

REGIONAL FISHERIES GROUP

Meeting Notes 23rd August 2022

Southeast 4c

15:00 – 17:00 MS Teams Conference Call

Attendees:

INDUSTRY

Wayne Brewster
Lee Doughty
Charles Lines
Paul Lines
Dean Fryer
Ken Bagley
Ashley Mullenger
Darren Holmes
June Mummery
Trevor Armstrong

MMO:

Courtney Inch – RFGs
Emily Theobald – RFGs
Amedeo De Masi – Senior Marine Officer
Charlotte Floyd – Senior Marine Officer
Katie James – Quota
Chris Turner – Licencing

Defra:

Andy Carrol – Inshore fleet management
Phil McBryde – NQS
Ross Deadman – Quota

MCA:

Ahsan Khan
Richard Woodrow

Seafish:

Felix Ameye

Cefas:

Jim Ellis

Apologies:

Julian Gregory, EIFCA

1. Introduction and welcome – Courtney Inch, MMO

Fisheries and Seafood Scheme have now enhanced and equalised the funding rates available to fund health and safety projects for the small-scale coastal fleet. This means that now *any* vessel with a length of 12 metres or less will be eligible for a funding rate of up to 80% for health and safety projects – regardless of the type of gear used.

Department for Transport have recently announced a support package for seafarers, including £2.4 million funding to support seafarers' mental wellbeing. The Merchant Navy Welfare Board, who are administering the £2.4m fund, welcomes grants that support fishers and have previously awarded funding in this area. More information can be found on their website: [Grants to Organisations : Merchant Navy Welfare Board \(mnwb.org\)](#). The application process and guidelines can be found here: [2022-GUIDELINES-FOR-APPLYING-FOR-A-GRANT.pdf \(toolkitfiles.co.uk\)](#).

Defra's Fisheries Science Team will be running a sole survey of 4C. The inshore survey targeting sole will be relaunched in 2022 in the Outer Thames (Division 4.c). Two surveys will be carried out in August-September 2022, collecting data on sole recruitment and inshore fish population dynamics, with results available in early 2023. Following concerns raised at inshore Regional Fisheries Groups, Defra hope that the reinstatement of the survey will improve evidence used in the advice for the North Sea sole TAC and improve trust in and transparency of the science.

The MMO are currently putting in place a process for marine licencing applications that affect this area that require consultations, that those consultations will be circulated to you directly via the RFG mailbox.

Since the last RFG, there has been a lengthy discussion which took place between the MMO, Defra and Cefas. This discussion covered a range of issues which have been raised in these RFGs. There are some which are in the process of being reviewed and are already taking your comments such as the Bass FMP, and others where we are waiting on advice. However, one of the elements raised in the RFG meetings was the impact of spatial squeeze and further impacts of human activities on your landings. We're currently putting together what investigating this will look like, and we will likely reach out between this meeting and the next one with more of an update.

Round One of the UK Seafood Fund Skills and Training scheme has opened for applications. You will be able to apply for a grant until the 12th of October 2022. Round One is for improving or creating training courses or specialised training equipment. Round Two which we expect to open in the Autumn will be for constructing or modernising training centres.

- Question from industry - Sole is being landed, why is there a Sole survey?
 - We have concerns that the sole quota is going to be removed when we're making a healthy living off this.
- Question from industry – is there funding to protect heritage on Fishers queys?
 - We are losing real estate on quays and storage for our equipment. The MMO responded by saying they will feed this up and propose this to grants.
- Question from industry – is there funding available for people who care about the industry?
 - It is really difficult to get through to the grants team. The MMO responded by saying that the infrastructure and innovation funds are the ones to look at and that the RFG team will reach out to this person with more information on a potential fund.
- Question from industry – where is the sole survey being undertaken?
 - Cefas responded by saying that this is an issue that had been flagged by multiple fishermen in the south end, and a lot of them have questioned why there is no longer a young fish survey, ICES has highlighted that the assessment for Sole in the North Sea is reliant on data from the Dutch and Belgium sectors. The industry member responded by saying they have concerns that this is going to backfire on fisherman massively, as the quota they have currently is working well. Cefas responded by saying that not all surveys have negative consequences, for example surveys on Thornback Ray, which contributed to a big change in ICES advice. Since then, the TACs have been increased, Cefas will always try and collect the best defence.
- There was on-going conversation between industry members about the condition of Sole stock. Cefas also contributed by saying that there is truth in the different perceptions of what is being aired in this meeting. Cefas have seen consistent catch rated in the 4m beam trawl survey in the outer Thames, some fishermen have said they have seen a decline in the

inner Thames, and this could be due to a number of anthropogenic reasons, or natural processes. Cefas also states that they want to undertake more survey work, due to reports of changes in what fish are where, which would give us indications of a changing environment, which may not be fishing induced.

