

# REGIONAL FISHERIES GROUP

## Meeting Notes 24<sup>th</sup> January 2024

### North East 4b

15:00 – 17:00 MS Teams Conference Call

#### Attendees

##### Industry

David Wilkins  
Ian Armstrong  
Andy Faichney  
Brian Dunn  
Ben  
Jo Ackers  
Stan Rennie  
Paul Widdowfield  
Andrew Shawl  
Jenny  
Sharon McDade

##### Defra

Andrew Carroll

##### MCA

Paul Scotter

##### IFCA

Vicky Rae (NIFCA)  
Mark Southerton (NIFCA)  
Ralf Bublitz (NEIFCA)

##### University of Oxford

Dr Claire Tanner

##### MMO

###### RFG Team:

[regionalfisheriesgroups@marinemanagement.org.uk](mailto:regionalfisheriesgroups@marinemanagement.org.uk)

- Daniel Wardle, Fisheries Manager –  
[Daniel.Wardle@marinemanagement.org.uk](mailto:Daniel.Wardle@marinemanagement.org.uk)
- Caley McIntosh, Fisheries Manager –  
[Caley.McIntosh@marinemanagement.org.uk](mailto:Caley.McIntosh@marinemanagement.org.uk)
- Courtney Inch, Principal Fisheries Manager –  
[Courtney.Inch@marinemanagement.org.uk](mailto:Courtney.Inch@marinemanagement.org.uk)

###### Quota Team:

[inshorequotamanager@marinemanagement.org.uk](mailto:inshorequotamanager@marinemanagement.org.uk)

- Katie James, Quota Manager - 07747638655
- Jacob Bestwick, Quota Manager -  
07469443840

###### PMO/Chair

- Christian Proud – Principle Marine Officer  
[Christian.Proud@marinemanagement.org.uk](mailto:Christian.Proud@marinemanagement.org.uk)

###### Other MMO Personnel:

Eleanor Johnston  
Andy Earle  
Eilidh Siegal  
Louise Price  
Sheridan Parry  
Angela Matson  
Caroline Hudson  
Anna Ni Donnchadha  
Steph Ingram

## 1. Welcome & Introductions – Chris Proud (Chair/MMO)

- Chris Proud introduced himself as the new North East Principal Marine Officer, taking over for Patrick Gray. He updated on the actions the Regional Fisheries Group team have undertaken since the last North East RFG meeting:

You said	We did
<b>Many of you have voiced concerns regarding the volume of seals in the Northeast area and the effect that they have on catch.</b>	Caley has now partnered up with 2 researchers from University of Oxford who are looking into seal depredation of fisheries catch and are discussing their work on the call today.
<b>Many of you informed Caley that you had lost large amounts of gear due to Storm Babet, or the gear had bundled together making it too heavy to lift.</b>	Caley has made a contact at Ghost Fishing UK - a charity who are willing to help retrieve the lost gear and return to their owners.

## 2. Fishing Vessel Licence Improvements – Angela Matson (MMO)

- There is currently an opportunity to support fishing vessel licensing improvements at MMO.
- MMO is aware that getting the right fishing vessel license can be a complicated process for people to follow, and over the next 3 years we are looking to make improvements to how we do this. A key priority is to make understanding and applying for a license much more straightforward and accessible for all who need it.
- We are starting by looking at MMO's fishing vessel licensing webpages and MMO's Service Design team is looking to speak to fishers about their experiences with the website. We want to understand how the website helps or hinders those who are trying to get licensed or make changes to entitlements, vessels and authorisations fish. The Service Designers are keen to set up one-to-one interviews to speak to you about your experience in these areas and what things you find most challenging currently.
- Interviews would last approximately 1 hour and can be via MS Teams call, telephone or possibly face-to-face. These will take place between now and end of February.

Are you part of the below groups?

We would like to speak to a range of fishers:

- We are looking to speak to fishers who have fishing entitlements, domestic licences (all categories), and fishers with authorisations for Bass, Sole Recovery Zone (SRZ), Western Waters Crabs & Scallops.
- We are very interested in speaking to people who have struggled to use the website in the past (e.g. finding information easily, filling application forms for your fishing vessel license).
- We are also keen to hear from people who do sometimes use the website to try to get information you need, so we can understand what works and what doesn't work for you.

