

# Meeting Notes 18<sup>th</sup> September 2024

## North East – 4b

15:00 – 17:00 MS Teams Conference Call

### Summary

<b>Meeting title</b>	NE RFG Meeting
<b>Attended participants</b>	21
<b>Start time</b>	15:00
<b>End time</b>	16:30
<b>Meeting duration</b>	1:30

### Attendees

<b>Industry</b>	<b>DEFRA</b>
Jenny Price David Wilkinson	Andrew Carroll Iain Glasgow
Richard Brewer	<b>NIFCA</b>
Brian Dunn	Vicky Rae
Jo Ackers	<b>NEIFCA</b>
Shaun	David McCandless Ralf Bublitz
<b>MMO</b>	<b>MCA</b>
Chris Proud (PMO-Chair)	Khademul Insan
Caley McIntosh (RFG)	<b>CEFAS</b>
Dan Wardle (RFG)	Emily Roebuck
Jacob Bestwick (Quota)	<b>NFFO</b>
Andy Earle (SMO)	Mike Roach
Rhiannon Lamb (MO)	<b>ZSL</b>
	Steve Long

### Agenda

- 1) Chris Proud, MMO – Welcome and Introduction
- 2) Katie James & Jacob Bestwick, MMO – Quota

- 3) Vicky Rae, NIFCA – Northumberland IFCA Update
- 4) David McCandless, NEIFCA – North Eastern IFCA Update
- 5) Mike Roach, NFFO – NFFO Reintroduction and Update
- 6) Iain Glasgow, DEFRA – EU Negotiations Discussion
- 7) Emily Roebuck, CEFAS – Clean Catch Project
- 8) Khademul Insan, MCA – MCA Q&A Session
- 9) Any other business

### **Contact Details**

Quota Team – Katie James / Jacob Bestwick

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Mike Roach – Deputy Director of the NFFO

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Charles Blyth – NFFO Safety and Training Lead

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CEFAS – Clean Catch emails

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Iain Glasgow – Defra Quota Policy and Negotiations Team

[iain.glasgow@defra.gov.uk](mailto:iain.glasgow@defra.gov.uk)

### **Recording**

The meeting was recorded and can be viewed at the following link: [North East Regional Fisheries Group \(RFG\) Meeting - 18-09-24 - YouTube](#)

#### **1. Welcome & Introduction – Chris Proud (MMO)**

Chris Proud introduced himself as Principal Marine Officer for the North East and the chair of this meeting, and thanked everyone for attending the call.

There were no comments or questions prior to the start of the first speaker.

#### **2. Quota update Q&A – Jacob Bestwick (MMO)**

The usual quota uptake presentation was pre-recorded and shared with members prior to the meeting - [North East RFG Video 20240821 165819 Meeting Recording \(youtube.com\)](#)

Jacob explained that this is an opportunity for a question-and-answer session on the recording. If anybody had not seen the video yet or wanted more information about a specific stock, Jacob offered to go over the quota updates for them.

No comments from attendees.

### **3. Northumberland IFCA update – Vicky Rae (NIFCA)**

Vicky Rae introduced herself and was sitting in for CEO Mark Southerton. She updated the group on 4 main areas of work:

#### **V-notching**

NIFCA has restarted the v-notch scheme as this was popular with fishers in the district with feedback of support with reintroducing the scheme which restarted in July 2024. Lobsters will now be solely bought from the wholesaler as this will avoid the wholesaler or fisher from losing out financially. Instead of v-notching only females, 1 male in every 10 females will be v-notched for a more balanced approach. So far this year, 1000 lobsters have been v-notched and returned across the district and there is one more drop to be completed which will be done within the next couple of weeks. This plan is to continue the scheme every year and NIFCA are currently approaching funders to ensure this.

#### **Management development for Coquet to St Mary's MCZ**

As part of NIFCA's statutory duty to ensure the conservation objectives of Marine Conservation Zones (MCZ) are continued, commercial feature and fishery interactions assessments for trawling on subtidal mud were carried out. Assessments concluded that otter trawling may be hindering the site's conservation objectives.

Current management measures in place prohibits all mobile gears except light otter trawl gear, and fishers must hold a permit with an exemption to fish there. The conditions of the exemption are that a permit return must be submitted with details on the amount of time spent in the fishing site. This information was used to inform the assessment.