- Cefas also stated that the assessment for stock assessment has changed, therefore we are likely to see a reduction in Sole TAC for this year. Cefas also noted how 8000-11,000t are, on average, caught a year, therefore even if the TAC is reduced substantially, it won't reduce the amount fishers are catching.

2. Quota – Katie James, MMO

- **Latent capacity**
 - Temporary lift of the under-10m licence cap from 1 August 2022. The cap on some under-10m vessels which restricts their uptake to no more than 350kg per year of quota stocks will be temporarily lifted for the remainder of 2022. This is being done to facilitate uptake of available quota and as an exercise to make an initial test for any unexpected consequences of lifting the cap more permanently.
- **Additional quota**
 - The MMO were able to temporarily offer vessels with Cat B and Cat C licences additional quota: Offer of additional quota to vessels with Category B and C licences. Over 10m vessels with Category B or C licences have a limited number of quota stocks for which they can fish. Under this scheme, those vessels were able to apply for one-time offer of access to more opportunities for the remainder of 2022. This has now closed but hopefully those who wanted to took advantage of this uplift.

If anyone has any questions surrounding quota in the Southeast, please contact katie.james@marinemanagement.org.uk.



IVc presentation
August 2022.pdf

3. MCA Q+A – Ahsan Kahn and Richard Woodrow, MCA

- A question from industry – We regularly hear increasingly long wait times for the MCA services inspection, this is having a real time effect on the vessel owners, who needs vessels to be operational, especially in the summer months. Can you disclose the current wait times for S&I activities?
 - The MCA responded, by started with existing vessels that are coming for renewal surveys, MCA allows five months for you to apply before the expiry of the survey. The people who submit requests for surveys first, will get the priority. In general, wait times vary, but normally the wait time for surveys is on average two weeks. This massively depends on how many surveys and surveys requests we have.

- A question from industry – There are concerns about water-freeing arrangements, and free-board, there is concern that this may jeopardise water-freeing capabilities, and they should be able to rely on mechanical means only, has the MCA undertaken any independent assessment in the increased risk that may bring?
 - The MCA responded by saying that the water-freeing arrangement came from the Seafish Construction Standard, this is not an MCA policy. All open-board boats, have been made with this water-freeing arrangement, since 2012. We know of no incidence or accident that has been recorded because of this arrangement.
- A question from industry – Is there compulsory medical exams for skippers? And what implications is this going to have on fishermen, especially people with life-long conditions such as diabetes?
 - The MCA responded by saying that the medical is a phased in requirement, and some are already mandatory. After November 2023, all fishermen will have to have a medical certification, and how long they stay at sea or how far they operate will affect those medicals. The MCA also stated that they are not placed to comment on specific medical conditions and how they will affect the outcome of the medical. They have an approved pool of doctors who are undertaking the assessments.
 - The RFG team have followed this up with MCA direct to get a clearer answer on the second half of the question.
- A question from industry - We don't have anyone in our local office who deals with surveying over 15m vessels, can you foresee Colchester having an over 15m vessel surveyor? Do we also have to pay for a surveyor to come up here, from another office?
 - The MCA responded by saying that this has been discussed, and more and more surveyors are being eligible to survey over 15m vessels. The local marine office should guide you to a surveyor. The national MCA team are looking into this and know it's a problem. One charges, the MCA stated that you will be charged from your nearest, local marine office, not from where the surveyor is coming from. There is also a cap on travel charge.
- A question from industry – Why is there a difference between smoke detectors for U15m and O15m vessels?
 - This is inherited from the Seafish Construction Standard. U15's also have different requirements for smoke detectors, so the requirements vary as the sizes increase.
- A question from industry – are recreational anglers expected to wear lifejackets also?
 - The RFG team followed up the question issued by industry on recreational anglers and the lack of requirements for them to wear a life jacket. Their response is below, but in summary the need for lifejackets and any other safety measures on fishers are brought in proportionate to the evidence needed to justify regulatory intervention which the commercial fleet has met the evidence needed and recreational have not. The MCA though do encourage all members of the public to take personal responsibility to stay safe.

