

FISHERIES WORKING GROUP

COMMITTEE ROOM 1, WOODHILL HOUSE, ABERDEEN

FRIDAY, 17th FEBRUARY, 2017

Present: Councillors C C Buchan (Chair); R Cassie (substitute for Councillor S Smith); A Gardiner; J Gifford (substitute for Councillor M Roy); P K Johnston, and F McRae.

Apologies: Councillors A S Buchan, M Roy, S W Smith, and M Watt.

Officers: Derek McDonald, Industry Support Executive (Rural and Maritime); Michael Bates, SSA Development Officer; Ian Hay, Project Manager East Grampian Coastal Partnership; Ian McFadden, Scottish Pelagic Producers Association; James Buchan, Scottish Seafood Association; Anna Ziarkowska, Assistant Committee Officer.

1. DECLARATION OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS

The Chair asked members if they had any interests to declare in terms of the Councillors' Code of Conduct. No interests were intimated.

2. PUBLIC SECTOR EQUALITY DUTY

In making decisions on the undernoted items of business, the Working Group **agreed**, in terms of Section 149 of the Equality Act, 2010:-

- (1) to have due regard to the need to:-
 - (a) eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation;
 - (b) advance equality of opportunity between those who share a protected characteristic and persons who do not share it; and
 - (c) foster good relations between those who share a protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
- (2) where an Equality Impact Assessment was provided, to consider its contents and take those into account when reaching their decision.

3. MINUTE OF MEETING OF 23rd SEPTEMBER 2016

The Minute of Meeting of 23rd September, 2016, had been circulated and was **agreed** as a correct record.

4. MATTERS ARISING

Derek McDonald provided the Group with a verbal update on the Training for Young Fishermen Project. It was also reported that Mr Jimmy Buchan was attending the meeting in his new capacity as part-time Business Manager of the Scottish Seafood Association.

Derek McDonald distributed a paper to the Group providing the update on the work of the North East Scotland Fisheries Local Action Group (NESFLAG).

5. UPDATE ON SCOTTISH SEAFOOD ASSOCIATION ACTIVITY BY MICHAEL BATES – SSA DEVELOPMENT OFFICER

Michael Bates, SSA Development Officer, provided the Group with an overview of the SSA work. He advised that SSA is the national representative body for the Scottish seafood processors which is committed to safeguard the viable and long-term future of the sector and the wider fishing industry. SSA supports its members by representing them on policy issues, by working in partnership with other industry bodies, through the provision of bespoke services which benefit the individual businesses and by raising awareness of the world-class excellence of Scottish seafood. Mr Bates advised that SSA provide a united voice for its members and for the wider processing sector in the policy and legislation arenas through effective dialogue, consultation, collaboration and partnership working. It was further reported that SSA achieved a world first when it became the first association of its kind to achieve group certification through the Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) Chain of Custody programme. A number of members have already received MSC Certification in order to meet the growing demand to supply seafood from sustainable sources. SSA expects to add new species to the scheme in the near future. It was observed that the cost of gaining individual certification was prohibitive for many small and medium-sized processors, but is much more affordable under the group certification scheme offered by the SSA. The impetus for group certification came in response to high demand for supplies of MSC certified seafood, particularly Scottish haddock – the mainstay of fish & chip shops and restaurants.

Mr Bates informed FWG members that well-known 'Trawlerman' Jimmy Buchan had recently been appointed as new Business Manager at SSA, as Mr Bates is taking up a new post as Technical Manager at Seafood Ecosse Ltd in Peterhead. It was reported that Mr Bates will continue to work with the SSA during a transition period to complete ongoing projects and training commitments and to ensure a smooth handover. It was also highlighted that 2017 Scottish Skipper Expo will be held at Aberdeen Exhibition and Conference Centre on 26th – 27th May and will again feature a seafood bar in association with SSA to offer visitors cooking demonstrations and tastings to promote local seafood. Mr Bates indicated that there are ongoing discussions with Liz McIntyre - new Principal and Chief Executive at NESCOL - to engage with college students at the event to provide them with a practical insight into the sector.

