

**MINUTES OF THE GENERAL COMMITTEE MEETING
HELD AT THE EAST BEDLINGTON COMMUNITY CENTRE
ON MONDAY 23rd JANUARY 2023 AT 1PM**

Actions arising from minutes are highlighted in blue and collated in the actions table at the end of the document.

PRESENT: NIFCA Members:

Mr L Weller (Chair/LW), Mr F Armstrong (FA), Mr B Burdis (BB), Mrs E Dunn (ED), Mr C Hardy (CH), Ms A Henderson (AH), Dr M Kitching (MK), Mr S Lowe (SL), Mrs C Seymour (CSe), Dr C Scott (CSc), Mr M Swinbank (MSw), Mr I Thomas (IT), Mr A Wallace (AW) and Dr J Wood (JW).

Also in attendance from NIFCA was the Chief Officer Mr M Southerton (MS), Lead Enforcement IFCO Mr N Weir (NW), Finance Officer Mr J Sutton (JuS) and the Senior Environmental Officer Mr A Boon (AB). Minutes were taken by the NIFCA Administrative Officer, Emma Stiles (ES).

The meeting was also joined by guests Dr S Coulthard/Ms B Laing from Newcastle University and Ms S Ingram from the MMO.

3.1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Apologies for absence were received from:

Mr P Gray (PG), Professor P Moore (PM), Mr P Rippon (PR), Mr J Stephenson, Mr P Dent, Mr G Renner Thompson (GRT).

There were no declarations of interest given at this point in the meeting.

- LW**
- Welcome all and Happy New Year.
 - MS is our new Chief Officer, and this is his third meeting today.
 - Steven Moss has retired from the Authority due to personal reasons, but the MMO are now advertising for new members.
 - Thanks to SM for his time as a member with NIFCA.

3.2 DRAFT MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS QUARTERLY HELD ON 24 OCTOBER 2022 AND MATTERS ARISING THEREFROM

- MS**
- Actions Arising:
- Regarding action from 3.3 – MS will be going back to NB about this to clarify the information he requires.
 - Contribution to MNP has been paid.
 - We can report posts on Facebook if they come online although the concern is we potentially lose the intelligence of this activity by doing this.
 - NIFCA has done no camera work since the last meeting, but we can use the Olex multibeam to assess the area in discussion.
 - LW, CH, GRT were appointed as members of the NSHC – the Commission was written to as planned.
- LW**
- There is a lot of bait being sold online via social media pages – they are on closed Facebook spaces which means the sales will start going further underground.
 - Instead of reporting, we can use it as intelligence so it might be better not to report.

- NSHC was a bigger issue than it appeared – we were being faced with a Judicial Review if we did not agree.
- It was an old requirement in an early Order where 3 members were expected to be appointed from the SFC and following dissolution, would be appointed by the Council. Therefore 3 people were appointed members of the NSHC from this Authority.

3.3 NIFCA BUDGET 2023-24 (MEMBERS ONLY)

- LW**
- The budget is a matter for decision.
 - We held a meeting in December where it was decided by the members to opt for option A which is the option presented to the meeting today. There was no dissension from the Councillor members at that meeting.
- MS**
- This includes a 5% precept increase with the SMT receiving a 10% salary uplift from January 2023 and 5% COL increase in April 2023, with the remainder of the staff receiving a 10% COL increase in April 2023.
- JuS**
- The precept increase we are requesting in monetary value is around £37k between both Councils, which is felt to be of good value.
- LD**
- Listed in Income: option A shows as £995,000 but then reduces to £975,000 on the next page – why is this?
- JuS**
- This is just a typo – the following pages all show the same amount.

LW proposed acceptance of budget A, which was seconded by LD.

Members voted and agreed unanimously to accept budget A with 5% precept increase.

3.4 MEETINGS ATTENDED THROUGHOUT THE QUARTER

This report was received and accepted by the members.

- LW**
- Meeting with Choppington Parish Council re. boat owners – this was raised by SL initially.
- AW**
- Thank you to MS and AA who kindly came along to discuss the Wansbeck Estuary and the boat club. David, the former Deputy of the NCC was also in attendance.
 - Ian Lavery would like to attend NIFCA for a meeting in the future.
- CSe**
- Quotas – this increase for the UK is very positive.

