

NECRIFG Full Committee Meeting Note

18th September 2020, Video conference via Webex

Attendees

Present		
Stuart Bell	SB	MS Inshore
Lynda Blackadder	LB	MS Science
Vanessa Brown	VB	MS Inshore
Kenny Coull	KC	Scottish White Fish Producer Association (SWFPA)
Chris Cutts	CC	Forth Estuary Forum
Femke de Boer	FdB	Scottish White Fish Producer Association (SWFPA)
Malcolm Fraser	MF	NatureScot
Ian Gatt	IG	Scottish Pelagic Fishermen's Association (SPFA)
Foster Gault	FG	Scottish White Fish Producer Association (SWFPA)
Ian Hay	IH	Marine Coastal Partnership
Simon Macdonald	SM	West Coast RIFG (Chair)
Bernie McConnell	BM	
Jennifer Mouat	JM	North and East Coast RIFG (Chair)
Natalie Palmer	NP	Moray Firth Coastal Partnership
Chris Pattison	CP	
Gordon Pattison	GP	
Albert Ritchie	AR	
Robert Souter	RS	
Jim Watson	JW	Head of Domestic Sea Fisheries
Douglas Watson	DW	
Andrew Whiston	AW	St Andrews Inshore Fisherman's Association
Elaine White	EW	Communities Inshore Fisheries Alliance (CIFA)
David Whyte	DW	Rosehearty Inshore Fishermen's Association
Billy Wood	BW	Fishermen's Mutual Association (FMA) Pittenweem

Apologies	
David Anderson	
Charlie Hill	
Charles Milne	
Malcolm Morrison	Scottish Fishermen's Federation (SFF)
Sandy Ritchie	Left meeting due to technology issues.
George West	

1. Welcome and Review of actions from Previous meeting

JM welcomed everyone, and invited roundtable introductions from the group. A few comments were noted from the previous meeting minutes in January 2020.

Comments received by JM from the group included: -

- Item 1 – Malcolm Morrison requested that papers are released in good time for consideration to the group
- Kenny Coull affiliation is SWFPA
- Chris Pattison comment on the Windfarms at Buckendeth were missing from the minute, wishes for the reflection of before and after wind farm surveys to be carried out.

Actions of Previous Meeting

Action	Outcome
SB to inform the group on gill netting practices.	JM will circulate after meeting.
JM to find a map of sea use – with regards to shared marine spaces	JM trying to locate an electronic copy to circulate to group.
Hamish McPherson HP restriction in Moray Firth	FdB has taken on within SWFPA.
Update with FdB response from <i>Nephrops</i>	

**1. Marine Scotland Report & Modernisation of Inshore Fleet
Jim Watson and Stuart Bell**

Covid-19

- Covid-19 has had an immediate impact on the fishing industry.
- Two hardship schemes have been provided for the fleet, based on 2019 vessel grossing.
- Looking ahead, recovery is most important – *Nephrops* sector is the most concerning due to historic over supply and low demand. Mr Ewing is aware.

EU Exit

- All sectors will be impacted.
- Future Fisheries Management National Discussion Outcome paper will be published in Autumn containing high level aspirations for the next 10 years.
- MS has received over 100 responses.
- The discussion outcome paper will contain information on catching policy, management arrangements, RIFGs, licensing and more.

Modernisation of the Inshore Fleet

- The impact of covid had slowed down the progress of the project, however the initial roll out of REM to the Scallop fleet continued taking account of safe working practices.
- MS will continue to work closely with the fleet to determine the best approach to monitoring.
- This section of the roll out will be completed March/April 2021.

Other

- 40 vessels, taking part in OH pilot, are hosting SIFIDS equipment currently.
- The OH Pilot will begin on 1st November and letters of derogation will be sent out beforehand to eligible fishermen.
- The Mull Crab Box pilot has been underway for two years now, with good outcomes reported by the fleet, so has been extended for one more year.
- Gear conflict – The creel marking order is now in effect, with the fleet and compliance working closely together.

2. Seals Acoustic Deterrent Project – David Whyte

David Whyte and Lynda Blackadder presented the background to the project.

- 8 meetings have been held and the project has begun to move forward.
- GenusWave have become involved for the second stage of the project.
- The ADD uses short, infrequent pulses, at low noise levels to deter seals from coming near nets.
- St Andrews University and GenusWave have so far funded the project.
- A field trial is now needed to progress the project to the next stage and funding for this has been applied for through MS.
- Early indication shows the device is working with no adverse impact on other aquatic mammals.
- A research license has been granted and licensing contact are being kept up to date with progress.

Actions

None.

3. Renewables Update – Femke de Boer

- Moray East site will start construction in the next couple of weeks and Moray West has been licensed to start since last year but does not currently have funding in place.
- Seagreen is to start in 2021.