Mr Bates continued by discussing the 'barriers to entry' for those wishing to set up a new seafood processing business, specifically access to finance, to suitable premises and the scarcity of skilled staff. Questions then followed from members on how local processors could be supported and helped with the marketing of their products. The Group considered the potential for further collective, pro-active and innovative engagement with various partners. Given the potential opportunities arising from Brexit it was noted that a coherent approach in support of the extended fisheries supply chain – from net to plate - was essential. Aberdeenshire Council's willingness to assist via its Regeneration Strategies and Scottish Seafood Centre of Excellence Project was appreciated by SSA.

Thereafter, the Chair thanked Mr Bates for his informative update and the Group **agreed** to note the information provided in the update.

6. UPDATE ON PELAGIC PROCESSING ISSUES BY IAN MCFADDEN – SCOTTISH PELAGIC PRODUCERS ASSOCIATION

Mr Ian McFadden is Chair of the Scottish Pelagic Processors Association and provided the Group with an overview on the issues facing the pelagic processing industry, specifically in relation to the shortage of pelagic landings from Scottish vessels which is impacting adversely upon Scottish pelagic processors and which has already led to job losses. He indicated that there are five major pelagic processors in the UK, four of which are based in Aberdeenshire (one in Fraserburgh, three in Peterhead – and one on Shetland). All are major employers. It was reported that several Scottish pelagic vessels are choosing to land their catches in Norway, to the extent that less than 50% of Scottish pelagic quota is now available to domestic processors which is starving them of product and causing them to lose business.

Mr McFadden advised that Scottish Government was well aware of the issue and was committed to securing for Scottish processors a higher share of the landings arising from Scottish quota. There is, he advised, an immediate supply issue which, if not addressed urgently, could damage the long-term capacity of the Scottish pelagic processing industry. It was reported that pelagic processing sector representatives have a meeting with the Scottish Ministers on 1st of March to highlight these concerns and to seek action to increase the level of pelagic landings in Scotland.

The Group noted the importance of these concerns and **agreed** to contact the Scottish Government to urge the Cabinet Secretary to take all necessary steps to increase the level of supply of pelagic stocks to indigenous processors in the short-term as well as the longer-term – including the selective deployment of mackerel quota for 2017 which is currently unallocated (12%).

Action point 1: Write to Mr Fergus Ewing - Cabinet Secretary for the Rural Economy & Connectivity to highlight the serious supply shortage of pelagic stock.

7. EAST GRAMPIAN COASTAL PARTNERSHIP PRESENTATION BY IAN HAY - PROJECT MANGER

The Chair invited Ian Hay – Project Manager - to deliver a presentation on East Grampian Coastal Partnership (EGCP). Mr Hay provided the Group with an overview of the organisation and stated that partnership is a voluntary group of individuals, with representatives from local authorities, industry, conservation bodies, recreation and tourism groups, local residents and many others with an interest in the future wellbeing of the local coastline. It was further reported that the partnership was set up to assist in the delivery of Integrated Coastal Zone Management between Fraserburgh and St Cyrus and to help protect the natural coastal resources for future generations. Mr Hay outlined the strategic aims of the partnership which include advancing environmental protection and improvement; to promote education relating to the coastal environment; and to preserve the cultural heritage of the coast of North East of Scotland through the delivery of integrated coastal management projects and programmes and working in partnership with other bodies to achieve these aims.

Mr Hay continued by discussing the major projects of the partnership including ‘Making the Most of the Coast’; ‘Marine Spatial Planning at the regional scale’; ‘Marine Litter’ and ‘Discover East Grampian Coast website’. He indicated that the partnership is

involved in a wide range of activities including promoting local seafood and beach cleans which were very successful in recent years. Mr Hay also reported that Partnership's Business Plan for 2016 – 2018 focuses on Marine Planning Partnership, developing the Seafood trail in the North East and ensuring greater community engagement in clean beach project.

