

FISHERIES WORKING GROUP

WOODHILL HOUSE, ABERDEEN

WEDNESDAY, 12 SEPTEMBER 2018

Present: Councillors I Sutherland (Chair), C C Buchan, M Findlater, S W Smith, J Gifford (substitute for Councillor A Kille); G Reynolds (substitute for Councillor A Allan); D Beagrie (substitute for Councillor M Roy)

Apologies: Councillors A Allan, P Johnston, M Roy and A Kille.

Officers: Derek McDonald, Industry Support Executive (Rural and Maritime);

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 16th May 2018

The Minute of Meeting of 16th May, 2018 had been circulated and was **agreed** as a correct record.

4. MATTERS ARISING

Derek McDonald went through the action sheet from the last meeting to provide an update on progress in respect of each point. There were no further matters arising.

5. BULLETIN: DEFRA WHITE PAPER: SUSTAINABLE FISHERIES FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS

There had been circulated a report dated 4 September 2018 by the Head of Economic Development which provided Members with an overview of the DEFRA White Paper setting out post-Brexit fisheries policy, under which the UK will seek a fairer share of fishing opportunities in UK waters for the benefit of UK coastal communities.

whilst safeguarding and enhancing the marine environment. A future Fisheries Bill would give the UK full control of its territorial waters (UK Exclusive Economic Zone: EEZ) and enable the UK to set its own fishing quotas. The white paper noted that the allocation of fishing opportunities under the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) is outdated and that the UK's share does not accurately reflect the resource in UK waters. Under the current arrangements, EU member states derive around eight times as much fish from UK waters as the UK fleet derives from EU waters. No change is proposed to the (FQA) method of allocating existing UK quota but a different process may apply to additional quota post Brexit. The White Paper contained a commitment to work with partners to manage shared fish stocks in a sustainable way, based on the best available science in which UK Government will invest. The Paper recognised that healthy fish stocks are fundamental to a prosperous fisheries sector and committed to the principle of Maximum Sustainable Yield (MSY) when setting fishing opportunities. A further extension to Marine Protected Areas is proposed around the UK coast.

The paper noted that in 2020, the UK will be negotiating in its own right with other Coastal States for fishing opportunities for 2021 and annually thereafter – but until then the UK would continue to operate within EU fisheries policy under the terms of the implementation agreement (effective from 29 March 2019). The issue of future fisheries management and compliance within UK waters was also set out in the document – there is a commitment from DEFRA to work closely with Devolved Administrations to develop a new framework for fisheries management to implement international fisheries agreements and also to develop technical monitoring technology.

Under the terms of the implementation/transition agreement, the paper noted that the 'existing body of EU regulations will continue to apply (in UK waters) until December 2020' and that the 'EU Withdrawal Act will be used to make EU law part of a new body of UK law, to be known as retained EU law. The paper returns to the role of Devolved Administrations (DA) within the UK framework in the section on international fisheries negotiations and committed to allowing DA representatives to attend Coastal State meetings. The paper stated that the 'duty of cooperation' within the UK delegation would continue (ie the consensus view will prevail) but that the UK Secretary of State reserves the right to determine final decisions.

Consideration was given to the creation of a replacement European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF) programme to support economic, environmental and social investment in the sector. Also discussed was the proposal to levy charges upon commercial fishing (eg from quota auctioning) to raise resources for fisheries science, management and compliance, and to bring recreational sea angling into the scope of fisheries management. The White Paper was the first step in developing a new fisheries policy for the UK and further consultation is expected in due course, both at UK and Scottish Government levels.

During discussion, questions arose on the future provision of the UK coastal/fisheries protection fleet and electronic vessel tracking systems, 'choke species', fisheries investment funds post-Brexit (to replace EMFF) and plans for the extension of Marine Protection Areas (MPAs).

Action point 1: Information to be sought from DEFRA and Marine Scotland on the future provision of the UK coastal/fisheries protection fleet.

6. VERBAL UPDATES

a) Marine Scotland Report: Assessing the impact of alternative fish trade arrangements post-Brexit

Members were advised of a detailed paper published in June 2018 by Marine Scotland which set out the potential impacts of Brexit upon the UK and Scottish seafood sector:

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/seafood-trade-modelling-research-project-assessing-impact-alternative-fish-trade/>

b) Provisional Scientific Advice for key fish stocks (used to set fishing opportunities in 2019)

Members were provided with a summary of the provisional scientific advice relating to the main fish stocks which had been collated by ICES, the independent body which assesses marine ecosystems and provides advice to governments and regulatory bodies. The provisional advice suggested a sharp cut in the Total Allowable Catch (TAC) for North Sea cod in 2019, and haddock to a lesser extent.

c) Seafish Quarterly Labour Survey

The Seafish Industry Authority carries out an annual labour survey of the seafood processing sector, gathering data across the UK on workforce composition, nationality, gender, age band, skill levels and types of employment contracts. Members were provided with a copy of a presentation setting out the 2018 Seafish survey findings which revealed the high dependency of the processing sector in NE Scotland upon migrant labour, particularly in businesses employing more than 100 staff and sub-sectors (eg pelagic) which tend to be more seasonal. https://www.seafish.org/media/1756896/2018_seafood_processing_sector_labour_report.pdf

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

Action point 2: Further information to be provided at next meeting on 2019 fishing opportunities and on 'choke species'.

7. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Following the meeting, members visited Whitelink Seafoods in Fraserburgh. That some whitefish species caught in Scottish waters have a quality advantage over fish caught in more southerly waters (in respect of the levels of the Anisakis parasite) arose as an issue and it was suggested that the Group use its influence to help safeguard this advantage.

Action point 3: Anisakis issue to be investigated.

8. DATE OF FUTURE MEETINGS

Dates for the 2019 meetings to be confirmed.

