

MINUTES OF THE GENERAL COMMITTEE MEETING
HELD AT THE EAST BEDLINGTON COMMUNITY CENTRE
ON MONDAY 22nd APRIL 2024 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 C Hardy (CH), Mr S Lowe (SL), Dr J Wood (JW), Mr G R Thompson (GRT), Mr F Armstrong (FA), Miss A Henderson (Chair/AH), Mr M Nugent (MN), Mr P Gray (PG), Dr C Scott (CSc), Mr M Swinbank (MSw), Ms Liz Dunn (LD) and Mr I Thomas (IT).

Also in attendance from NIFCA was the Chief Officer Mark Southerton (MS), Lead Environmental IFCO Alex Aitken (AA) and Lead Enforcement IFCO Nick Weir (NW). Minutes were taken by the NIFCA Administrative Officer, Emma Stiles (ES).

The meeting was also joined by Mr C Proud (CP) from the MMO (in lieu of NIFCA Member Ms S Ingram).

3.1 Meeting Matters

Apologies for absence were received from:

BB, Cllr CS, MK, PM, SI and Cllr AW.

Declarations of Interest:

No Declarations of Interests were received at this point in the meeting.

Welcome:

Session is being recorded – will be deleted when transcribed. Any objections? None.

LW: Thank you for attending. This is my last meeting. I will not be standing again as Chair. It has been a privilege working with all of you, members and staff – you are what has made this role. It is wonderful to have been nominated for service provider of the year with the FN, which is an incredible way to end my term.

Election of Chair:

Three nominations of AH to stand as Chair. At the meeting, AH was nominated by LW, seconded by IT. All members voted and unanimously voted for AH to take over as Chair for IFCA year 2024-25.

Election of Vice Chair:

We have received 3 nominations for GRT for Vice Chair. Voted unanimously by members for GRT to remain Vice Chair for IFCA year 2024-25.

Handover to new Chair:

MS: Thank you to Les for your many years as a member, a Vice Chair and Chair at NIFCA and also a national Vice Chair at the Association. The amount of time you have put into your role cannot be understated. Will miss our weekly catch ups – want to give my sincere thanks for the advice and support you have given to me over this time. Most

particularly, your help with the HPMA was very well recognised. We have been nominated for service provider of the year and hugely contributed to by your work. Presented with certificate.

AH will now continue as Chair of the meeting.

Review Appointment of members of Subcommittees:

With the retirement of J Stephenson (JjS) there is one space available for a member to sit on the Watch and Finance Committees – any interest, please contact MS.

MS - The Authority also appoints 3 Commissioners to the North Sunderland Harbour Commission, with LW now retiring we will need to appoint another, LW has had a previous conversation with an Authority member who had indicated an interest in this, I will contact them to confirm the position for the next meeting.

3.2 DRAFT MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS QUARTERLY MEETING HELD ON 22 JANUARY 2024

- Minutes proposed acceptance and seconded.

3.3 MEETINGS ATTENDED THROUGHOUT THE QUARTER

- MS**
 - Have had a number of meetings with the Marine Directive (formerly Marine Scotland).
 - Speaking with both Policy and Compliance teams.
- AH**
 - There are some webinars hosted by AIFCA for Member training on the NIFCA website. Any issues, contact the office. Includes Sarah Coulthard's "Theory of Change".

3.4 NETTING BYELAW

- AH**
 - Thanks to the team for this excellent paper.
- SL**
 - Think this was a very well put together piece of work. Well thought out and appreciated.
- AH**
 - LW proposed accepting byelaw, seconded SL. Voted unanimously by the membership to accept the byelaw.
- MS**
 - Will now begin statutory consultation and the process of making the byelaw.

3.5 MEMBER MATTERS

- AH**
 - LW has conducted all of the member appraisals which have done successfully.
 - Formally acknowledge JiS service both with NIFCA and with NSFC.
- MS**
 - JiS served 28 years for NSFC and NIFCA. MS and LW met with JiS for lunch and presented JiS with a painting and certificate of service. Sincere thanks for his extraordinary term as a member.

- We of course also have LW leaving. We plan to speak with Amy Maughan (AM) for a press release regarding two long term members retiring from the Authority.
- SL**
- Shouldn't really have a lag of member handover given that we have members on the waiting list – should be coming to a meeting in advance of becoming a member. Something to feedback to MMO.
- LW**
- The program of the MMO recruitment is now that recruitment is year round and they can be added to the merit list in preparation for member vacancies.
- AH**
- Will be a lot of opportunity to create some social media content in the coming months which could help with recruitment.

3.6 STAFF MATTERS/RECRUITMENT

- AH**
- Congratulations to the Authority for being nominated by Fishing News as service provider of the year – results on 8th May.
- MS**
- Confirm that the JG Award was presented to ML in his role for mentoring TN/EO.
 - Following competent Officer training, KS and WM have been warranted which will support the Enforcement Team.
 - Latest IFCO recruitment now closed and will be interviewing on 3rd May.

