 12 N.M.
* Soak time of gear is also an issue, with some being left for years. The group have discussed 3 weeks as being the maximum time however Simon thinks this is too long.
* Discussion highlighted that creel fishing effort has been an ongoing growing issue, long before vivier vessels were working some inshore grounds, so they can’t be singled out
* Elaine Whyte stressed that it was important anyone who has an interest or is affected should attend the working groups to give their advice.
* Discussion took place on how to ensure more active fishermen attend these working group meetings, perhaps through website advertisement.
* Simon advised a decision needs to be reached as soon as possible. He will host a new meeting to create a proposal and pass it to Marine Scotland for consideration. Jim Watson advised they will also be looking at the OH pilot for any lessons learned and early feedback.

Scallops;* Last meeting was held 7th July.
* The report has been circulated but nothing has been taken forward yet due to other pressures.
* Lynda Blackadder would like the minute amended to reflect the delay was not due to recruitment issues but Covid-19. Also to clarify, REM won’t feed into stock assessments just yet. Interviews have taken place so a person should be in post soon to specifically take forward scallop stock assessments.
* No gear conflict has been recorded in the Mull Crab Box.
* Nick Turnbull has reached out, with a proposal, and Nature Scot is currently considering it. Other members will have opportunity to be involved.
* Lynda Blackadder will take time to consider how to access processors and get their involvement.

Aquaculture;* The working group met a couple of days ago. It was a very productive discussion.
* The position statement was discussed at the last meeting with everyone to give their comments in order to find common ground.
* A strategy has been circulated, from Simon, inviting comments and then the paper will be updated accordingly.
* The two industries have different goals but the group is optimistic communication will improve relationships.
* Simon advised discharging of chemicals will be discussed at the next meetings.
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| 1. Understanding the Consequences of Scallop Dredging in Relation to Seabed Habitat Types, Conservation Features and Other Industry Sectors (Mairi Fenton)
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| Mairi Fenton, PHD student from Heriot Watt University, outlined the presentation (attached).* Some members of the RIFG advised that they had discussed potential accreditation with Seafood Scotland. They agreed MSC accreditation may not be the best way forward, and other options should be considered. Other members of the RIFG, who were not present at the Seafood Scotland meeting, disagreed with not pursuing accreditation. Further discussions will take place and no decision was agreed at this point. No further options were presented.
* Jim Watson advised the existing governance structures must be respected and advised the group to take a look at the FFM strategy.
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| 1. AOB: Date of next Meeting
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| * Herring Spawn Closure – Some members wished to continue the closure next year, having determined a need in the first place it makes sense to protect it next year as well. It was highlighted there was some confusion last year to which area the closure covered.
* Concerns were raised about the prevalence of Spurdog on some west coast ground. Spurdog and Flapper Skate are impacting stock negatively now and measures need to be put in place urgently. There is a possibility Spurdog are eating soft shelled lobsters.
* Kirstie is doing a review on research into offshore windfarms. The report will be available in February 2021.
* A Brexit meeting will be held in December.

The next WCRIFG Meet will be in February 2021. Simon will confirm the date in January.  |