The findings were discussed at a committee meeting. Options discussed at the meeting were:

Option 1: Do nothing

**Option 2: To introduce an adaptive management approach through introducing measures through permit conditions of the trawling byelaw. This is the preferred option as it can still allow trawling activity but with effort capped.**

Option 3: Prohibition of light otter trawling, therefore all mobile gears

Committee members voted for option 2 at the quarterly meeting, the next steps are to develop the conditions for capping the effort and seeking legal advice on developing or updating a byelaw. Ongoing work is also continuing for gear trials of semi-pelagic otter boards which remain off the seabed and therefore reduce the impact. The results of this could influence the management of the site.

### **Netting Byelaw Update**

NIFCA are required to review byelaws every 3 years and from the 2022 cycle it was concluded that the Fixed Engine Byelaw required an update.

The main objectives to revise and simplify the byelaw, include more netting gear types and improve the amount of information provided to improve monitoring.

There has been a call for information, consultations and a draft byelaw produced which has been reviewed by the scientific committee and presented to the authority. The byelaw is about to go to the MMO for legal review.

Current proposed changes:

- Fishers will need to have a permit to set any nets
- Only vessels under 12m can apply
- Spatial, seasonal and gear conditions attached to the permit
- Submission of monthly returns

### **New Pot Tags, 2025**

As part of Byelaw (4) Crustaceans & Molluscs permitting & Pot Limitation byelaw, commercial and recreational fishers must attach tags to all pots. Commercial fishers must replace every 3 years, at the time of purchasing their permit. 2025 tags will be issued with the permits at the beginning of 2025 and will be a new colour.

### **Questions, answers, and comments**

Q: David McCandless (NEIFCA): How are you funding the v-notching at the minute?

A: Vicky: Vicky will ask Andrew to share information with David after the meeting. Currently looking at approaching windfarm developers or sources they have heard from local authorities in the area.

David commented that although the NEIFCA haven't taken forward a similar scheme since the prohibition of berried lobster, it is still an important conservation measure.

Q: Industry member: How is the pot limitation going to be policed?

A: Vicky: The patrol vessel has a hauler onboard and will be hauling fleets of pots to look for tags on every single pot.

## **4. North Eastern IFCA update – David McCandless (NEIFCA)**

David McCandless and Ralf Bublitz providing an update on 3 new byelaws in progress.

## **Fishing in the Humber Estuary**

Fishing in Humber estuary provisions relate primarily to a protected area for eelgrass and seagrass inside spurn point. Byelaw revision to expand the area to cover the seagrass that has been seen to have outgrown the designated fixed area.

## **Shellfish Permit Byelaw**

The provisions which were consulted on with this byelaw are unchanged.

- Shellfish permit byelaw will set a maximum cap for pots within the district. The cap has stayed at 1000 pots which was decided through consultation.
- The number of commercial permits will be capped at 234 which will cover current levels plus 10% to allow some leeway.
- Number of recreational pots will be reduced from 10 to 5.

The byelaw is currently going through formal MMO quality assurance and NEIFCA have just received a stage two return from the MMO QA team which is under review.

Timelines: Quality assurance phase will carry through until end of 2024 or beginning of 2025. Existing shellfish permit holders are advised to apply for permits under the current regulation for next year.

## **Management of Beam Trawling**

Emergent fishery within the district where beam trawls were being used for king scallop. Those fishers wishing to beam trawl will require an additional permit. The byelaw was made in June 2024, although there has been a long-standing emergency byelaw in place to manage beam trawling, particularly in relation to exploitation of king scallop.

Timelines: Informal consultation completed July 2023 – June 2024. Byelaw made in June 2024. July – August 2024 formal consultation. Currently at Stage 1 Quality Assessment with the MMO QA team. Emergency byelaw in place until 17<sup>th</sup> January 2024. Intention to start implementation process from January 2025.

## **Other Updates**

Ralf added that the European Lobster Settlement Index (ELSI) is now coming to an end and October will be the final month. He also gave an overview of the other work undertaken this year including plankton tows across the coastline, observer trips, boardings, quayside sampling, and scallop dredging surveys.

Chris Proud commented that timings can be quite varied on QA process of byelaws, process has been streamlined by cannot comment any further on the success of that.

## **Questions, answers and comments**

Q: Mike Roach: Has any consideration been given to the cumulative effect of the measures under the crab and lobster FMP likely to be dropping in 2025 as well, predominantly the increase in minimum landing size (MLS) for lobster. A decrease in pot numbers and an increase in MLS will be a double hit. Are NEIFCA talking to Defra about co-aligning the work to reduce impact to industry?