3.5 CHIEF OFFICER'S REPORT ON THIRD QUARTER OF NIFCA 2022-23 (MEMBERS ONLY)

- MS**
- EO, TN and AB have completed their warranting so now have 9 warranted Officers.
 - PR will be leaving 10th February so we are currently recruiting.
 - ML will be going part-time in February.
 - All employees undertook E&D training during the quarter and officers took part in conflict resolution training.
 - There was news of a walrus resting in Blyth.
 - Michael Nugent is to be commended by the RNLI for a rescue during Storm Arwin in 2021
 - Fisher Forums taking place throughout the district – one on 24th Jan at Royal Quays and on 25th Jan, both held on the PV. Been encouraging to see the number of fishers attending and giving feedback. Hope to hold these quarterly.
 - FMPs are going to be a huge piece of work for IFCA's – in this area, crab and lobster are particularly important. Have received £50k to support the development

of FMPs and Sarah Coulthard is here to give an update on one project we have in the pipeline.

- The annual quota negotiations has been approved and favourable for the UK fleet.
- iVMS Further testing for assurances for industry will result in a delay to legislation for all English vessels to have iVMS in English waters.

LW

- Stephanie Ingram is here in place of Patrick Gray who may become a permanent member for the MMO.
- The Jon Green Award has this year been awarded to AA for her work in the HPMA response.
- Sarah Coulthard has also been an amazing part of the work which has gone into the HPMA responses so sincere thanks to her for her contributions.

MSw

- Will Scottish vessels also have to have iVMS devices?

MS

- Yes, all fishing vessels will require a functioning device if they are working in English waters.
- – There will be a consultation soon about over 12m vessels requiring more frequent position reporting.
- The MMO need to get all vessels sorted in separate tranches (based on length) to ensure there isn't a rush before the Statutory Instrument comes into force.
- 80% of the NIFCA inshore fleet have their iVMS device fitted.

3.6 UPDATE ON PROJECTS IN NIFCA DISTRICT (ORAL UPDATE)

SC

- Sarah Coulthard (SC) joined NIFCA to give an update on the project regarding FMPs. She was joined by Beth also from Newcastle University.
- Shellfish is one of the front runners in the FMPs.
- As enshrined in the Fisheries Act, fisher engagement with the project is essential.
- There is the potential to get real fisher knowledge and engagement in the design of these FMPs.
- One potential problem is disengagement from the industry, so it is hard trying to get people to the meetings. There is a bit of a communication problem – either they are unaware of the meetings or don't feel they can have an impact. Some of the feedback is that they're fed-up of being asked to feedback into pre-arranged consultations.
- The project plan is to go out to each of the fishing families in the district to speak to fishers about how FMPs should be planned. We will spend 8-weeks trying to reach everyone and allow them to have an input if they want to; this will include going to the harbours and trying to connect with fishers.
- Will also work with Seafish who are designing the FMP for crab and lobsters' information to try and feed into their work.
- Seafish do have forums, but they are not always highly attended. If we have contributions from the fishers, it could make a vast difference to the design of fisheries policy, and we hope to be able to influence moving away from this consultation type of design and to create collaboration into the fisheries legislation/management.
- Hope to have feedback from the industry by the next QM and hopefully some thoughts from Seafish.
- The Fisher Forums can also connect with the Regional Fisheries Groups. The last one had 30-35 people (both online and in person). The Northeast is a very large area to cover in a short amount of time. One of the reasons for the Fisher Forum in Northumberland is to get feedback from local harbours to enable us to feed a response into the RFGs.
- The RFGs can easily get taken over by big events such as the HPMA or the Tees Fisheries deaths.

