

**MINUTES OF THE GENERAL COMMITTEE MEETING  
HELD AT THE EAST BEDLINGTON COMMUNITY CENTRE  
ON MONDAY 24<sup>th</sup> OCTOBER 2022 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), Mr G Renner-Thompson (GRT), Mr P Dent (PD), Mr C Hardy (CH), Ms A Henderson (AH), Dr M Kitching (MK), Mr S Lowe (SL), Mr S Moss (SM), Mr P Rippon (PR), Mrs C Seymour (CS), Dr C Scott (CSc), Mr J Stephenson (JS), Mr M Swinbank (MSw) and Mr I Thomas (IT).

Also in attendance from NIFCA was the Chief Executive Officer Mr M H Hardy (CEO), the Chief IFCO Mr M Southerton (MS), Lead IFCOs Ms A Aitken (AA) and Mr N Weir (NW). Minutes were taken by the NIFCA Administrative Officer, Emma Stiles (ES). Other IFCOs in attendance were Mr T Nash (TN), Ms E O'Regan (EOR), Ms K Smart (KS), Mr M Lynn (ML), Ms B Harvey (BH) and Mr A Boon (AB).

The meeting was also joined by guests Ms S Coulthard from Newcastle University and Mr N Brodin from the MNP.

**3.1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Apologies for absence were received from:

Mr F Armstrong (FA), Mr B Burdis (BB), Mrs L Dunn (LD), Mr P Gray (PG), Professor P Moore (PM), Mr A Wallace (AW) and Dr J Wood (JW).

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

Sarah Coulthard, lecturer at Newcastle University who is on secondment to Defra and has engaged in the HPMA project, provided some positive feedback from the fishing industry and her observations on NIFCA's engagement with the proposed Lindisfarne HPMA consultation including holding an emergency meeting, assuring the fishers "it isn't a done deal" and countering articles which were presented in papers.

LW: The Chair explained that this indicates that NIFCA showed openness and transparency and listened to the fishing industry. Time was put in by the team to look at the people affected and wasn't just about data. Well done to the team, it's a great response to something difficult.

**3.2 DRAFT MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS QUARTERLY (ANNUAL GENERAL) MEETING HELD ON 25 JULY 2022 AND MATTERS ARISING THEREFROM**

**MH** Minutes are in a new format which show the actions and next time we will include an update from these actions.

SL proposed acceptance which was seconded by GRT.

### **3.3 MARINE NATURE PARTNERSHIP (MNP) PRESENTATION BY NICK BRODIN (NB)**

- NB** The meeting received a presentation about the MNP from Nick Brodin.
- Have included NIFCA's CoC and byelaws in the Good Practice Guides
  - Invasive non-native species strategy is currently in consultation
    - Been sent to national AIFCA
    - **Getting costings for training to stakeholders of biosecurity – interested to hear from NIFCA about stakeholders who would benefit.**
  - 3Cs – funding scheme by EA launched last autumn.

- SL** Raised Declaration of Interest as the Chair of ERIC:
- Found we don't have enough environmental data as terrestrial data will inform future designations
  - Delay in restoration of the coast at Lynemouth – keen for this to be a place for habitat restoration but no one has looked at the offshore element.
  - So far supported the MNP at £4k until now and would like to continue with this contribution.

**Voted by all members unanimously to continue.**

### **3.4 MEETINGS ATTENDED THROUGHOUT THE QUARTER**

- This report was received and accepted by the members.

### **3.5 CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S REPORT ON SECOND QUARTER OF NIFCA 2022-23**

- MH**
- Think the position for NIFCA overall is extremely positive – has been great to see latest IFCOs settle in well.
  - NIFCA continues to work really well and media coverage so far has been very positive. With thanks to MS who leads the IFCO team so effectively. Thanks also to the members - particularly the Chair who at the announcement of the pilot HPMA consultation said we must get out and engage with stakeholders immediately, which was such a positive piece of work.
  - It has been really important for NIFCA to have put forward an evidence-based response to the HPMA consultation so thanks for all of the hard work the team has done to achieve this.
- LW**
- IFCA Chairs have accepted (on behalf of their Committees) £50k for the first tranche development of FMPs. It does come with some technical caveats as outlined in a letter to Chairs from Defra.
  - This is only a portion of the £165k proposed by Defra for each IFCA and there should be more to come. There will be £15k going to the AIFCA.
  - Thanks to the members for attending the HPMA meeting which made a huge impact on how well it was accepted.
  - Would like to wish MS very best of luck in his new role and we look forward to a new era.

