

## FISHERIES WORKING GROUP

### MICROSOFT TEAMS MEETING

WEDNESDAY 26 MAY 2021

**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), Catriona Arthur, Healthy Lifestyle Advisor, Alistair Reid, Team Manager, Economic Development & Protective Services; June Burnett and Suzanne Robertson, Business Development Executives, Jamie Wilkinson, NESFLAG Programme Co-ordinator

**In attendance:** Kenny Coull, Fisheries Policy Officer, SWFPA and Sandy Garvock, Peterhead Mission Port Officer

#### 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: 2021 TACs by KENNY COULL, FISHERIES POLICY OFFICER, SCOTTISH WHITEFISH PRODUCERS ASSOCIATION

Mr Coull opened his presentation with an overview of SWFPA membership and services, followed by slides showing tonnage and value of landings since 2010 for pelagic, demersal and shellfish vessels in Scotland, current draft advice from ICES for main species in 2021 and

the annual cycle which underpins the process of setting Total Allowable Catches (TACs). The UK's departure from the EU has resulted in new processes for shared stocks. No agreement was reached between UK/Norway and UK/Faroe, meaning fishing vessels will be denied reciprocal access to waters in 2021. Negotiations continue between UK/EU although broad agreement has already been reached. Quota constraints seem inevitable during 2021 for several species of importance to the Scottish demersal fleet. Mr Coull concluded with a nature conservation update, summarising SWFPA's support for the creation of new Marine Protected Areas and Special Protected Areas and reserves, in consultation with the fishing industry, and the importance of investment in fisheries science and analysis to ensure TACs accurately reflect the actual abundance and (more northerly) distribution of commercial species. Mr Coull then fielded questions from members on the impact of non-agreement upon Norwegian and Faroese vessels, on pelagic TACs, quota/access swaps, the influence of NGOs, MPAs and on the science underpinning catching opportunities and how it is interpreted. The Chair then expressed members' thanks for his highly detailed and insightful presentation.

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

Further to previous presentations to the Group, Mr Grant advised that the council's Environmental Health (EH) Service had experienced very strong demand for Export Health Certificates (EHCs) since the introduction in January of the new arrangements for EU seafood exports (844 EHCs to date) with a further 203 to 'third countries' and 90 to China and Australia, making Aberdeenshire the busiest local authority for seafood exports by far. Pelagic exports figured strongly. Most demand arises from larger companies exporting full lorryloads, with the value of individual consignments often exceeding £100,000. EH staff resources – 5 certifying officers, 5 certifying support officers and 3 in administrative support - were fully stretched. The new EH office at Peterhead Port Authority was working very well. Mr Grant explained the process by which exporters obtain EHCs and noted inconsistencies were still being experienced at the EU border, though no loads certified by the council had been rejected. Mr Grant concluded by indicating that documentary checks would commence at UK Border Control Points on seafood imports from the EU in October 2021, with physical checks from 1 January 2022. Mr Grant then answered questions from members, following which the Chair expressed the group's thanks for his helpful update.

**7. JOINT PRESENTATION: THE WORK OF THE FISHERMENS MISSION IN ABERDEENSHIRE BY SUPERINTENDENT SANDY GARVOCK, PETERHEAD MISSION PORT OFFICER AND THE SEAFIT PROGRAMME BY CATRIONA ARTHUR, HEALTHY LIFESTYLE ADVISOR, ABERDEENSHIRE COUNCIL**

Mr Garvock opened the joint presentation by advising that the Fishermen's Mission, which was established 140 years ago, currently operates out of 37 offices around the UK, of which 15 are in Scotland. Its role is to provide financial, physical, medical and pastoral support to fishermen. The Mission works closely with other charities to achieve its aims. Based at the Peterhead office of the Mission, which has functioned in the town for 100 years, Mr Garvock described the range and extent of demand for the services of the Mission, currently at high levels due largely to financial worries arising from the quota-related reduction in fishing opportunities. Mr Garvock, a former fisherman himself, noted and welcomed the recent increase in the number of fishermen willing to acknowledge and discuss mental health concerns at an early stage,

which provides an opportunity to intervene positively. This is in contrast to earlier times when issues went unspoken and alcohol and substance abuse often ensued. Examples were given on the types of tangible support provided (eg grants for white goods) and also the extent to which the Mission had facilitated the vaccination of over 300 fishermen whose irregular working patterns made it difficult to fit with the usual appointment system, many of whom were international fishermen. The latter group was also adversely affected by CV-19 related travel restrictions, with their transit visas expiring but no way of returning home. Mr Garvock's presentation drew many questions and offers of help from members, along with unanimous appreciation of the vital service it provides.

The Chair then invited Catriona Arthur, Healthy Lifestyle Advisor with Live Life Aberdeenshire to present an overview of the Seafit Programme, a joint initiative involving the Seafarers Hospital Society and the Fishermen's Mission to deliver improved health and wellbeing amongst fishermen and their families following a report by the Seafarers charity in 2018. The report noted that fishing is the UK's most dangerous occupation, that work can be irregular, unpredictable and financially insecure and that fishing communities often experience high levels of deprivation but are reticent to ask for help. Ms Arthur gave examples of poor lifestyle and dietary choices often found amongst fishermen and their families. Seafit aims to strengthen communication links with fishermen and offers a wide range of accessible support and advice to help improve physical and mental wellbeing. Ms Arthur's presentation also resonated strongly with members who expressed their support and offered their assistance.

**Action point 1: Contact to be maintained with Mr Garvock and Ms Arthur and assistance offered as required**

#### **8. BULLETIN: MARINE FUND SCOTLAND (MFS)**

Members were advised of MFS, the first phase of the replacement fund for EMFF, which was launched on 20 March 2021 with a budget allocation of £14M for financial year 2021/22. The bulletin summarised the main criteria for MFS funded project which applicants will require to address. Further updates will follow as the programme progresses.

**Action Point 2: Future updates on MFS to be provided to members**

#### **9. BULLETIN: EFRA REPORT: SEAFOOD AND MEAT EXPORTS TO THE EU**

Members were provided with a bulletin summarising the main findings of the Westminster Environment Food and Rural Affairs (EFRA) Select Committee following a 'call for evidence' and investigation into the new procedures under which UK food is exported to the EU post-Brexit. The Committee was sharply critical of the asymmetrical trading arrangements between the UK and EU and vice versa (strongly favouring EU suppliers for 12 months) and on the inadequate testing of the UK's new IT export systems prior to 'going live' on 1 January 2021.

#### **10. VERBAL UPDATES**

Brief verbal updates were then provided on representations to government in relation to structural funds for fisheries, the Scottish Seafood Centre of Excellence project, the ONE Seafood Transformation Project, the forthcoming meeting of NESFDP and the review of Fisheries Working Group, under which a minimum of two virtual meetings per annum will be held until further notice.

## **11. ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

There was no other business

## **12. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

- Virtual meeting to be arranged

## **FISHERIES WORKING GROUP ACTION POINTS 26 MAY 2021**

- 1: Contact to be maintained with Mr Garvock and Ms Arthur and assistance offered as required**
- 2: Future updates on Marine Fund Scotland to be provided to members**
- 3: Date of next meeting to be arranged**