

**MINUTES OF THE GENERAL COMMITTEE MEETING
HELD AT OLD COMMITTEE ROOM 1 (BLOCK 5), COUNTY HALL, MORPETH,
NORTHUMBERLAND NE61 2EF ON MONDAY 22 JANUARY 2024**

**Actions arising from minutes are collated in
the actions table at the end of the document**

PRESENT: NIFCA Members:

Mr L Weller (Chair), Ms A Henderson (AH), Dr M Kitching (MK), Mr S Lowe (SL), Mrs C Seymour (CS), Dr C Scott (CSc), Mr F Armstrong (FA), Mr M Swinbank (MSw), Mrs E Dunn (ED), Ms S Ingram (SI), Mr M Nugent (MN), Mr P Gray (PG), Dr J Wood (JW) and Mr I Thomas (IT).

Also in attendance from NIFCA was the Chief Officer Mr M Southerton (MS) and Lead IFCOs Ms A Aitken (AA) and Mr N Weir (NW). Minutes were taken by the NIFCA Administrative Officer, Emma Stiles (ES).

The meeting was also joined by guest Mr N Brodin from the MNP.

3.1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Apologies for absence were received from:

Guy Renner-Thompson, Brian Burdis, Pip Moore, Alex Wallace and Jim Stephenson

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

**3.2 DRAFT MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS QUARTERLY MEETING HELD ON 23
OCTOBER 2023 AND MATTERS ARISING THEREFROM**

- Proposed acceptance by IT and seconded by SL.

3.3 NIFCA BUDGET 2024-25 (MEMBERS ONLY)

- LW** • Thanks again to JuS for the narrative which is very helpful.
- MS** • Members have since received a revised budget due to change in staff agreed at finance meeting earlier this morning.
- We will be recruiting at the end of February for KO position on a 24-month contract using the RDel funds (not budget), meaning instead of £21k deficit, will be a £19k surplus.
- LW** • Asking for a stand still budget.
- Some members have suggested being aware of inflation, but it is felt it will be absorbed within the budget.
- MS** • Asset replacement fund – proposing to increase to £50k increasing incrementally every two year for the next 10 years.
- Suggesting a change in the Financial Regulations – currently says the Authority should hold no more than 10% reserves, but now considering changing this to allow us to hold reserves of up to 20% of annual precept– this is due to inflation changes and other unexpected costs. This is being considered nationally by other IFCA's.
- LW** • Feel that this is a sensible thing to do, particularly with costs and inflation going up substantially in recent years.

- These are a matter for decision by the General Committee – proposed LW, seconded CSe.
 - The members voted on accepting a stand still budget for NIFCA year 2024-25. It was voted unanimously by the members to agree this budget.
- CSe**
- Pleased we don't have to increase the precept – done some good financial planning which has resulted in this outcome.

3.4 MEETINGS ATTENDED THROUGHOUT THE QUARTER

- This report was received and accepted by the members.
- LW**
- There is a 'Monthly Member Roundup' which goes with this report on the website in the members area.
 - Lot of good things going on - the Officers are very busy.

3.5 MNP Presentation by Nick Brodin

- NB**
- NB attended to give a presentation on the MNP.
 - They held a number of workshops which NIFCA have been part of which is great.
 - LW: Are pink Atlantic salmon included as part of the Invasive Non-Native Species strategy?
 - *Yes, they are.*
 - LW: How does surveillance happen?
 - *Ad hoc records and making sure systems in place. And specific survey work etc. getting volunteers out on the ground to monitor (for example) invasive species.*
 - *Records are then checked and decisions can be made to action further.*
 - LW: Do you cover Alnmouth to the Coast? If so, can we look more at Lynemouth which remains a significant issue in the area and not have to go through another year of erosion. Needs more pressure on the Council.
 - *We can certainly make the right people in the Council aware of the importance of the issue.*
 - LW: Are you taking the illegal sewage leakage into the assessments too for the rock shores?
 - *Yes it's all part of the discussion.*
 - Open invite to come back NB.

- SL**
- Biosecurity video has been created and could be changed for your purposes.
 - Lynemouth is a huge dilemma but also great opportunity – intertidal there are birds fishing there all the time so there must be something going on. I would push on this.
 - Coastal Stamp – really good opportunity to look at archive – coastal change is natural. There is a good archive at Woodhorn – maybe a student project that looks into this rather than just survey. Don't seem to get any deposition, so where is all that sand going.

- LW**
- Agreed to continue giving funding to MNP and an increase for this year by £1000

3.6 MEMBER MATTERS

- LW**
- MK had membership extended.
 - JiS membership comes to an end in May – he won't be reapplying again after 26 years. We will be doing something for him. Sincere thanks to JiS for his work on the Authority and its NSFC.
 - We will have a new member in the year.