A: David: It is ambitious to increase MLS within a year when FMP process is still finding its feet. NEIFCA are maintaining dialogue with Defra and implementation of the permit byelaw will be a slow, phased, process and won't be implemented until 2026.

Q: Mike: Outlined that there is a defined timeline of 2 years, and so the FMP measures will be happening next year.

A: Ralf: Mentioned that with a new government there may be delays. He then advised that once the measures have been signed off, there will be an implementation period where things could be adapted and changed.

Q: Mike gave examples of speed that FMPs can work. The crawfish measures were introduced within 3 months or less at the request of the industry. Emphasis of the importance to establish how IFCA regional management will fit into the FMP process to try and minimise impact.

A: David: NEIFCA will monitor the progress of both the byelaw and FMP and the potential implications. IFCA have some control over the implementation process and so will manage this appropriately.

Q: Mike: Commented that Seafish are currently working out the economic impacts of how an increase can be implemented. It is viewed that the NE in general will feel one of the biggest economic hits.

## **5. NFFO Reintroduction and update – Mike Roach (NFFO)**

Mike Roach introduced himself as the new deputy chief at the NFFO and reintroduced the NFFO to the group. There has been a recent change in staffing, Mike Cohen is the new Chief, taking over for Barry Deas. Mike took over as deputy in March 2023.

The Federation is aware that they have been absent from the coastline for some time, particularly post-covid, and Mike is trying to reinvigorate communications. NFFO are trialling different methods, including co-aligning work with Regional Fisheries Groups.

### **Regional Committees**

Historically, the way the NFFO works with the non-sector partners is through regional committees around the coast. Previously the NE Committee covered from the border to Humber committee.

The Committee has since been split into two: Whitby to the Humber is now referred to as the Yorkshire & Humber Committee, while Whitby to border is now the North East Committee.

**North East NFFO Chair: Richard Brewer, Whitby**



## Yorkshire & Humber NFFO Chair: Will Jenkinson, Scarborough

NFFO are still seeking a vice-chair to assist Richard as there is still a lot of work for one person. Ideally, they will be based further North for better coverage for the whole district.

Each area has a regional chair that is directly connected to the fishing industry based within the region. The chair acts as a conduit for information, speaking directly with fishermen. They meet at least once every week or with the central staff to ensure the flow of information. Mike will meet with the Regional Committees twice per year, at the front and back end of the season, to avoid peak fishing seasons.

The Federation is there to help all fishermen, although they are a membership organisation and members will generally come first, they will not turn away from anyone asking for help. This could be by pointing them in the right direction or putting them in contact with someone who can help. Mike provided his contact details to be shared which can be seen in the 'Contact Details' at the start of this document.

Other than engaging with fishermen across the coast, the NFFO feed into a lot of national policy and raise coastal issues.

## Offshore Wind

For Round 4 windfarms they have been involved in every step of process, feeding information directly to the Planning Inspectorate. Consulting on impact assessments and assess whether assumptions around commercial fisheries impacts are ranked.

Crown Estate announced new search areas for offshore wind last week. There are large areas in SW and NE being considered. The areas are shown in **figure 1** and will be looking at generating around 15 GW of offshore power.



To enable additional capacity to be operational by 2040, based on the upper end of the GW ranges set out in this report, it is expected we would only need to lease a small proportion of each area of opportunity:

- Celtic Sea (up to 12% of Area of Opportunity)
- North East (up to 15% of Area of Opportunity)
- Other areas of dispersed opportunity (up to 2%)

The map shows indicative areas of opportunity for offshore wind in the waters off England and Wales, as identified in our Whole of Seabed analysis. These will be refined to Areas of Search and ultimately to precise Project Development Areas for leasing through further consideration of all marine sectors and nature, as part of the Marine Delivery Routemap.

Next steps will be fully informed by wide stakeholder engagement. Offshore wind leasing in the waters off Northern Ireland is being considered in parallel through the work under the Offshore Renewable Energy Plan.

**Figure 1: Regional areas of potential opportunity for offshore wind in England and Wales**

Since 2022, the NFFO have been gathering evidence of fishing grounds to show the Crown Estate where the fishing industry is and to find the 'least worst' area for offshore wind developments.

There is a call for evidence out at the moment to collate data, if you are fishing in the areas indicated in **figure 1**, please contact the NFFO.