4. Fly Seining – Phil McBryde, Defra

- Launching a consultation on Thursday to gather evidence for fly seining. Trying to work out with the issues are, but the data is lacking due to them being NQS.
- This is not just about EU vessels, but English registered too.
- The plan is for the consultation to be launched, we will circulate the link and the slide pack and consultation document (attached below).
- Ministers are really supportive of this, so please propose specific measures.
- We know that landings have doubled over the last 3 years, the scaling up is a challenge and the impact these vessels are having on stocks.
- A package of potential measures has been put together, and its important fishers have the opportunity to input into this.
- A question from industry – we’re concerned the damage has been done, we spoke about this two years ago.
 - Defra responded by saying that they disagree. We don’t have the biological evidence to suggest the stocks have collapsed. We cannot target some member states over others and have to be fair.
- A question from industry – are NQS going to be made into quota species?
 - Defra responded by saying that they are proposing measures to help limit the scaling up of the gear that’s being used, as they recognise there is an issue, and they don’t have the full evidence to take defensive action. How NQS are managed moving forward is another question, but we can look at technical measures, effort, and closures.
- A question from industry – if this is successful, what are the chances of the MMO asking for track records to be able to gain fishing opportunities?
 - Defra responded by stating that what can we do to limit the activity of the current, large fleet of fly-seiners, to limit what they are taking out.
- The MMO asked whether there was any targeted engagement that is happening, aside from the consultation?
 - Defra responded by saying nothing specifically, with a stretched team, there has been a delay, but government and ministers have been briefed. Defra also stated that they are happy to have smaller industry meetings to discuss the consultation, to offer a more bespoke consultation.

The presentation and consultation are attached below.



Demersal NQS
flyseining consultati



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NQS flyseine consulta

5. Quota Consultation – Ross Deadman, Defra

Presentation is attached below:



Defra Quota
Consultation slides.pp

- There is a new approach for delivering additional quota in 2021 and 2022, and a further consultation of how Defra do this process.
- Question from industry – It's really important for the U10's to diversify, and be able to fish what's there, when it's there.
 - Defra responded by saying they use track records from 2012-2019, this has been asked whether it should be changed to better represent what the industry has been catching for the past two years.
- A question from industry – Are track records going to be just for over 10's or under 10's as well?
 - Defra responded by saying that allocation is only for the sector (PO's), so for non-sector and for U10's, it stays the same.
- A question from industry – there are too many consultations, they are a challenge, fishers are a hard-to-reach group, a lot of the time they are hard to fill out online and could be adjusted.
 - Defra responded by saying that they are looking at ways to improve this, through social researchers. We are also looking at coming out on the coast to meet with fishers on the coast. They also made it clear they're willing to hear and take advice on how best to reach the industry.

6. AOB

- Licencing Blakeney Point: Some people here have raised concerns about a proposal to build a seaweed farm off the coast Blakeney point. While a consultation has already taken place for this, it is a bit out-of-date, and we recognise that not everyone has had the opportunity to put forward their views so we will be taking feedback here in this RFG to pass on to the licencing team for consideration.
 - The proposal under MLA/2020/00475 is a 5ha 'proof of concept'/pilot operation, including infrastructure installation, the sowing of two seeded seaweed lines, monitoring progress, harvesting an initial crop, and delivering it to customers. The site will consist of a mooring system designed for a capacity appropriate to maintain the seaweed cultivation system in place, taking account of all expected weather and tidal stream conditions. The mooring system will be FlipperDelta type embedment anchors, 6000kgs sinker type anchors, chain ground tackle and chain risers. The cultivation systems (rigs) will be a suitable substrate of appropriate rope, suspended on the surface by buoys and attached to the moorings. The area will be protected by navigation marks designated by Trinity House and informed to MCA will be yellow marker buoys fitted with top marks, yellow flashing lights and reflective markings. The UK Hydrographic Office will be informed for the inclusion of this site on current charts. All pilot farm infrastructure and navigation marks will be laid by an anchor handling tug.
 - The original public consultation opened on the 3rd of Dec 2020, running until the 31st of Dec 2020. Formal consultation with our advisors initially ran from the 27th of Nov

2020 to 15th of Jan 2021. The applicant also carried out the following public consultations:

1. Notice posted at Morston Quay adjacent to the Blakeney Harbour Association noticeboard in the defined area for notices to be displayed. Posted on Thursday the 3rd of Dec 2020.
2. Notice placed for 1 week in North Norfolk News (published by Archant), published on Friday the 4th of Dec 2020.
3. Online notice placed for one week on the Eastern Daily Press website (also published by Archant), first day shown to be on Saturday the 5th of Dec 2020.

The application, location and all associated documents alongside consultee responses can be found on the MMO's Public Register, by searching for reference MLA/2020/00475.

MMO licencing have recognised that the original consultation was some time ago and that there may be more current opinions needed. If anyone has further comments on this pilot proposed in this licence, they are encouraged to get in touch via the RFG mailbox or directly with one of the RFG team via phone to pass along these comments before ~8th September 2022.