### 3.6 NEWCASTLE UNIVERSITY/NIFCA PROJECTS

- LW
- Our relationship with Newcastle University is great and beneficial all round.

### 3.7 BYELAW UPDATE

- MH
- At the last meeting where the byelaw 4 permit conditions were discussed, members agreed to go to consultation and if there were no issues raised, it would go into legal effect and put the new provision into the new byelaw book and onto the website. That has now been done as there were 2 responses and no objections.
  - Regarding the Fixed Engine Byelaw – call for information will begin this week. Was put on hold due to the Defra HPMA consultation but will soon go on our website, with an email/letter to be sent and then we can meet with stakeholders in the district on site visits being arranged.

### 3.8 ENVIRONMENTAL UPDATE

#### Mussel Bed:

- BH
- There are three mussel beds in the district – Fenham Flats, Blyth Estuary and Lindisfarne.
  - This year's survey found continued declines in cover and density, (ten-fold in density since 2015 in Blyth and over 95% from the highest peak at Fenham Flats in 2010).
  - Reasons may include nutrient deficiencies and a range of other causes. We do have a bait collection CoC to manage hand gathering which has been updated last year with the help of collectors (including that it is only for recreational purposes, not commercial). Still some level of commercial collection on Blyth. Decline is being seen nationally.
  - Range of options from engaging with bait collectors to total ban.
  - Is this something we want to look into, given the other priorities?
- SL
- Think it needs to go to T&S meeting as it impacts on other species too.
  - Still concerned about a non-native oyster farm up the river and worry it may be having a potential impact.
- PD
- The Blyth one could have declined this year – there's a trawler in the top end severely dredging the area and the sediment was highly impacted – the ship worked 7-months flat out digging. Everything dredged has been dumped in one area and fishing boats now can't go through that area. Hoping that over the years the currents will wear it down so we can use the area again
- SM
- Our prawn pots had to be moved out of the area as they were covered in filthy silt. Don't think the team were really aware of this.

- SL
  - Seen the report from a collective in Whitby. Wondered if there is any role the IFCA can play nationally to see what Impact Assessments have done at a national level and if it's on the radar of IFCA's as a matter of urgency.
  - There is a large EU funded project and has scope to look at pollution sources in the area – anyone has a sense of possible sources we can look at through this project?
- LW
  - Rather than having individual plans we need to join this up at NIFCA. Think we need to be proactive as an IFCA on this.
- GRT
  - Pollution on Fenham Flats – NE have imposed something on the Council to prevent new building development without sewage neutrality.
- MS  
SL
  - Port of Blyth user event – removal of 244 tonnes of spoil from that site.
  - There are also plans afoot for dredging off the Coquet – this isn't just an isolated thing. Silt arrives from different areas, primarily farmland.
- MS
  - A tenfold decline on these beds is quite enormous – if there is a way to prevent this happening, we need to do that. We ought to be flagging them up, even if it's not us that can make the changes.
- AH
  - **Bait collecting: the person seen online as selling bate – we should be reporting them on Facebook formally to show that they're breaking the rules/illegal advert.**
- MK
  - Joined up thinking between IFCA's is incredibly important – the issue around Teesmouth is that it's being treated as a local issue when it's not. Seabirds for example, thinking it's due to dredging whereas these problems have been impacting the whole marine environment internationally.
- LW
  - It is possible that we need to be raising consultation responses with the committee?
- MK
  - **Next time St Aidan is out they could place a drop-down camera to have a look at the area?**
- CS
  - AB makes a response by NIFCA to consultations – the conditions of the licence are being adhered to (including volume and material) but the question is whether the licence conditions are adhered to.
- AB
  - Doesn't just fall to AB – it goes to the whole team to give thought and feedback and of course other agencies respond too. Our responses also often ask for the MMO to liaise with the local industry.
- LW  
AB
  - If we gave a strong objection, would it be heard?
  - It has happened before when a lone applicant has put in an objection, and it was responded to well.