- Feeding back to fishers from what they have discussed is also an important part of this. So having representatives from the RFGs giving us some feedback for the fishers would be beneficial.
- MS**
- FMPs are only going to be for English/Welsh waters. We have the unique issue of managing the border so there is the potential for cross-border imbalances, and this is an area which SC will also be looking at.
 - Blue Marine have extended some funding of this project to understand how FMPs will manage border fisheries.
- IT**
- Only one fisher showed up at Amble which is a shame. Shows the apathy we have in the industry. Seems the engagement has improved through HPMA and let's hope it continues to improve.
- LW**
- Scottish border down to the Humber (Northeast RFG) is not specific to the area unless the IFCA attends the RFG. Feel it's counterproductive to make RFG where they cross IFCA borders, and it makes communication difficult. Think its diluted the point of the RFG.
 - The Fisheries Act also covers angling and disappointed that anglers are not included in RFGs. They are mentioned in quotas and do impact the fisheries.
 - IFCA's are about localism and what we can do locally for Northumberland.
- SC**
- We can also have a comparative data set to see what people bring up at a local level, regional level, the RFG level and then national.
- MSw**
- Will the FMPs be put into categories?
- MS**
- There are several categories by species from the front runners crab and lobster, whelk, Bass, King scallop, Southern north sea flatfish and channel NQS.
- AH**
- Do we anticipate FMP fatigue given the lack of engagement now and can we do anything to counteract it?
- MS**
- Think there's the risk in small voices – the larger industry voices have the time and resources to feed into consultation whereas the small ones can easily be lost.
- LW**
- Cornwall IFCA recently brought in an emergency byelaw re. vivea boats as they are huge vessels which can take huge amounts of shellfish from Cornwall.
 - There were 3 boats, but they were able to get huge influencers to overturn the decision of the emergency byelaw.
- AB**
- Stakeholder fatigue – it is a real concern. We have 33 boats in Amble now but the in-person event in Bridlington was extended to 96 fishers we had last year. The RFGs didn't have real representation from this area which is where the Fisher Forums step in to include the right representation and close the loop and ensure they get the feedback they want to get.
 - We've adapted the forum format to allow fishers to drop-in to the vessel, attend when they can and for any amount of time which suits them.
 - Try to alleviate the fatigue by ensuring we give them feedback on the issues they raise.
- LW**
- What Northumberland are doing has not gone unnoticed that we're doing the forums and getting somewhere with it and are aiming for bigger events.
 - Feel we are a future thinking IFCA.
- AW**
- Chaired for 3 years in the Local Fisheries Action Group and disappointed to hear still struggling to get people involved.
 - The right person speaking to the communities in different ways is what is needed to get the feedback.
 - The information we received back then is still available and happy to share that.
- CSe**
- Attended an HPMA meeting in Seahouses on the proposed ban on fishing - this was full of fishers. Have you done any consultation in a building where they can come/ face to face rather than online?
- SC**
- None of our research is online – it is going to the harbours, drop-ins on the PVs and calling people to ask if they have the time to go for a coffee in a local café.

- CH • Defra is considered the enemy of the fishers and they may see SC as being part of that and it may make things difficult.
- SC • It was felt during the HPMA consultation – I am fulltime at the University but have the secondment into Defra but hope to be able to have some influence in this area.
- CH • There are lots of possibilities in the FMPs which hope to be captured.
- SC • NIFCA Officers are some of the people who are steppingstones/contacts who can get these people to engage, and these are the people to do this with.
- SC • Definitely agree – I go to the fisher forums and observe a knowledgeable fisheries Officer talking to a knowledgeable fisher. Then write about it.
- SC • Maybe an action for Steph to back to the RFG to ask why recreational fishers have not been included in RFG?
- SI • One reason may be that locally no one has come forward to attend, so it hasn't been included in the agendas.
- SC • The IFCA's strength is that they are answerable to an independent committee.

- SL **Questions to be asked:**
- **Why have Defra not moved forward with the HPMA consultation?**
 - **Why have recreational fishers not been included in the RFG?**

3.7 **MEMBER MATTERS** (oral update)

- MS • The General Member appraisals are to take place in March. **You will receive an email about that shortly.**
- There are 2 members whose tenure is coming to an end this year.
- Currently have one vacancy being advertised by the MMO.
- LW • Appraisals will be light touch unless anyone wants to speak to the Chair, in which case, please get in touch.

3.8 **RISK MATRIX**

- MS • This was reviewed in October and an additional risk was identified regarding new management structure.
- This is on the website and will be in the Annual Plan.

3.9 **SUMMARY REPORTS OF WATCH & FINANCE COMMITTEES BY CHIEF OFFICER (ORAL)**

- FINANCE:**
- MS • The minutes of the last Finance meeting were approved as were the minutes of the budget meeting in December.
 - Members received an update on the risk matrix
 - Received copies of the accounts which were approved
 - Members also received the budget papers which General members have just approved
 - Members were given an update on the £50k funding which has been received by IFCA's for the support in development of national FMPs. There are a couple of projects in the pipeline, one of which you have just heard an update on from Sarah Coulthard.
 - Regarding the lease, Finance members were informed that the landlord has agreed to continue our lease and we are just negotiating detailing the 10 year lease and arranging a schedule of update and upkeep of the building. Members preferred the agreed raise (pre-agreed) at 3 years followed by a break at 5 years.