### **FMPs**

NFFO are also involved in all the FMP discussions, especially around the important Non-Quota Species (NQS) stocks, such as crab and lobster.

The crab and lobster has now been published, with 3 key recommendations happening soon:

- MLS for lobster - increase to 90mm nationally
- Ban of sale of crab direct for whelk bait - excluding processed crab
- Piloting finer scale management - a co-designed process with government officials and industry to work out how to manage your fishery.

Seafish are acting as secretariat for the working group and are looking for people interested in different working groups to feed into this finer scale management, so get in touch with Mike if you are interested.

### **Pilot Schemes**

NFFO are trialling a pilot scheme to work closer with MMO to discuss issues that are not as relevant to the MMO, for example harbour issues, MCA medicals. This will hopefully reduce overlap of discussions.

### **Safety and Training**

NFFO also have a Safety and Training lead, Charles Blyth, who can help everybody (not just NFFO members) with any safety and training issues. This can be help with getting vessel up to coding prior to MCA inspection, or challenge of any issues after coding. Charles' contact details can be found in the 'Contact Details' section.

## **6. EU Negotiations Discussion – Iain Glasgow (DEFRA)**

Iain Glasgow advised that within the next few weeks we will be starting the process of negotiating fishing opportunities, including quotas for 2025 with the EU.

ICES have published annual advice for most stocks, though there is not yet advice available for Nephrops, this is due by 31<sup>st</sup> October.

Advice suggests that for many North Sea stocks, they are doing comparatively well, however there are some stocks that fishers may be interested in that Iain would like to receive views on.

### **Farne Deeps Nephrops**



Cefas annual survey indicates that biomass has declined, but Defra are awaiting final advice. Depending on the final advice, there may be consideration of measures to avoid any further decline. If this is the case, Defra will work with stakeholders to ensure that any proposals are workable.

Q: Chris Proud: How is this data being shared with industry?

A: Iain: Data not yet published as ICES advice is not published. Once available, Defra will share the advice, and Cefas will be able to provide some further explanation behind that. Iain is wanting to flag to industry that biomass has declined and the possibility that we may need to introduce some additional measures if they are appropriate to protect the stock.

Chris commented that there have been concerns voiced by fishers about this stock and it's interesting to see that there's information corroborating that. Caley will facilitate passing on details of fishers who have raised questions to Iain.

### **Lemon Sole**

ICES advice indicates 30% cut from 2024 TAC, Iain is asked for views on how important is this stock to local interests in the NE. UK position not decided yet, in order to protect the stock Defra are minded to take that advice, but would welcome views?

Q: Mike Roach: Have you reached out the relevant POs (Producer Organisations)

A: Iain: Yes, we have and will be meeting with the NFFO again on 2<sup>nd</sup> October to discuss.

### **Northern Hake Biological stock (including North Sea)**

28% cut recommended by ICES. Comments from the offshore sector indicate that hake is a lot less prevalent on the grounds in the North Sea than it was, but stock is now returning to its previous size following a period of high recruitment.

No comments from attendees.

### **North Sea Turbot and Brill**

Both stocks will have an increase, the combined increase is going to be +19%.

No comments from attendees.

### **Other Recommended Catch Increases**

NS sole +177%

NS whiting +149%

NS plaice +14%

There is still no decision on whether to accept the full 14% increase in NS plaice yet.

No comments from attendees.

### **Reductions of Recommended Catch**

NS haddock -5%

No comments from attendees.

### **Open floor for Questions**

Q: David McCandless: Where is North Sea cod sitting?

A: Iain: Have not come to a decision yet. A small decrease has been recommended in TAC for the stock, still working out what position will be. To be determined trilaterally with EU and Norway.

Q: Richard Brewer: The prawn fishery is very sensitive to fishers on the East coast now, trouble is that the influx from the North of the area every year. we knew there is going to be a devastating effect. It is under pressure and awful lot. Very dependent fishery from smaller boats and would be a tremendous loss.

A: Iain: Have industry has seen a benefit from spatial closures under the recovery measures?

Richard: Advised that there was a benefit to start with, however, more larger boats have been drawn to the fishery. When the larger vessels move South sheltering from weather from the west, they fish off the Tyne when smaller boats can't. So, all the good work that has been done has now been undone. The fishery was improving, but now it is back to the status quo.

Chris: Advised he will pass on comments that have come into the North Shields office to Iain that corroborate Richards points. Chris also thanked Richard for speaking and emphasised the importance and value of facilitating the ability for fishers to be heard by speaking to the MMO, Defra and partner organisations.

