

## **REGIONAL FISHERIES GROUPS: TERMS OF REFERENCE**

### **Introduction and Constitution**

Regional Fisheries Groups (RFG) will provide a formal method of engagement to help to further develop more collaborative and stronger working relationships between policy makers, scientists, regulators, and the predominantly inshore fishing sector at a regional level. The intention is to support a cultural shift that enables fisheries participants to be more involved in developing and maintaining a world-class sustainable fisheries management system while also supporting their local coastal communities.

The term 'predominantly inshore fishing sector' refers to active commercial and recreational fishers that operate predominantly inside 12nm and / or are classed as Non-Sector vessels. Buyers, processors, and other inshore industry representatives such as Producer Organisations (PO), where appropriate, may also form part of these groups.

RFGs present opportunities for collaborative working on a range of issues, from fisheries management plans and localised collaborative science projects to quota management. The groups are designed to focus on inshore issues relevant to that region, but it is acknowledged that these may naturally at times require consideration of offshore and national activities to ensure that the groups remain mindful and in touch with the bigger picture on a national scale.

Representation on RFGs encompasses government bodies, inshore fishing industry, and recreational sea anglers. Other relevant stakeholders may be invited depending on the agenda of the day. Working collaboratively across these sectors supports inclusive dialogue and engagement.

The secretariat for each of the RFGs will be provided by MMO/Defra for an inaugural 12-month period, after which each group will identify an appropriate secretariat and review period in which to proceed.

### **1. Purpose**

- To discuss and work collaboratively as a group to develop management options for the sustainable exploitation of fish stocks and highlight stakeholder priorities to the relevant organisations.
- To participate in the evaluation of existing fisheries management techniques within the wider statutory framework.
- To discuss with, make recommendations to, and work closely alongside policy makers, scientists and regulators on fisheries management-related matters considered to be of importance to the group.

- To support and develop detailed collaborative science proposals and work together as a group to implement these.
- To critically evaluate the data for fisheries management and where necessary identify how data gaps can be filled.
- To engage in fishing community and stakeholder liaisons, share knowledge and views from fishing communities, and facilitate broader engagement and participation outside the group.
- To ensure all fishing activities within the region are represented (when appropriate) and nominated delegates provide comments to the group and feedback from the group to the industry and stakeholders they represent.

## **2. Principles**

### **Transparent and Accountable**

- The name of the individual attendees and (if relevant) the organisation(s) that they represent will be publicly available.
- A draft summary of the meetings will be made available to the group within one month of the RFG meetings. Once approved by the attendees they will be made publicly available.
- External queries regarding RFGs or outcomes of meetings will in the first instance be directed through the relevant RFG Secretariat.
- Contact details for RFG members will only be provided where written permission has been granted to do so.
- The members of the groups shall be expected to declare their interests, and the interest of whom they represent at the beginning of the meeting and at any time that an interest become apparent during a meeting.
- In time, delegates will be required to provide a short paragraph describing the organisations they represent which will be publicly available. As meeting attendees are not fixed, a description of individually represented interests will not be required but may be provided by those individuals that wish to do so.

### **Expert**

- Wherever possible, expert local knowledge and scientific expertise will be brought into discussions to help inform and further the approach of the group. This may include but is not limited to statutory nature conservation bodies and where appropriate to the agenda Non-Governmental Organisations.

### **Efficient**

- RFG members will always seek to address issues in a timely manner.

### **Facilitation of Discussion**

- Discussions must be professional, constructive, and respectful.
- Where appropriate business may be conducted by correspondence.
- Discussions and attendance at RFG meetings will be agenda led and can include but not be restricted to issues raised by its members.
- With the agreement of the chair, working groups may also be established to progress specific issues. Such groups will be required to provide regular progress reports to the RFG.
- There will be an opportunity and clear process for appropriate resolution where the general arrangements and spirit of engagement are considered by one or more party not to have been met. Until this process is drafted the MMO and or Defra complaints procedure should be followed if necessary.

### **3. Representatives of the RFG**

- The chair and secretariat will be decided by the RFG. Defra and MMO will initially provide support for the organising and facilitation of the meetings.
- With the permission of the RFG chair, other experts, or salient members of the community may attend meetings to input to particular agenda items.
- Group members can nominate an alternative person to represent their interests at a meeting by informing the RFG chair or secretariat in advance of that meeting taking place.
- Non-attendance by the representative of an organisation three times in a row without any form of communication to either the RFG chair or secretariat will be taken as withdrawing from the group and result in removal from the RFG. A new person may then be found to represent that organisation.

Representatives of the RFG will be fair and balanced

#### **Fair and Balanced**

- Membership of RFG should be representative of all inshore commercial and recreational fishing activities within the region, and relevant policy making, regulatory and scientific bodies.
- There is no requirement for the full range of offshore fishing activities to be represented but offshore interests may be invited as appropriate.
- Individual attendees may represent themselves or wider organisations.
- Buyers and sellers may be represented where appropriate.

- There is no requirement for POs to be represented as POs already have formal lines of communication with government bodies, but in some cases POs may form part of the group and provide insight into inshore fishing issues. Where they have a membership base that reflects this.
- The group will record the balance of membership, identifying any gaps in membership, and actively encourage participation from any under representative group; any gaps or omissions in membership should be identified and the RFG encouraged to actively fill such gaps / omissions.

#### **4. Catch limit decisions for quota stocks**

- The MMO is the competent authority responsible for assessing and setting catch limits for quota species, in consultation with the RFG and the wider fleet.
- The MMO will seek the advice of the RFG on quota priorities and the seeking of catch limits.

#### **5. Frequency of RFG meetings**

- Unless otherwise agreed between the representatives, the RFG will meet quarterly, or more frequently by exception.
- The date and time of forthcoming RFG meetings will be circulated via email by the RFG secretariat.
- The Secretariat will endeavour to book meeting venues that include video conferencing to ensure inclusivity for individuals that cannot attend in person.

#### **6. Meeting Records**

- A draft summary of discussions at RFG meetings will be produced by the secretariat and circulated to all those who attended for approval within 1 month of the meeting taking place. Once agreed the summary document will be made publicly available on gov.uk.

#### **7. Review**

- These terms of reference and will be reviewed on an annual basis.