3.7 SUMMARY REPORTS FINANCE AND WATCH

MS FINANCE:

- Previous minutes were agreed and budget was received/recorded.
- Members updated on latest RDEL funding and confirmation of new Burdens Funding and the latest spending review which IFCAs were asked to submit.
- Update given on office renovations – now completed.
- Members considered review of the NIFCA Communication Strategy and decided to continue support of AM.

WATCH:

- Approved previous mins of Watch and T&S Minutes.
- Received sea activity and vessels report.
- Agreed to send a final advice and written warning to one fisher.
- Received vessel report and H&S report.
- Update on AIFCA meeting received with thanks.

3.8 IFCO REPORTS

3.8.1 Chief Officers Report

- MS**
- Monthly Round Up for members is hosted on the website in the members section.
 - Lost Kate Owen in the quarter but have now closed the recruitment for her replacement.
 - Thanks to staff for their patience during the work being carried out at the NIFCA office. The office improvements are excellent.

- Loss of two long serving members – looking to replace members and retain balance of the Authority.
 - Annual Plan has been submitted to Defra within the deadline.
 - There is also an annual AIFCA Plan on their website which shows how they plan to support IFCAs in the coming year.
 - Conduct and Operations Report is ongoing.
 - Fisher Forums didn't take place in the last quarter.
 - RSA – species challenge continues with over 80 anglers engaged. Have also had an RSA drop-in. Could have been better attended but still received some good outputs.
 - RDEL funding – this has been committed to end of SR21 period.
 - iVMS project ongoing but still delays until the SI is laid (exception at D&S who has a byelaw provision).
 - “Theory of Change” briefing session is on the NIFCA website. Will be looking at introducing Exit Interviews with members.
 - NSHC has been dealt with.
 - Excellent to have been nominated as Service Provider of the Year with the FN.
- LW** • Used to see iVMS, now we can't see it at all until the SI is laid.
- CP** • Do understand the frustrations being felt by the delays to the iVMS project. If there are any questions, please do contact.
- JW** • In this interim, do NIFCA have access to iVMS?
- MS** • No, can't be used for any enforcement and compliance.
- JW** • Contingency in place if we get 6 months down the line and we're still not able to access iVMS – a byelaw?
- MS** • Don't believe the MMO would be happy with IFCAs pursuing iVMS byelaws due to changes across the areas and MMO compliance direction which would allow vessels to move between different districts with the same byelaws in place.
- JW** • When the project started, we were promised we would never be left in this position, and we are. It's very disappointing.
- AA** • Asked if there is any risk that we've used iVMS data for assessment of byelaws but have been told that we can use whatever we have available but we can't use new data going forward.
- AH** • Conduct and Operations Report deadline – please take 5-10mins to get it completed – it's not as dry as it sounds and is really helpful. Deadline by end of today.

3.8.2 Enforcement Report

- NW** • Two more Officers now warranted.
- Had a successful prosecution in the quarter.
- AH** • Well done to WM for his award for being top student at the enforcement training in Torquay.

3.8.3 Environmental Report

- AA
 - Change in the team with KO leaving in January.
 - Congratulations to AB for birth of daughter.
 - FMPs – plans in development. The first five plans have been published in December and then very quiet since. Awaiting further advice on plans.
 - Whelk fishing – potential for historic records of fishing to get permits.
 - Surveys have been very quiet – poor visibility and weather.
 - Species Challenge has started this year 300+ submissions been received already.
- LW
 - Mussel Survey – decline since we've started monitoring. Has it been one particular year or is it a steady decline? A concern that the decline has continued but nothing in stone as to why. Where can we go to put it right?
- AA
 - Since 2012/13 there has been steady decline. Declined by 99% since it began. CSc has arranged samples to be sent up to St Abbs – there could be a number of things which have affected it. Not just this area – also in Scotland and areas in Wales experiencing the same decline.
- CSc
 - Trying to get a national project funded to look at this but can't get funding. There is likelihood that there are a number of impacts affecting the decline, not just water quality.
- SL **DOI as Chair of ERIC**
 - Are you sending information from species challenge to ERIC?
- AA
 - Yes, sent annually.
- SL
 - Marine Nature Recovery – voluntary nature recovery project looking to start a MCZ which would be very confusing – think NIFCA should be involved if they're not.
- AA
 - There are meetings coming up which NIFCA will be attending.

3.8.4 Maintenance Report

- MS
 - WM does this report and maintenance on the vessels – see report.
 - Main thing is that St Aidan has had its annual lift out and painting.
 - Vessels have ran as expected
- LW
 - This is a really important report – both previous and current engineer does a sterling job.
 - Would like to thank WM for his work.
- MS
 - Additional information related to crew training which will be a permanent part of this report.

3.9 ACRONYMS TABLE

- Received with thanks

3.10 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

- MS
 - Having a get together for LW retirement – this Friday at Tynemouth.

- Some representatives from the Association making the journey up.

MS

- Next meeting to be held at the office in Blyth.

The meeting was closed by the Chair at 14:22.

ACTIONS ARISING FROM THE MEETING:

Item	Action	Who
	Confirm with the Authority member to be nominated NSHC	MS