**If you would like to speak about any of the stocks discussed or any other stocks you are interested in, please contact Iain, his information can be found in the 'Contact Details' section.**

### **7. Clean Catch Project – Emily Roebuck (CEFAS)**

Emily Roebuck, marine scientist at Cefas, provided an overview of the clean catch programme. This is a project supported by Defra and is delivered by a consortium of partners listed in the presentation.

A copy of the presentation can be found here:



Clean Catch New  
fishery partner search

Clean Catch are establishing a new mitigation trial with a new fisheries partner focusing on potentially a sensitive species group. These species include cetaceans, seals, seabirds, turtles and elasmobranchs.

They are looking for a fishery in England to work collaboratively with industry to look at mitigation methods for one or more of these sensitive species, with on-water trials to ensure the methods are practical to use.

Being a partner will involve a 2-year collaboration with Clean Catch to codesign a trial early in 2025, run the trial for 12 months and provide feedback at the end.

The closing date for expressions of interest is 20<sup>th</sup> September. The first expression of interest is to gather information on who has interest to be a partner.

Shortlisting will take place in October and Defra will make a final decision in November

Link to Expression of Interest:

[https://forms.office.com/pages/responsepage.aspx?id=DQSIkWdsW0yxEjajBLZtrQA\\_AAAAAAAAAAAO\\_VzVnlhUOE8yMVdJUUXMQjJCUVhRQ0s2OExTSEIUQS4u](https://forms.office.com/pages/responsepage.aspx?id=DQSIkWdsW0yxEjajBLZtrQA_AAAAAAAAAAAO_VzVnlhUOE8yMVdJUUXMQjJCUVhRQ0s2OExTSEIUQS4u)

For more information, visit: <https://www.cleancatchuk.com/fisherytrial/>

Steven Long advised that 20<sup>th</sup> September is a 'soft deadline', and so they are happy to extend the deadline by a week or so to allow those interested to apply. These submissions will still be considered for the fully funded programme.

## **8. MCA Q&A session – Khademul Insan (MCA)**

Khad Insan offered the opportunity for a Q&A session for any MCA related questions. Khad is a surveyor and examiner in South Shields Marine Office and is mainly involved in the surveying and inspection of all types of ships, mostly under 15m vessels and some 15-24m vessels.

Q: Pre-submitted question: 'Why do under 10s and 8s have to have a roll test? It's not like a trawler?'

A: Khan: It does not say anywhere that only a trawler should have a roll test. A roll test is basically to establish whether the vessel is seaworthy. Seaworthiness applies to all types of vessels and all sizes of vessels. A roll test and any other test is considered to be applicable to all vessels.

Q: David McCandless – Workboat code 3, where is this currently, is this finalised, what stage is it at?

A: It is in progress; consultation is nearly coming to an end. Workboats are normally delegated by MCA to an authorised organisations such as SCMS and RYA.

No further questions.

Khad advised that MCA welcome any queries from the fishing industry to the Hull Marine Office mailbox, which is monitored 24 hours a day. The email can be found in the 'Contact Details' section.

## **9. AOB**

Q: Pre-submitted question: *'MPAs And HMPAs. The information is proving hard to find on the internet. Would it be possible for the MMO to provide the appropriate vessels with pen drives like the energy sector does for their plotters?'*

A: Caley will take this question to the Marine Conservation team and Defra and provide a response to the group via email as soon as this is received.

Q: Pre-submitted question: *'Does the discard rule trump the % catch composition while towing prawn gear? If yes, could I use my 100mm trawl gear catching fish. While at the same time moving on looking for prawns.'*

A: There is a complex interaction between legislation and around catch composition, essentially Landing Obligation does trump anything else. Chris will need to seek more clarity on what the stance is when we encounter this interaction between those two pieces of legislation, as it is still open to some interpretation. An answer will be provided to the group once this is received.

## FMP Online Survey

The MMO's FMP Team are currently leading on developing three new FMPs; The Celtic Sea and Western Channel demersal FMP (that covers species such as Pollack, Cod and Nephrops), the Wrasse Complex FMP and the Black Seabream FMP. To help with the development of these FMPs, the team have created short surveys for any stakeholder with an interest in the FMPs to complete. The link to the Wrasse and Bream surveys can be found here [Wrasse and seabream views vital - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk).



Marine  
Management  
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