This is a chance to have your say and help the MMO to understand what your needs and preferences are, so we can design services that are much easier to use. We will be attending upcoming stakeholder meetings, where possible, to reach out to people who might be interested in sharing their experiences with us. If you are interested in taking part, please contact Courtney Inch or the Regional Fisheries Groups Team at: [regionalfisheriesgroups@marinemanagement.org.uk](mailto:regionalfisheriesgroups@marinemanagement.org.uk)

### 3. Quota – Katie James and Jacob Bestwick (MMO)

Katie James introduced herself and provided an update on the quota allocations in the region. There are not currently physical allocations for 2024 and so figures are estimates based on 2023 allocations and the Secretary of State determination. Therefore, the figures are subject to change.



NE Quota  
Presentation Jan...

#### Quota Leasing Scheme

Vessels in the non-sector pools with under-10m capped licences and over-10m category B, C and no-quota annex licences were able to apply for access to additional quota. At this stage only stocks where the MMO are confident there is excess within the non-sector pools were released. This is the first time MMO has offered quota leasing this early in the year. The quota leasing scheme ([Quota Leasing Scheme - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)) closed on Monday 22 January 2024, however, your applications are still welcome by email on a case by case basis. Applications for this additional quota should be emailed to: [fmc@marinemanagement.org.uk](mailto:fmc@marinemanagement.org.uk)

#### Capped Licences

The cap for licences was reinstated at the end of 2023 as the policy in place only covered a temporary suspension of the cap until 31st December 2023. The feedback from the public consultation has been analysed and Defra will be publishing the document and issuing a government response in February 2024.

If you have any questions relating to quota, please feel free to contact either Katie and Jacob at [inshorequotamanager@marinemanagement.org.uk](mailto:inshorequotamanager@marinemanagement.org.uk) or via their phone numbers:

Katie: 07747638655  
Jacob: 07469443840

### 4. Stage 4 MPAs – Eilidh Siegal (MMO)

Eilidh Siegal gave an update on the Stage 4 Marine Protected Areas. Please see the PowerPoint attached for more information:



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Site assessments are still being drafted and no managements have been made for any of these 5 MPAs. If any management measures are proposed, these would be shared in a formal consultation later this year. If you have any questions, please contact [conservation@marinemanagement.org.uk](mailto:conservation@marinemanagement.org.uk) or call 0300 123 1032. The call for evidence is currently live and will be open until the **13<sup>th</sup> February 2024**: [consult.defra.gov.uk/mmo/stage-4-call-for-evidence](https://consult.defra.gov.uk/mmo/stage-4-call-for-evidence).

## 5. Seal Depredation – Dr Claire Tanner (University of Oxford)

Dr Claire Tanner from the Marine Conservation and Ecological Department at University of Oxford provided an update on the ongoing project looking at quantifying the proportion of catch partially eaten by seals in the UK, as well as the economic impact it is having on fisheries around the coast. They've recently been granted further funding to achieve aims including:

- (1) assessing seal depredation mitigation strategies.
- (2) collecting longer term data for individual fisheries.
- (3) assessing the frequency of depredation.

As part of this work, they are planning a range of extra activities, including workshops with fishers to discuss mitigation ideas and approaches, reports of findings to date, and additional data collection from one fishery with daily contact. The workshops to discuss mitigations will be a series of three workshops across the coast, and this is where the Regional Fisheries Groups at the MMO are partnered with them to deliver these workshops. Please see the PowerPoint attached for further information.



Tanner\_MMO\_RFGM  
eeting.pptx

If you would like to request a workshop in your area, attend face-to-face interviews, or provide evidence of seal depredation in your area, please contact Dr Tanner at: [claire.tanner@biology.ox.ac.uk](mailto:claire.tanner@biology.ox.ac.uk)

## 6. FMPs – Louise Price (MMO)

Louise Price provided an overview on the tranche 1 Fisheries Management Plans (FMPs), with a primary focus on the crab and lobster FMP. As the FMPs are developing as they progress, details are subject to change. Please see the PowerPoint attached for more information.



FMP Overview - RFG  
23012024 1 3.pptx

Short-term goals are currently expected to be implemented by mid-end of 2024; long-term goals are expected to be implemented from 2025 onwards.