- The Finance members were informed that the annual Audit has been agreed with Northumberland County Council to take place in May this year on the same terms and conditions as last year. The date of the audit meeting is yet to be confirmed but aim to have at the July QM.
- I confirmed that the precepts had been prepared in readiness for the anticipated approval of the budget at this afternoons meeting. They will be signed by the Chair and myself after this meeting and sent to the Vice Chair for signature then to be sent to the respective Councils.
- In any other business, members heard an update from Julian about an update to the Financial Regulations in the light of Mike's departure – these amendments are minor but necessary.
- And finally in the Finance meeting it was confirmed that it was agreed at the AIFCAs that all IFCA subscription fees will be increased by 4.5% (amounting to circa £584 increase).
- That concluded the business of the finance committee

WATCH:

- The minutes of the last Watch meeting were approved as were the minutes of the T&S meeting in December.
- The Patrol vessel report was received by members – this included one infringement matter for decision which was agreed by members to proceed to prosecution.
- The Vessels, vehicles and equipment report was received as was the health and safety report in which there were no health and safety incidents to report.
- Staff matters:
 - Paul Ridley leaving on 10th Feb
 - Have advertised and shortlisted for his replacement and are interviewing 3 candidates on 1st Feb.
 - ML will be going part-time from 1st Feb.

LW

- New Burdens Funding is safe for the next 3 years which is great.
- It's possible we could look at the bass nursery areas with support of JW.

3.10 IFCO REPORTS

3.10.1. District Report on Activities for quarter ending 31 December 2022

LW

- Think this report is very good.
- Received with thanks.

3.10.2. Environmental IFCOs Report for quarter ending 30 September 2022

AB

- Fisher forums have been a key part of what we have been up to these last few months – very successful and hope this continues.
- Surveys have been busy including with the brown crab maturity project and hope to get that published in a scientific journal this year.
- Had fixed engine byelaw running and got some relatively good feedback – when we have a report, we will feedback to the committee. May have it by the next T&S meeting but possibly the following one is more likely.
- HPMA – not had anything back yet due to a huge amount of feedback so analysis is taking more time than anticipated.

- Detailed the marine licences in the report and going forward, we are building in an internal traffic light system to flag up anything we need to discuss with members.
- SL** • Brought some leaflets along re. the farming impacts on Lindisfarne for anyone who may find this of interest.
- SC** • On a wader project at Newcastle Uni which may be of particular interest to SL – happy to discuss.
- IT** • Code of conduct – is that just for the mussel beds?
- AB** • It's for that and intertidal gathering. Being mapped on Survey 123 app.
- MK** • Community Voice Project meeting to decide if it could be beneficial – we decided as an Authority not to do this – how come it's come up again?
- MS** • It's been used by other IFCA's, Eastern IFCA as well as Kent and Essex have used it successfully. Marine Conservation Society are concerned the HPMA project was becoming less desirable due to the negative publicity surrounding the Lindisfarne pHPMA and didn't want to jeopardise the benefits of HPMA's
- LW** • Re. HPMA's – NIFCA was impartial about this consultation from the start to the fishing industry.
- Don't think paying someone to put something like CVP together will be beneficial.

3.10.3. Maintenance Report and Engineering Log for quarter ending 30 September 2022 and Cabin RIB Report

- Received with thanks.
- Thanks to PR for your hard work and enthusiasm at NIFCA – you will be missed.

3.11. GLOSSARY OF ACRONYMS

- Received with thanks.

3.12 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

- MS** • Operations and Conduct Report – been ongoing. The quayside interviews have been completed.
- There will next be a Member's contribution and likely a Chair's contribution.
- SC** • Recreational anglers were able to input to this too.
- MS** • MMO Consultation on bottom towed gear and Call for evidence on other gear
- We are looking at the shape which straddles the NIFCA boundary.
- Prohibition on bottom towed gear in the hatched areas – the areas are so close to the NIFCA boundary that the buffer areas extend into our district.
- AB** • Received these documents last Thursday.
- Proposed management within 13 MPAs in England – for NIFCA, area of concern is the Farnes East MPA. It is due east of Holy Island/Farnes.
- Moderate energy circulatory rock is looking to be protected.
- Two consultations running simultaneously:
 - Proposed ban/management
 - Call for information on feature interactions with the sites.
- Back in 2022, NIFCA responded to a call for info.

