

## NORTH EAST SCOTLAND FISHERIES DEVELOPMENT PARTNERSHIP

WOODHILL HOUSE, ABERDEEN, 13 NOVEMBER, 2020

**Present:**

- Aberdeenshire Council** – Councillors J Cox (Chair), Cllrs J Gifford, K Adam (as a substitute for G Reynolds) D Beagrie, C Buchan and A Kille.
- Aberdeen City Council** – Councillor C Allard
- Lunar Fish Producers’ Organisation** – R Stevenson
- Moray Council** – Cllr M Macrae and Cllr S Warren
- North and East Regional Inshore Fisheries Group** – J Mouat.
- Peterhead Port Authority** – S Brebner, P Duncan and S Paterson
- Scottish Enterprise** – I Garrett
- Scottish Fishermen’s Federation** - E Macdonald.
- Scottish Pelagic Fishermen’s Association** - I Gatt.
- Scottish Seafood Association** – J Buchan and R Scatterty
- Scottish White Fish Producers’ Association Ltd** – M Park
- Seafish** – H Duggan
- Seafood Scotland** – D Fordyce.
- Grampian Seafood Alliance** - M Clark and M Robertson.
- Members of Parliament** – D Duguid (Banff and Buchan) and R Thomson (Gordon).
- Members of the Scottish Parliament** – P Chapman and T Mason (North-East Scotland Region), S Stevenson (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) and M Watt (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine).

**Apologies:**

- Aberdeenshire Council** – Councillor G Reynolds.
- Aberdeen City Council** – Councillor J Laing.
- Aberdeen Fish Producers Organisation** – D Anderson
- Scottish Enterprise** – G Ford
- Scottish Maritime Academy (NESCoI)** – L Hope.
- Marine Scotland Science** – C Needle.
- Members of Parliament** – S Flynn (L Marwick as substitute).
- Members of the Scottish Parliament** – G Dey, J FitzPatrick, L Macdonald, J Marra, G Martin (N Burns as substitute), M McDonald, S Robison and K Stewart.

**Officers:** J Savege, G Buchanan, J Harrold, D McDonald (Aberdeenshire Council); and J Grant (Moray Council).

**Also in attendance:** Dr C Black (NHS Grampian), K Findlay (Press and Journal), C Littlejohn (NHS Grampian) and N Miller (HSE).

### 1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

## 2. PUBLIC SECTOR EQUALITY DUTY

In taking decisions on the undernoted items of business, the Partnership **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; and
- (2) to consider, where an equality impact assessment has been provided, its contents and to take those into consideration when reaching a decision.

### **\*EMERGENCY ITEM\*: HIGH INCIDENCE OF COVID-19 WITHIN THE NORTH EAST SEAFOOD PROCESSING SECTOR**

The Deputy Director of Public Health at NHS Grampian had requested the opportunity to brief members on the high incidence of Covid-19 within the local seafood processing sector as an emergency item on the agenda. The request was granted and taken before the scheduled business of the meeting. Chris Littlejohn (Deputy Director of Public Health, NHS Grampian), Dr Corri Black (Public Health Consultant, NHS Grampian) and Niall Miller (Principal Inspector, Health and Safety Executive, HSE) introduced themselves to members and presented information on confirmed CV-19 case numbers, distribution and key sectors affected, including the local seafood processing sector. Members were advised by Mr Littlejohn that a multi-agency Incident Management Team (IMT) had been convened to address concerns over the rising incidence of CV-19 cases associated with the seafood processing industry and the IMT was working closely with companies to put control measures in place. Dr Black advised that case numbers were relatively low and steady across Grampian, but that there had been a sharp rise in some parts of Aberdeenshire since 1 November 2020, principally in Fraserburgh and Peterhead, and strongly linked to seafood processing staff. The aim of the IMT was to work closely with industry to develop a better understanding of how the sector functions to help identify and manage transmission risks. Mr Miller (HSE) emphasised the importance of social distancing and urged compliance with recommended workplace control measures. After a question and answer session, the Chair thanked Mr Littlejohn, Mr Miller and Dr Black for their valuable contribution to the meeting and their efforts in support of the seafood sector.