### Industry Questions

**Q:** Andy Faichney commented on the current state of the crab and lobster market, with the market often being flooded by the increasing number of larger vessels with vivier tanks allowing them to fish 6–7-day trips. A flooded market is putting additional pressure on the inshore fleet, request for restrictions to be placed on vessels with vivier tanks.

**A:** Louise Price advised that we are still taking onboard feedback from industry to include the FMPs. These can be emailed to [FMPs@defra.gov.uk](mailto:FMPs@defra.gov.uk). Chris Proud mentioned that fishers can recommend viable management measures that should be included in the FMPs in their comments.

**Q:** Chris Proud asked on behalf of industry whether the increase in minimum landing size for lobster has been decided how this will be managed.

**A:** Currently the implementation of the proposed management measures is still being developed, and so this has not been decided.

**Q:** Stan Rennie asked whether there would be a stepped increase in lobster minimum size or whether it would be a straight 3mm increase.

**A:** Louise Price advised that this has not been decided, again it would be helpful to have these ideas put forward via the FMP mailbox for further consideration.

## **6. NIFCA – Mark Southerton and Vicky Rae (NIFCA)**

Mark Southerton and Vicky Rae gave an overview of the Fisher Forum meetings and the actions for future plans as a result of these meetings. As well as the key issues which have been identified at these meetings. Please see the PowerPoint attached for more information:



2024-01-24\_RFG  
Presentation.pptx

NIFCA will be holding 2 Fisher Forums meetings at each of the 7 ports per year. These events will be advertised on the NIFCA website: [Fisher Forums - NIFCA](#). Caley McIntosh will also be attending these meetings to support actioning issues where possible.

### Industry Questions

**Q:** Andy Faichney commented that a lot of the time suggestions from these meetings get stuck with government and Defra for a year or 2 years before any ruling or byelaws come in, giving pot limits in the district as an example. There will be a lot of drop-out at meetings because of these delays as there is no evidence they are being taken forward. Request for MMO and IFCA to push Defra and central government not to sit on these issues for too long.

**A:** Mark Southerton described the details of the NIFCA district pot limit byelaw compared to the NEIFCA byelaw. He appreciated that it can be difficult to get a consensus on pot limits across the fleet. Chris Proud advised that there has also been streamlining in the checking process of IFCA byelaws now which could improve the speed that issues are actioned.

**Q:** Andy Faichney commented that the FMP process is taking far too long. 5-year period is too long when the stocks are already poor.

**A:** Chris Proud clarified the point Andy was making that we need to make sure that when engagement happens that actions taken from that are timelier.

## **7. NEIFCA – Ralf Bublitz (NEIFCA)**

Ralf Bublitz provided an overview of updates from the NEIFCA and progress of new byelaws. Please see the PowerPoint attached for more information.



RFG Jan 24 NEIFCA  
Byelaw update.pdf

NEIFCA are also planning on rejuvenating stakeholder engagement meetings which will be advertised in due course.

## Industry Questions

**Q:** Stan Rennie questioned whether there were many replies to the pot limit byelaw consultation. Also commented that he believed comments from the drop-in sessions would be included in the consultation. Finally, he advised that since the Tees die offs, over half the Hartlepool potting fleet have left the industry. If the fishery comes back, these people will want to get back into the industry there will need to be enough licences to accommodate this, as well as new entrants.

**A:** Ralf Bublitz shared a slide from the presentation with information on the number of responses. Comments from the meetings have been taken into consideration in the consultation. Additionally, the number of permits is still flexible model and can be changed accordingly depending on the data.

**Q:** Jenny asked in the MS Teams chat whether it worries NEIFCA that only 15% of fishers responded to the consultation and commented on the poor relationship between fishers and NEIFCA. This question was also agreed by Stan Rennie.

**A:** Ralf Bublitz agreed that it is a shame that the number of responses is low but acknowledged that there were many comments taken away from drop-ins and that there is likely to be consultation fatigue from industry due to so many ongoing consultations. The report is available on the NEIFCA website.

**Q:** Stan Rennie commented that the relationship between fishers and NEIFCA needs to improve.

**A:** Ralf Bublitz agrees this is something that needs to be improved and he will be arranging industry meetings in the coming weeks to try and improve relationships going forward.