b) Temperature Loggers on Pots:

- AA
  - Like to put temperature loggers on pots to get at depth temperatures.
  - Some consideration in the paper for members and if agreed, we will go ahead with the project.
- LW
  - At the end of the report, you discuss suitable vessels. Have we considered financially compensating fishers?
  - Fishers might be asked to supply data long term and at that point there would be possible need for financial compensation.
- PR
  - Environmental monitoring with renewable schemes could be considered. Check what data is already available.

c) Stock Assessment:

- AB** • Following feedback from the papers at the T&S meeting, we discussed with JW to get some quick wins including analysis of old data sets from back to 2012. Back up and running with this now and working with commercial boats to get information.
- AA** • Anyone has any other crustacea ideas, they are welcomed.  
• Crab and lobster subcommittee was postponed – did we want to rearrange this or wait until we've had discussion with James Wood.
- MH** • Only want this to be an item for a meeting when there is something substantial to give.

**3.9** RISK MATRIX

- MH** • On the website now and published in Annual Plan. Do a review in March and usually September; due to work on HPMA, the second review will take place later than usual ie. this week.  
• Will address the change in management.  
• Nothing else really stands out at the moment.

**3.10** CORRESPONDENCE

- LW** • Pacific Oysters: Howden Yard – when you get these requests, do they give you the requests for the dumping ground?
- MS** • They give you an area but not specifically say they have to be spread out.
- PD** • They often dump outside of the designated areas. They should have something like a fisheries liaison officer who goes onboard and watches the activity to ensure it's carried out properly.
- LW** • Water quality – NCC were fined for this and discussion on Budle Bay.

**3.11** SUMMARY REPORTS OF WATCH & FINANCE COMMITTEES BY CEO (ORAL)

Finance Committee:

- MH** • Finance and accounts approved by members.
- Discussed the lease which comes to an end in August 2023. As reported at last QM, wish to begin meetings with the landlord. Heard from the landlord who has offered a 10-year lease with break clause of 5 years and Finance Committee agreed on this basis. Must get approval from landlord prior to works. Landlord happy for rent to remain as now for 2-years then would like an increase (to be agreed now). Rent has remained the same for over 4 years, last increase was relatively moderate.
- Spoken to our agent at Naylor's Gavin Black and will find their recommendation for a new rent. Hope this will all be agreed this calendar year.
- If the landlord does not agree with the proposed rent, the agent will negotiate (as agreed by the Finance Committee). The Chair, Vice Chair and CEO have been delegated the power to make a final decision by the Finance Committee.

- Looked at budget planning for 2023-24 – the meeting will be on 8<sup>th</sup> December (likely at 8 Ennerdale Road). MH, MS and JuS will begin planning for next year.
  - Budget is then finalised at the January 23 QM.
  - MNP discussion (and agreed their remuneration at General Committee).
  - P.Ridley likely to retire in March 2023. Look to recruit Engineer/Boat Crew.
  - Discussion re. £50k funding given to IFCA's and utilisation of this eg. loggers on pots.
- SM**
- Would the Committee consider using any of these funds to reintroduce the v-notching fund?
- MS**
- No legal way to take berried hens from the sea so can't buy them back to v-notch and return
- LW**
- It is our intention to look at the re-grading of staff.
  - There will be other money for FMPs – think it's reasonable to consider v-notching but can't overstep national legislation. Get the feeling that voluntary v-notching is the preferred option amongst fishers.
- MK**
- Not that long ago that we turned down a sum of money from the industry for this. The meeting was attended by a number of fishermen that didn't want v-notching to come in due to it being an additional burden on the industry.
- Watch Committee:
- MH**
- Minutes of the last QM were approved.
  - Focus on Officer safety. Intimidation and in some cases violence of Officers and essential that officers put their safety first.
  - Comprehensive update on new and existing enforcement matters.
  - Went through the infringements reports and a number of decisions made. The Chair noted there could be greater scrutiny on IFCA's decisions due to issues happening nationally, but NIFCA has a good decision-making procedure.
  - Had a large fine of £12,500 in a recent case which was an important result.
  - Accepted vessels, vehicles and H&S reports.
  - No issues raised re. membership with a full suite of members
  - AIFCA update – Rob Clark (RC) has been instrumental in getting national funding established. RC has also majorly improved links with Defra and kept the role of IFCA's in the forefront of Defra thinking.
- LW**
- RC at a drop of hat joined with NIFCA to support the HPMA work and has been named one of the 100 most influential people in marine management this year.
- MH**
- NSHC discussion which will be covered further under AOB.
  - Planning for MH succession of MS supported by a new SMT.