- Looking at rocky reefs – proposed management in place with buffer zones – the blue dots are spread out and represent the features.
- Proposed prohibition of all bottom towed gear, trawls, seine gear etc. for most if not all mobile gear which would work there.
- This is the proposed first stage, not the final management.
- We will be responding to both consultations.

Stage 3 call for evidence:

- Looks at static gears including pots – looking at a possible (not proposed) management.
- The brown area is subtidal mud.
- Ocean quahog also listed in this site.
- Would require quite large sites.
- These would be brought in under MMO byelaws which may bring about an element of enforcement from NIFCA.
- Runs to 28th March.
- There will be a stage 4 consultation for birds and harbour porpoises who are a designated feature of an MPA.

MK • Ocean quahog are found everywhere – not a bit of the sea that doesn't have it.

LW • Did not anticipate this when planning these district boundaries.

- That is a pretty active area.

MK • The missing rectangle at the bottom of that area is a very active potting fishery.

AB • Believe the buffer zone is based on guidance to create the buffer zone size.

JW • Believe there was an additional map which included quahog. Would be interesting to get a copy of that map also.

MK • Concerned about the idea of stage 4 (marine birds) as the Northumberland Marine SPA is huge and had a lot of pushbacks from the industry. There would be huge pushback if we had to enforce regulations in this area too.

SL • I recall that when we drew up these boundaries that they wouldn't impact the fishery. Believe the boundaries we drew were inclusive of buffer zones.

AB • Management is looking to protect the circulatory rock which is the same feature protected in the Coquet to St Mary's – how we used low impact gear to reduce impact.

- The response to that is that the waters are much deeper and don't feel the management is suitable in that area.

LW • Is that not dealt with in the same traffic light risk system?

AB • It is which is why this has been brought up.

CSc • In red – management needs to be put in place and consultation on the type of management.

- Would ask the question what about the anglers?

MK • Question for the MMO: Is there recent evidence that rock actually exists as a feature in this area?

- It's a worry – don't know what evidence will be presented to show this feature exists here.

CSc • Believe vessels have been out there to survey the area.

LD and AW left the meeting.

- LW**
 - Biggest concern is the consultation for all of the other gear types.
- MS**
 - Holy Island, Seahouses and Burnmouth will be the most affected areas.
- AB**
 - Already have a prohibition in the MCZ and this could bring prohibitions in other MPAs - there is therefore potential for a lot of management in a small area.
 - Stakeholder fatigue is a big thing but also stakeholder anxiety – people putting off buying gear for fear of not knowing if they will still be fishing.
- LW**
 - People will look to us for reassurance on this.
 - Could be commissioned by the MMO to go into this area and enforce it.
 - Important how we use stakeholder engagement to get the right answers.
 - This should maybe be added to the discussion on forums. People are angry.

CSe and CH left the meeting.

- MS**
 - Date of next meeting and venue.
- LW**
 - Like the venue but hearing here is very difficult.
 - Using a mic isn't suitable here – maybe head back to the NIFCA office in Blyth.
 - Any feedback in how to change papers.
- MS**
 - Possibly moving the Epitome onto the website monthly rather than the papers.
 - Any ideas, please bring them forward.
- IT**
 - Actions arising from the meeting is very good addition.
- LW**
 - Using the members area better.
 - Getting minutes out quite quickly.
 - **Can the members be emailed with the login details?**
 - **Can the updates be put on in MS Word so they can listen to it rather than having to read.**

The meeting was closed by the Chair at 15:15.

ACTIONS ARISING FROM THE MEETING:

(Actions that have been carried out since last meeting)

Item	Action	Who
3.3	Members voted and agreed unanimously to accept budget A with 5% precept increase.	JuS
3.6	Ask Defra why they have not moved forward with the HPMA consultation. Defra announced 3 pilot HPMA sites on the 28 th February with Lindisfarne and inner silver pit sites not going forward to HPMA's.	MS
3.6	Ask MMO why recreational fishers have not been included in the RFG? The decision was made to include recreational anglers in the RFGs, and they are now welcome to join. MMO have made no announcement of this, but if recreational anglers request to join, then they are sent details/invites to the meetings.	MS
3.7	NIFCA to email all General about appraisals.	ES
3.12	NIFCA to respond to MMO both consultations/call for information.	Enviro
3.12	ES to email the members with the website login details.	ES
3.12	Member updates to be put on the website as a MS Word doc so they can be listened to rather than having to be read.	ES