

FISHERIES WORKING GROUP

SKYPE MEETING

WEDNESDAY 11 December 2020

Present: Councillors I Sutherland (Chair), A Allan, C C Buchan, M Findlater, D Beagrie, P Johnston, M Roy and D Mair

Apologies: None

Officers: Derek McDonald, Industry Support Executive (Rural and Maritime); John Grant, Team Manager (Public Health), Alistair Reid, Team Manager, Economic Development & Protective Services; June Burnett and Suzanne Robertson, Business Development Executives, Jamie Wilkinson, NESFLAG Programme Co-ordinator

In attendance: Malcolm Morrison, Fisheries Policy Officer, Scottish Fishermen's Federation

1. DECLARATION OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS

There were no declarations of interest in relation to the Councillors' Code of Conduct,

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 30 SEPTEMBER 2020

The Minute was **agreed** as a correct record.

4. MATTERS ARISING

There were four action points from the last meeting, all of which were covered in the agenda.

5. PRESENTATION: OVERVIEW OF BREXIT AND FISHING BY MALCOLM MORRISON, FISHERIES POLICY OFFICER, SCOTTISH FISHERMEN'S FEDERATION

Mr Morrison opened his presentation by summarising the current state of the Trade and Cooperation Agreement being negotiated between the UK and the EU, within the context of the UK's right to manage its fisheries resources as an independent Coastal State under the

UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), noting the particular importance of fish stocks predominantly located within the UK Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) to fishermen in France, Denmark and Spain. Mr Morrison described the additional Brexit-related complexity which will be introduced to forthcoming trilateral and bilateral negotiations between the UK, EU, Norway and Faroe on reciprocal fishing opportunities within the North Sea, noting that a more extended discussion period was anticipated prior to agreement being reached, during which time reciprocal international access was likely to be denied. Mr Morrison concluded by explaining some of the pandemic-related difficulties faced by the fleet and then took questions from members on future trade in live seafood and other export-dependent species, the likely impact upon fishing activity in January 2021 and whether local vessels may need to tie up pending final agreement on international fishing opportunities. The Chair expressed his appreciation to Mr Morrison for sharing his industry insight with the Group at such a busy time for the Federation.

6. PRESENTATION: UPDATE ON EXPORT HEALTH CERTIFICATION ARRANGEMENTS IN ABERDEENSHIRE by JOHN GRANT, TEAM MANAGER, PUBLIC HEALTH AND ANIMAL HEALTH & WELFARE, ABERDEENSHIRE COUNCIL

Further to his presentation at the prior meeting of the Group, Mr Grant firstly advised that 330 fishing vessels had now registered in Aberdeenshire, of which 280 had been inspected. Work continued on preparations by Protective Services to be ready to issue Export Health Certificates (EHCs) for seafood exports to the EU – the team already provides such a service for seafood exports to eg China, Australia and the US. Arrangements were in place for EHCs to be issued from locations in Peterhead, Fraserburgh and elsewhere in Aberdeenshire, certification charges had been fixed (for an initial six-month period) and there was ongoing advisory engagement with local businesses. Regular meetings with other local authorities and Food Standards Scotland aimed to deliver uniform service delivery. An early audit by EU inspectors is to be expected in Aberdeenshire. Following questions from members on vessel inspections, EU Border Inspection Points, exports to China, staffing resources, the Chair expressed his thanks on behalf of the group to Mr Grant for his clear and informative update.

Action point 1: Update on seafood exports to be presented at a future meeting

7. PRESENTATION: BUSINESS SUPPORT IN NE ABERDEENSHIRE BY SUZANNE ROBERTSON AND JUNE BURNETT, BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT EXECUTIVES FOR BUCHAN AND BANFF & BUCHAN

Suzanne Robertson and June Burnett opened their joint presentation with a summary of their extensive private sector business experience (in seafood/engineering and banking respectively) prior to joining the council, before moving on to detail the wide array of business support they deliver on behalf of the council, ranging from start-up enterprises to large employers and including community enterprise (eg asset transfer), working closely with council colleagues in for example property and planning. Both are strongly involved in the delivery of regeneration programmes in their respective administrative areas. Their workload had risen sharply during 2020 due to their active involvement in administering pandemic-related funds provided to the council by UK and Scottish Governments over and above council resources. Both were involved in the Easing Lockdown team set up to offer a single point of contact for business enquiries. The team also comprised officers from eg Legal and Trading Standards.