### **3.12 IFCO REPORTS**

#### **3.12.1. Chief IFCO Report on activities for quarter ending 30 September 2022**

- LW
- MS
  - Really like the new matrix which is helpful for new members.
  - Found a report from 1981 which confirmed there were 147 operating from the district. With few young people coming into the industry, possible we will see a decline in these numbers over time.
  - Mobile fishing – no scallop activity.
  - Trawl activity – 42 trawl permits in the district
  - Intertidal – seen big increases due to summer weather. People collecting shellfish with increase in non-English speaking community. Had to have some translation in the district.
  - Increase in avian bird flu in the district.
  - iVMS project – roll out continues although further delays in certain tranches.
  - Joint activity – Officers working with other agencies
  - Staffing – thank to all the officers – been a busy quarter for both enforcement and environmental including the HPMA.
- MH
  - MH's last QM after 19 years of dedicated service allowing him to concentrate on passions outside of fisheries enforcement.
- LW
  - Now estimated close to 50k bird deaths in Lindisfarne due to Avian bird flu.
  - Thank you to NW and ML for their contribution to this report.

### **3.12.2. Environmental IFCOs Report for quarter ending 30 September 2022**

- AA
  - Main task for the team was HPMA process. Thank you to the members for their input to this. It is greatly appreciated and also to Sarah C for her help.
  - Other important work – lobster stock assessment project back in place.
  - Had a Uni student with us for a few weeks and he seemed to enjoy his time and found it very beneficial.
- LW
  - Thank you also to NIFCA for taking on a placement at college level. Really good that NIFCA has taken this on.
- SL
  - Thank you to MS and MH for joining at Cresswell Tower which was a really successful event.

### **3.13.3. Maintenance Report and Engineering Log for quarter ending 30 September 2022 and Cabin RIB Report**

- MS
  - All repairs completed as planned and happy with the work of the contractor who did some work.

### **3.13. GLOSSARY OF ACRONYMS**

- IT
  - Received with thanks

### **3.14 ANNUAL REPORT**

- MH**
  - Thank you to Chair for pointing out re. page 3 where it says Angling Trust Strategy should of course be “Angling Strategy” – this is a NIFCA Strategy.
- SL**
  - Proposed acceptance and agreed by all members.

**3.15 ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

- MH**
  - a) Date of next meeting 23 January 2023 at venue TBC.
  - b) There is a legal obligation for NIFCA to assign 3 of our members to sit on the North Sunderland Harbour Commission. MH asked for nominations:
    - SL nominated LW, GRT and CH
    - Membership voted and agreed.
    - **LW, GRT and CH have been appointed by NIFCA to be NSHC commissioners.**
- GRT**
  - **Suggest sending a formal letter to the Commission too.**

Meeting closed at 15:45

**ACTIONS ARISING FROM THE MEETING:**

<b>Item</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Who</b>
3.3	NIFCA to indicate to NB which stakeholders would benefit from training on biosecurity	AA/MS
3.3	NIFCA to continue with £4k contribution to NMP	JuS/MH
3.8	NIFCA to report to Facebook any people/posts advertising the sale of live bait	AB/ES
3.8	St Aidan to place a drop-down camera at site of sediment dumping to have a look at the area	MS
3.15	LW, GRT and CH have been appointed by NIFCA to be NSHC commissioners – write a formal letter to the NSHC to confirm	MH