Thereafter, the Chair thanked Mr Hay for his informative update and the Group **agreed** to note the information provided.

8. BULLETIN REPORT ON DEFRA PROPOSALS TO BAN THE USE OF MICROBEADS IN COSMETICS

There had been circulated a report dated 9th February, 2017 by the Head of Economic Development which provided Members with an overview of the DEFRA proposals to ban the use of plastic microbeads in cosmetics and personal care products in the UK. The report detailed that DEFRA had issued a consultation on proposals to ban the manufacture and sale in the UK of cosmetics and personal care products containing microbeads and also to gather evidence on the extent of the environmental impacts of microbeads found in other products to inform future actions to protect the marine environment. Members were informed that consultation closes on 28th February 2017 and invited to take opportunity to provide their comments and feedback on consultation questions and the proposed response which was attached to the report.

After consideration, it was **agreed** that any comments or feedback as to the consultation should be forwarded to Derek McDonald by 28th February, 2017.

9. BULLETIN REPORT ON PROMOTING SEAFOOD CAREERS AT ABERDEEN LEARNING FESTIVAL

There had been circulated a report dated 8th February, 2017 by the Head of Economic Development which provided Members with an update on Promoting Seafood Careers at Aberdeen Learning Festival. The report detailed that annual Aberdeen Learning Festival will take place on 14th February, 2017 at AECC with a view to enable teachers from across North East Scotland to meet and engage with their pupils' prospective employers and industry sectors to enhance their awareness of skills required and potential career paths. Aberdeenshire Council had booked a stand to promote seafood careers in association with the Scottish Seafood Association.

After discussion, Members **agreed** to note the information provided in the report.

10. VERBAL UPDATE ON FISHERIES/BREXIT

Derek McDonald provided the Group with a verbal update on the potential impact of the Brexit vote on the wider fisheries industry in the North East of Scotland. Members were informed that at the last meeting of the North East Scotland Fisheries Development Partnership on 10th February, Bertie Armstrong – Chief Executive of the Scottish Fishermen's Federation, gave a presentation on the implications for the UK fishing industry describing potential challenges and opportunities in coming years. It was also reported that the House of Lords' European Union Sub-Committee has published its report on Brexit and fishing which is a very detailed piece of work.

After consideration, the Group **agreed** to note the information provided in the update.

11. VERBAL UPDATE ON SCOTTISH SEAFOOD CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE PROJECT

Derek McDonald provided the Group with a verbal update on the proposed Scottish Seafood Centre of Excellence Project. Partners include Aberdeen and Grampian Chamber of Commerce, North East Scotland College, Scottish Enterprise, Skills Development Scotland, Seafish, the Scottish Seafood Association, Scottish Fishermen's Federation, Fraserburgh harbour and local seafood businesses. Mr McDonald reported that following discussions with relevant parties, including fishing producer organisations, seafood industry representatives, public agencies and Marine Scotland, a business case assessment is to be commissioned. The procurement exercise is ongoing at the moment.

During the discussion, the Group supported the creation of a Centre of Excellence for the fisheries industry in the North East to encourage seafood sector growth in the area. Mr McDonald advised that Members will be kept informed about the progress at the next meeting of Fisheries Working Group.

After consideration, the Working Group **agreed** to note information provided in the update.

Action point 2: Scottish Seafood Centre of Excellence Project progress update to Members at future meeting.

12. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The Group discussed the apparent disconnect between the view of working fishermen and marine scientists on the reliability of data gathered to underpin fish stock assessments and in turn, quota. A new initiative is under preparation to bridge the gap.

Mr McDonald informed Members that he will provide an update on the project – Fishing into the Future - at the next meeting.

Action point 3: Fishing into the Future Project report to Members at next meeting.

13. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

To be arranged.