- There is conflict over the *Nephrops* survey at Berwick Bank will have environmental impact surveys ongoing.
- Hywind turbines are up and running but tests have been delayed due to Covid.
- Co-operation is required between fishers and those working on the turbines and notices to mariners warning of dangers/hazard are vital.
- Cable surveys are ongoing. Round 4 took place in 2019 and was updated in December 2019.
- Analysis of maps was undertaken in June 2020 and will be shared with the public soon.
- There will be a new leasing round taking place in 2021, and there will be meetings on that soon.

Actions

None.

4. Aid to Navigation Project – Jennifer Mouat

- Devices were being tested in 2018 by five vessels. With one of the main complaints being the poor battery life, as they were supposed to last days but only lasted a few hours.
- This project has been brought up during Foster Gault's series of gear conflict meetings and has been identified as being a potentially beneficial tool.
- A cost effective device of this nature is available from a company called Advanced Netting.
- Ideas are being discussed with the Stakeholders to increase the battery life and optimise use of the devices.

Actions

1. JM to explore options for further developing the project within the NECRIFG.

5. SEaCoRP Project – Coastal Partnerships – Chris Cutts

This is an EMFF project to carry out a review on the status of the East Coast.

- East Grampian was the most recently surveyed area and this will be refreshed as part of the National Marine Plan.
- The entire project is to last 13 months which will include additional staff to carry out literature reviews as stakeholder engagement.
- The aim is for the project to produce a useful outcome with multiple reports aimed to be of use to the community

- Reports are proposed to be set out by Marine Region.
- Consultations and discussions will occur between now and March 2023, subject to delays in the project due to Covid-19.

Actions

1. CC to share the documentation on the SEaCoRP project with JM to disseminate to the NECRIFG.
2. IH mentioned Marine Initiatives regarding marine litter and asked for assistance from NECRIFG members. He will send such requests to JM who will circulate to anyone interested in getting involved.

6. SSE Berwick Offshore Windfarm – Douglas Watson

The project was brought forward by renewables and was originally named Seagreen 2 and 3 although the names changed in July. These are Scotland's largest offshore windfarms and are now named Berwick Bank and Marr Bank. Connection points for these are to be made in October 2020. The Berwick Bank in particular is a £6-8 billion project and with more than 50 people on the team is one of the largest in the UK.

There will be a number of scoping exercises to put in the cable route such as environmental impact assessments (EIAs) both on and offshore. In summer 2019 the geographical survey on shipping and navigation was carried out. The winter survey is to occur in January 2021. Boat-based ornithology surveys are to be completed by spring 2021 and there are various other surveys such as geotechnical and subtidal benthic assessments underway.

Covid-19 has created a number of problems with the meetings scheduled for stakeholder participation changing to a virtual format. There are a number of surveys and exhibitions planned to take place in November 2020. The onshore and offshore EIA reports should be completed towards the end of 2021.

Actions

1. DW asked for anyone who has questions or wishes to engage in the discussion process to contact him. Responses will be collated and maintained by JM.
2. FdB to share comments with JM and DW regarding the plans outlined.
3. JM to look into the issues surrounding double barriers, and a 15-mile wide safety corridor as proposed previously.
4. JM to resend scoping information to NECRIFG members and collate comments

7. Harmonisation of fishing operations – mobile and static gear – Foster Gault

The 'Foster Series' began as an SICG consultation UK wide group but now hosted and attended by FG and FdB. The aim is to get agreements to enable mobile and static fishers to work together and enable appropriate sharing of space on the seabed.

- **Arbroath** – There have been 6 meetings with 95% of stakeholders in agreement about a 2 mile lane system. Discussions regarding the pattern of rotation remain unresolved. The Arbroath Association has asked for talks to be postponed until after Covid-19 as they would prefer face to face discussion. Work is continuing in the Pittenweem to Montrose area.
- **Fraserburgh** – Fraserburgh had token agreements this summer with a box operating between 1st April – 1st October then 1st October – 1st April. There have only been a few fishermen failing to observe the agreement.
- **Peterhead to Stonehaven** – No agreement reached, but there has been recent interest in reconvening this group.
- **Burghead to Gamrie** – Gamrie-Burghead all is going well, bar some issues with visiting vessels and how to notify them of the boxes in place. Buckie area has not experienced any problems yet but does want to get boxes marked out clearly and perhaps make use of the AIS-type devices to reduce conflict.

Actions

1. FG to share code of conduct once completed with SM.

8. Industry Representations

KC noted the National Cod Avoidance plan launched yesterday and voiced immediate concerns about the squid fishery particularly to the North and East Coast and Moray Firth. JW assured members that the details will be shared as there are a number of implications for inshore fisheries interests.

Actions

1. JM to follow up on this discussion with JW.

9. Date of Next Meeting – Jennifer Mouat

The Chair thanked everyone for attending. The next meeting will take place within the next 6-8 weeks.

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