- Member appraisals will be taking place in March.
- It is my recommendation that all General members remain – if you have anything to discuss, please contact me directly. We have excellent members who offer a lot and we couldn't do it without you.
- Will also be giving details of Councillor member attendance to the Council.

3.7 **FMP Update**

- LW** • Defra are not committing yet to an increase in MLS. They seem to have recognised the issue we have raised about this.
- AA** • Members heard an update on FMPs including the publication of the first five front runner plans. Details on the changes made due to the consultation on the draft plans are detailed in the paper.

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

MS Finance:

- Previous meeting minutes were approved.
- Members updated on the Risk Assessment Matrix which has been updated and is on the website.
- Members heard that KO will be leaving the Authority and her position will be recruited from Rdel funding on a 24 month contract. VR will be offered a permanent position.
- Members reviewed the paper changing the Financial Regulations to include maintaining a 20% reserves allowance.
- Members were given an update on the lease.
- Agreed to upgrade the Sea Spyder.

MS Watch:

- Members approved previous minutes.
- 3 cases were discussed and agreed for:
 - Case A – Written warning
 - Case B – FAP
 - Case C – Prosecution
- Received the H&S report.

3.9 **IFCO REPORTS**

3.9.1. District Report on Activities for quarter ending 31 December 2023

- MS** • Been challenging quarter for the fishing industry – number of storms which have been hard for fishing and also changed the profile of some parts of the coast.
- After the big storms, people didn't recover their gear? In time, gear will end up on the shore?
- JW** • It will remain out there and potentially catch other people's gear.
- MSw** • Is there any legal requirement for someone to clear it up? Or benefit to changing the makeup of pots?
- MS** • Pots have been changed over the years.
- LW** • Could we tell people what their pots should be made of?

- JW**
 - Choices that people have considered are escape gaps or hog? tying an end. The cost to retrospectively do that in any part of the country would be far too expensive.
- MS**
 - Fisher Forums meetings – we have held a number of them in the last quarter. We plan to host this information on the website for those unable to attend.
 - Been a busy quarter for members including recruitment and Poole trip.
 - The Annual Report was submitted early.
 - The SMT review was concluded in November.
 - AA/NW have been working on the Fixed Engine Byelaw.
 - Attendance at a beach pollution exercise.
 - Species Challenge concluded in December and we had a winner. Started the process for 2024 which has now gone live online.
 - iVMS grant scheme closed at the end of December.
 - Conduct and Ops Report – haven't had any correspondence from Defra the survey to be on the Citizen Science space.
- LW**
 - Thanks to MS – handled information on the Smiths Docs and got the backing of the membership almost immediately. Had some very happy responses to this. It was good to go there and get a positive result so quickly.

3.9.2. District Report on Activities for quarter ending 31 December 2023

- NW**
 - ON 18th January, CMD was found guilty of landing 1 berried lobster.
 - The Magistrates disqualified him from getting a permit for 12 months and fined him £2,500. There are limitations to that – the owner of the boat can still apply, but we will keep an eye on this.
- LW**
 - Would like to thank NW and his team for putting this case together. The Magistrates commended one of our officers for their work in giving their evidence and just shows how professional the team is.
 - First time we have had a permit removed in the area.
- CSe**
 - An excellent deterrent.
- LW**
 - Thank you to the Officers who attended the Amble Open. Over 500 fishers took part this year making it the biggest national competition.

3.9.3. Environmental IFCOs Report for quarter ending 31 December 2023

- AA**
 - Cornwall attended NIFCA and gave some training in detecting scrubbed lobsters, which has been excellent.
- MS**
 - Association meetings which we have attended have also been uploaded onto the website.
- LW**
 - The members section is an excellent resource on the website so worth having a look.
- CSe**
 - Regarding the application on Old Berwick Bridge that work is about to start and will last 12 weeks.

3.9.4. Maintenance Report and Engineering Log for quarter ending 31 December 2023 and Cabin RIB Report

- Received with thanks.
- IT**
- Only using 1L of oil – very good.
- MS**
- We are going to get chemical samples from the coolant along with oil samples.

3.10. GLOSSARY OF ACRONYMS

- Received with thanks.

3.11 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

- LW**
- Sea Harbour Commissioner Members – there is a meeting at 14:00 on Friday.
- MS**
- Next QM - East Bedlington CC is a possibility – difficulty with hearing due to high ceilings.
- CSe**
- Democratic services at County Council could be used.
- LW**
- Could use other venues in the district. Any suggestions, let us know.

The meeting was closed by the Chair at 14:40.

ACTIONS ARISING FROM THE MEETING:

Item	Action	Who
3.3	Update the Financial Regulations to allow NIFCA to hold reserves of up to 20% of annual precept.	JuS
3.5	MNP to be paid.	JuS
3.6	Members to contact the Chair if they wish to have a discussion regarding their appraisal.	General Members