

FISHERIES WORKING GROUP

WOODHILL HOUSE, ABERDEEN

WEDNESDAY, 23 JANUARY 2019

Present: Councillors I Sutherland (Chair), C C Buchan, M Findlater, S W Smith, A Kille); A Allan; M Roy; P Johnston

Apologies: None

Officer: 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 12th SEPTEMBER 2018

The Minute of the Meeting of 12th September 2018 had been circulated. Cllr Smith pointed out that the venue was incorrectly noted as Woodhill House when in fact the meeting was held at Fraserburgh Community and Sports Centre. The minute was otherwise **agreed** as a correct record.

4. MATTERS ARISING

There were three action points from the last meeting. Derek McDonald provided a progress update on each point. There were no further matters arising.

5. PRESENTATION: SUSTAINABLE FISHERIES BY JENNIFER MOUAT, THE AEGIR CONSULTANCY

The Chair introduced Jennifer Mouat, an independent fisheries consultant who specialises in delivering internationally recognised sustainability accreditation for the Scottish fisheries sector and more recently in the development of fishing gear to enhance catch selectivity. Ms Mouat started by outlining the Total Allowable Catch limits for 2019 as they currently stand (they are subject to confirmation) and noted sharp cuts in North Sea cod and haddock (32% and 31% respectively) compared to 2018, and the zero quota for West of Scotland cod which was expected to create major issues for the fleet. However there had been significant increases in the TACs for hake, saithe, monkfish and Rockall haddock.

Ms Mouat then went on to describe the work of GITAG, the Gear Innovation and Technology Advisory Group. Formed in 2015 and led by the Scottish Fishermen's Federation, the Group's aim is to develop and trial innovative fishing gear to find practical solutions to reduce the level of fish discards. The work of the Group has mostly been funded by Scottish Government and European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF). Ms Mouat described the geographic and sectoral scope of the project and some of the innovations currently under development to reduce the volume of small fish (below 'Minimum Conservation Reference Size') and non-target species ending up in the cod end. Gear trials in the flume tank in Hirtshals, Denmark had been particularly useful in fine tuning performance and precision.

Ms Mouat concluded her presentation with a summary of the Scottish Fisheries Sustainable Accreditation Group (SFSAG) and its track record in achieving stock sustainability accreditation for Scottish fisheries. Created in 2006, SFSAG delivered Marine Stewardship (MSC) accreditation for North Sea haddock in 2007. Subsequent successes include North Sea/West of Scotland saithe, North Sea cod in 2017 (hugely significant), and the addition of West of Scotland haddock, whiting, hake, plaice and Rockall haddock in 2018. The beneficial impact of the work of SFSAG was revealed by an analysis of the main whitefish species which revealed that 81% of haddock landed in the UK in 2017 was MSC accredited, while the figures for saithe, cod and whiting were 81%, 73% and 73% respectively.

Questions were asked on the marine science underpinning stock assessments, on the technical details of innovative gear under GITAG and on potential fisheries impacts posed by the proposed Southern Trench Marine Protected Area (off the north Aberdeenshire coast). The Chair thanked Ms Mouat for her excellent presentation.

Action point 1: Derek McDonald to forward supplementary information from Ms Mouat to members.

Action point 2: Derek McDonald to circulate presentation slides

6. NESFLAG PROGRAMME UPDATE REPORT

There had been circulated a NESFLAG update report dated January 2019 by Jamie Wilkinson, NESFLAG Coordinator which set out the background to NESFLAG programme, its budget and the timeline for its completion (December 2020). It was noted that the budget for North Aberdeenshire and for Angus was now on the verge of being fully committed but that £120,000 remained in the pot for South Aberdeenshire. The report included details of the 22 projects already approved. Questions arose from members on the likelihood of unspent funds from elsewhere in Scotland being made available to NESFLAG (unlikely) and on project cashflow challenges for applicants lacking financial wherewithal to incur and settle project expenditure prior to making claims (which are paid in arrears by Marine Scotland on proof of payment). Members will be kept informed of progress of the NESFLAG programme at future meetings. Further details are available at <http://nesflag.org.uk/>

7. BULLETIN: ANISAKIS

There had been circulated a report dated 14 January 2019 by the Head of Economic Development which provided Members with an update on the issue of the Anisakis parasite in whitefish species. The Managing Director of Whitelink Seafoods Ltd had explained during a visit by FWG on 12 September 2018 to the factory that whitefish caught in Scottish waters enjoyed a quality advantage over the same species caught in more southerly waters in that levels of parasitism were significantly lower and that steps should be taken to preserve that natural advantage. The issue had also been raised at the NE Scotland Fisheries Development Partnership meeting in Peterhead on 2 November. Mr Stewart Stevenson MSP was present and undertook to raise the matter with Mr Ewing, Cabinet Secretary for the Rural Economy.

On 26 November 2018 a letter arrived from Mr Stevenson, attached to a letter from Mr Ewing which set out the Scottish Government's view on Anisakis - that the population density of marine mammals was the principal driver and that onboard treatment of fish offal before discharge at sea would not be cost-effective in reducing Anisakis levels.

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

8. BULLETIN: FISHERIES PROTECTION FLEET

There had been circulated a report dated 14 January 2019 by the Head of Economic Development which provided Members with an update on correspondence received from Marine Scotland on the issue of the adequacy of the fisheries protection fleet post-Brexit. No response had been received from DEFRA.

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

9. BULLETIN: SCOTTISH SEAFOOD ASSOCIATION UPDATE

There had been circulated a report dated 14 January 2019 by the Head of Economic Development which provided Members with an update on the progress being made by the Scottish Seafood Association (SSA), most notably on the launch in December 2018 of the NESFLAG-funded Seafood Industry Workplace Ready scheme, a two-week training programme free of charge to trainees to help them prepare for a career in the seafood industry. Members were encouraged to disseminate news of this new training opportunity.

<https://www.scottishseafoodassociation.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/Introduction-to-Fish-Processing-6.12.18.pdf>

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

10. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Derek McDonald provided a brief verbal update on the proposed Southern Trench MPA, on the recent Seafish Information Note on NE Atlantic Mackerel and on the Seafish Briefing Paper on business rates for fish processors in NE Scotland, dated November 2018.

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

Action point 3: Derek McDonald to circulate links to enable Members to obtain further information on the above.

8. DATE OF 2019 MEETINGS

- 10am on 15 May 2019 in Peterhead (venue and site visit tbc)
- 10am on 11 September 2019 in Banff/Macduff (tbc)