**Action Point 1: Send contact details for Scottish Seafood Association to IMT**

## 3. MINUTE OF MEETING OF THE PARTNERSHIP OF 21 FEBRUARY, 2020

On consideration of the circulated Minute of Meeting of the Partnership of 21 February, 2020, members **approved** it as a correct record.

#### **4. MATTERS ARISING**

Three action points were carried forward and are addressed respectively in Items 8, 9 and 10 of the current Agenda.

#### **5. PRESENTATION: BREXIT: THE LATEST BY ELSPETH MACDONALD, CHIEF EXECUTIVE, SFF**

Members **noted** an oral update from Elspeth Macdonald (Chief Executive, Scottish Fishermen's Federation), which reviewed progress on numerous work strands related to Brexit including: the current state of fisheries negotiations between the EU and the UK, the operational readiness of the industry and the UK Fisheries Bill. Ms Macdonald noted that the UK has now signed framework fisheries agreements with Norway and Faroe but that bi-lateral and tri-lateral negotiations involving the UK, EU and Norway cannot commence until a post-Brexit trade deal has been agreed between the UK and EU. Ms Macdonald informed members that SFF, Seafish and Seafood Scotland are collating information as it emerges to provide advice to those within the wider fisheries industry. After a question and answer session, the Chair thanked Ms Macdonald for her contribution to the meeting.

#### **6. PRESENTATION: THE SCOTTISH SEAFOOD SECTOR THROUGH THE PANDEMIC AND BEYOND BY DONNA FORDYCE, HEAD OF SEAFOOD SCOTLAND**

Members **noted** a presentation by Donna Fordyce (Head of Seafood Scotland), which described the extensive range of work undertaken by Seafood Scotland during the CV-19 pandemic and to prepare for the end of the post-Brexit Transition Period. Seafood markets have been badly hit by the pandemic with many processors now experiencing declining sales again following the second wave of the virus. Key issues include the collapse of foodservice markets, transportation issues (reduced number of passenger flights has curtailed hold-sharing export capacity) and costs associated with making workplaces CV-19 safe, including PPE provision and regular deep cleaning. Distancing measures have led to declines in productivity and reduced profit margins. Seafood Scotland is supporting companies by providing weekly bulletins, covering Brexit preparations and CV-19, including reports from key export markets. Seafood Scotland has also organised promotional activities including online Supper Club and seafood 'MasterChef' initiatives and is embarking on a two-year project to exploit market opportunities in the UK retail sector as well as overseas. After a question and answer session, the Chair thanked Donna Fordyce for her contribution to the meeting.

**Action point 2: Information to be presented at the next meeting on the industry impact of the closure of supermarket fish counters**

**Action point 3: Update to be presented at the next meeting on future fisheries funding programmes and eligibility criteria**

## **7. PRESENTATION: UPDATE ON EXPORT HEALTH CERTIFICATION FOR SCOTTISH SEAFOOD BY JOHN GRANT, TEAM MANAGER (PUBLIC HEALTH), ABERDEENSHIRE COUNCIL**

Members **noted** an oral update by Gordon Buchanan (Service Manager Environmental Health and Trading Standards, Aberdeenshire Council) on behalf of John Grant (Team Manager, Public Health, Aberdeenshire Council) regarding the council's preparations for seafood exports service provision post-Brexit and an overview of Export Hubs, which will be operated by logistics companies with certification services provided by Certifying Officers (Official Vets) from Food Standards Scotland. Aberdeenshire Council is working with Peterhead Port Authority to create a local certification centre (not an Export Hub) to enhance capacity and operational efficiency. Officers from the council's Environmental Health Service had already inspected over 250 fishing vessels (as food premises) to meet EU seafood supply chain quality requirements. Aberdeenshire Council is still trying to establish industry intentions and the likely level of local demand for export health certification services (ie non-Hub activity). Mr Buchanan encouraged vessel owners and all seafood businesses intending to use council certification services to make immediate contact with Environmental Health so that preparatory work (eg premises inspections for attestations) can be carried out, thereby minimising delay and disruption when the new arrangements for seafood exports come into effect on 1 January 2021. After a question and answer session, the Chair thanked Gordon Buchanan for his contribution to the meeting.