**Q:** Jenny asked in the MS Teams chat how many other IFCA's charge for permits

**A:** Jo Ackers (MCA) advised that NIFCA also charge for their permits.

**Q:** Stan Rennie asked whether NEIFCA will be including the target stock in the beam trawling byelaw to ensure this doesn't affect those targeting shrimps.

**A:** The main restrictions are focused on those who are targeting scallops in the area, so this will not have an impact on those targeting fish and shrimps etc.

**Q:** Chris Proud asked a pre-submitted question asking why the proposed byelaws never relate to the shellfish catch, and more towards generating income through fines and permits. NEIFCA pot limits won't stop brown crab being landed all year round, we need to be increasing sizes and looking at a 2-4week ban on female crab maybe a couple times of year when the condition is poor. We should have placed a ban on landing female lobsters at certain times of year instead of a full berried ban.

**A:** Ralf Bublitz responded that with the flexible byelaw model they will be allowed to implement measures when necessary, however, at the moment that needs formal consultation with industry and has to be based on better data in future. Impact on industry would have to be assessed before implementing measures like this.

## **8. Any Other Business (AOB)**

### Under 10m medical exemption consultation Q&A – Paul Scotter (MCA)

Paul Scotter provided the opportunity on the call for fishers to ask questions about the ongoing MCA medical exemption consultation for the u10m fleet.

**Q:** Jenny asked whether new entrants need to have a medical before going to sea, or whether this would fall under the 2-month grace period that is allowed for tickets following a sea survival course.

**A:** Paul Scotter advised at the moment it is mandatory to have an ENG1 or ML5 certificate before they can go to sea.

**Q:** Stan Rennie urged any other fishers or members of the public to take part in the public consultation and include their concerns under question 2. Commenting on the stress and worry he has experienced appealing to get a 1 year medical over the last 4 months.

**A:** Paul Scotter agreed and encouraged any other fishers looking for grandfather rights to get involved with the consultation process.

**Q:** Andy Faichney commented on the inconsistencies in the MCA regarding enforcement of regulations and methods of measuring the vessels.

**A:** Paul Scotter responded to advise locally, the surveyors try to be consistent and apply the regulations in a consistent manner. If you experience any issues, get in touch with your local marine office and we will address these concerns. MCA colleagues will engage with feedback and can look at the issues again.

Paul Scotter also advised that there are new rules and regulations coming in, particularly with the measurements of catamarans that did have issues with the code which were not foreseen. There is new guidance on that for surveyors to follow and exemptions to particular vessels meeting the requirements being developed by MCA headquarters.

#### Red Diesel Issue

**Q:** Andy Faichney raised the ongoing issue regarding red diesel. He has been advised that there is nobody else left to ask in government departments to discuss the dispensation looking at tractors to use red diesel to launch fishing vessels. This is forcing fishers to use white diesel of the tractors and vessels as the council will not provide red diesel in case this is used in the tractor, which increases costs for the businesses.

**A:** Caley McIntosh will continue to push the issue with Defra and other colleagues to progress actioning the issue to attempt to issue a dispensation to allow tractors to use red diesel as part of the launching process for commercial fishing. Chris Proud will also support this action where possible.

Defra colleagues are currently following up on this issue and are contacting HM Treasury. Updates will be provided as things progress.

#### I-VMS Device Installation

**Q:** Stan Rennie commented on the threatening wording of the letters issued to fishers relating to suppliers installing I-VMS devices within 90 days of the grant funding being issued. Additionally, he advised that although his issue is now resolved, other fishers will be in a similar position that they cannot force suppliers to install the devices within the 90-day period, this is more of a contract issue between the MMO and suppliers.

**A:** Caley responded to Stan Rennie via email prior to the meeting, and his issue has now been resolved. Chris Proud advised that we will be raising the issue internally, to address the nature and tone of the letters being issued to fishers and raise installation issues internally to see if we can put pressure on suppliers to install the devices on time.

**Q:** Jenny advised that she had received a similar letter from the MMO and had responded to the MMO advising that Fulcrum are only able to install the devices 1 day every 2 months or so. This has also since been resolved with Fulcrum. However, the tone of the letter needs to be reviewed.

**A:** Caley McIntosh will be in contact with the I-VMS team and will update Stan and Jenny once the issue has been raised.