The fishing and seafood sectors are key elements of the economy of Buchan and Banff & Buchan and examples were then provided on how individual businesses had been helped, before and after the onset of the pandemic and in the run up to the UK's departure from the EU, including assistance in overseas marketing, adoption of quality accreditation standards, upskilling, liaison with other business support bodies and active involvement in major transformational projects to help the wider fisheries sector grow and develop. Following members' questions on assistance for harbours, structural funds and the potential impact of Brexit upon seafood processors, the Chair thanked Suzanne Robertson and June Burnett on behalf of the group for their excellent presentation.

8. PRESENTATION: NESFLAG ACTIVITY BY JAMIE WILKINSON, NESFLAG PROGRAMME COORDINATOR

A regular contributor to FWG meetings, Jamie Wilkinson briefly introduced himself and quickly set the scene for his presentation which comprised an overview of the NESFLAG programme over the past 5 years, including the recent Coastal Communities Challenge Fund. Since launching in March 2016 with a budget (from EMFF) of £1.437M, 40 projects have been supported by NESFLAG, 28 of which had already been completed. Projects were distributed widely across the NESFLAG area, which also includes Angus. Several projects were then described including the Buchanhaven Boat Shed, East Grampian Coastal Partnership's beach litter initiative 'Turning the Plastic Tide', Whitehills Harbour improvements (davit, chill room, ice machine etc) and the Seafood Bothy in Stonehaven. Work continues to monitor and support EMFF-funded NESFLAG projects through to completion. An independent evaluation of the programme is underway. Video footage of selected projects is being captured for sharing online. Whether successor funding from UK Government sources will enable the programme to continue post-Brexit remains unclear but all Scottish FLAGs have worked collaboratively to lobby government for continued financial support. Despite the ongoing hiatus, NESFLAG has remained active, largely by managing and allocating £196k of the £400k Coastal Community funds awarded to the council in August 2020 by Crown Estate. Ten projects were selected for support from 25 applications, and it is hoped a further funding round will be held in 2021. After answering several questions from members, the Chair thanked Jamie Wilkinson for his presentation and for the work he has led to support local project activity

9. BULLETIN: FUTURE STRUCTURAL FUNDING FOR FISHERIES

Members were provided with a bulletin which described the objectives of and budget for EMFF 2014-20 and 2021-27 against which to compare UK Government funding support announcements to date for the fishing, seafood and maritime sectors in 2021/22. Budget comparisons for 2021/22 were drawn between Scotland and Spain, for whom fishing is equally important. Their coastlines are of similar length (4905km and 4964km respectively) but Spain's fisheries budget is approximately ten times that of Scotland. The bulletin suggested that in order to maximise the benefit of UK fisheries funds, support should be prioritised for large scale strategically significant projects. Members commented on the disparity between Spain and Scotland, on the benefits of a multi-annual funding programme and suggested representations be made to government, with partners

Action point 2: Representations to made to government on future fisheries funding

Action point 3: Further structural funding updates to be provided to members as and when information becomes available

10. BULLETIN: THE SOUTHERN TRENCH MARINE PROTECTED AREA

Members were provided with a bulletin setting out the background to the designation of the Southern Trench as a Marine Protected Area (MPA) on 3 December 2020 (three other MPAs and twelve Special Protection Areas were also announced at the same time). No fisheries management measures are in place in the Southern Trench at present. As a Phase 3 MPA, it is expected to be some time before any changes are proposed. Members will be kept updated.

11. VERBAL UPDATE

Brief verbal updates were provided on the Scottish Seafood Centre of Excellence project, seafood exports to China and the Review of Fisheries Working Group. On the latter point, a minimum of two virtual meetings per annum will be held until further notice.

12. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There was no other business

12. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

- Virtual meeting to be arranged

FISHERIES WORKING GROUP ACTION POINTS 11 DECEMBER 2020

NO.	Agenda Item	ACTION	ACTION OWNER
6	Export Health Certification	Action Point 1: Update on seafood exports to be presented at a future meeting	Derek McDonald
9	Future Structural Funding for Fisheries	Action Point 2: Representations to made to government on future fisheries funding	Derek McDonald
10	Verbal Updates	Action Point 3: Further structural funding updates to be provided to members as and when information becomes available	Derek McDonald
12	Date of next meeting	Action Point 4: Next meeting of group to be fixed for Spring 2021	Derek McDonald