## **8. BULLETIN: FUTURE PROOFING THE SEAFOOD INDUSTRY STUDY AND THE ONE SEAFOOD TRANSFORMATION PROJECT**

Members **noted** an oral update report by the Industry Sector Executive on the 'Future Proofing the Seafood Industry study and the ONE Seafood Transformation Project (STP). The former was officially launched on 30 October 2020. All NESFDP members were invited. 'Future Proofing' recommendations have been adopted by STP, a major initiative to secure >£75M investment. Further STP updates will be provided at future meetings.

## **9. BULLETIN: SCOTTISH SEAFOOD CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE (SSCE) PROJECT UPDATE**

Members **noted** an oral update report by the Industry Sector Executive on the 'Scottish Seafood Centre of Excellence Project'. The SSCE Business Case is at an advanced stage and the current iteration has been shared with UK and Scottish Governments. The final version will require to be tailored to meet the criteria, once known, for the new UK structural funding programme for the fisheries/seafood sector.

## **10. BULLETIN: RESPONSIBLE FISHING SCHEME AND FISHING VESSEL INSPECTIONS**

Members **noted** an oral update report by the Industry Sector Executive on the relationship between the 'Responsible Fishing Scheme' (RFS) and official (EU)

fishing vessel inspections carried out by Environmental Health Officers (EHOs) as part of the seafood export supply chain.

Seafish, which created RFS, and the council's EH service had both confirmed that regardless of RFS membership, all vessels would be subject to the same statutory inspection, in accordance with EU food safety law (a more stringent test than RFS).

## **11. BULLETIN: FUTURE FISHERIES MANAGEMENT IN SCOTLAND**

Members **noted** an oral update report by the Industry Sector Executive on future Fisheries Management in Scotland. Scottish Government carried out a consultation in March 2019, responses had been analysed and the Scottish Government's response to comments was published in the report.

## **12. INDUSTRY REPORTS AND ROUND TABLE ROUND-UP**

The Partnership **noted** updates from Simon Brebner (CEO, Peterhead Port Authority), who described the many challenges in keeping the fish market operational during the CV-19 pandemic. The impact on tonnage has not been as detrimental as expected, however the adverse impact on value has been considerable – around 15%. The Partnership also considered comments from Cllr Charles Buchan (Aberdeenshire Council), who noted the imminent ending of funding from DEFRA and Scottish Government for KIMO and the 'Fishing for Litter' project. Cllr Buchan appealed to members from industry to support campaigns such projects which play a critical part in supporting the reputation of the industry. The Industry Support Executive offered his assistance but advised that securing grant funds at this time for the project's continuation would be challenging - EMFF had ended, no details of the UK successor scheme were available and the Crown Estate allocation to the council for 2020/21 had been committed.

**Action point 4: Support to be provided for KIMO Fishing for Litter project**

## **13. A.O.C.B.**

There was no further business for the Partnership to note.

## **14. PROPOSED MEETING DATES IN 2021**

The Partnership **agreed** that future meetings should continue to take place virtually via Skype, unless otherwise specified on:

- Friday 19 February 2021 at 1pm,
- Friday 11 June 2021 at 1pm
- Friday 12 November 2021 at 1pm.

**Action Point 1: Send contact details for Scottish Seafood Association to CV-19 Incident Management Team**

**Action point 2: Information to be presented at the next meeting on the industry impact of the closure of supermarket fish counters**

**Action point 3: Update to be presented at the next meeting on future fisheries funding programmes and eligibility criteria**

**Action point 4: Support to be provided for KIMO Fishing for Litter project**