

Kent & Essex Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority

MINUTES of a meeting of the Authority held in the Council Chamber, Chelmsford City Council, Duke Street, Chelmsford, Essex on Tuesday 14 June 2022 at 10.20am

Present: Cllr J Lamb (Southend BC), Mr J Nichols (MMO), Mr J Rowley (MMO), Mr R Turner (MMO), Cllr J Fleming (ECC), Cllr H Tejan (Medway Council), Mr E Hannam (MMO), Mr P Wexham (MMO), Cllr T Hills (KCC), Cllr A Goggin (ECC),

Apologies: Cllr N Collor (KCC), Ms T Ferry (MMO), Cllr M Coxshall (Thurrock Council), Cllr L Parfitt-Reid (KCC), Cllr M Skeels (ECC), Mrs E Gilson (MMO), Mr A Baker (NE), Mr A Oliver (Andrew, Jackson Solicitors)

In Attendance: Mr J Cook (Clerk, KCC), Dr W Wright (Chief Fishery Officer), Mr D Bailey (Assistant Chief IFC Officer), Mrs D O'Shea (Office Manager), Mrs K Woods (Admin Assistant)

DECLARATION OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS (A1)

The Chairman requested Members to declare any interests on the Agenda item prior to it being dealt with and advised that those with a disclosable Pecuniary Interests and Other Significant Interests may not vote on that Agenda item. The Chairman reminded Members that they could declare an interest either at this time or prior to the agenda item being discussed.

Mr Turner declared a personal interest in the cockle fishery as a member of ROFF
Mr Wexham declared a personal interest as a member of the Leigh Port Partnership Board

Prior to the meeting Mrs Gilson had declared a disclosable pecuniary interest and would therefore not be attending the meeting.

Laid around the table:

- Letter from Thames Estuary Fishermens Association
- Email from Richard Eves
- Letter from Wayne Brewster

Exempt items

MOTION TO EXCLUDE PRESS AND PUBLIC EXEMPT ITEMS

That under Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972 that the public be excluded for the following business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraphs 3 and 5 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act.

Members were provided with a summary and evaluation of Consultation 1 options, together with legal advice received from the IFCA's legal advisor relating to the actions open to Members.

12:30 Meeting ended

Cllr Goggin left

MINUTES of a meeting of the Authority held in the Council Chamber, Chelmsford City Council, Duke Street, Chelmsford, Essex on Tuesday 14 June 2022 at 13.15pm

Present: Cllr J Lamb (Southend BC), Mr J Nichols (MMO), Mr J Rowley (MMO), Mr R Turner (MMO), Cllr J Fleming (ECC), Cllr H Tejan (Medway Council), Mr E Hannam (MMO), Mr P Wexham (MMO), Cllr T Hills (KCC)

Apologies: Cllr N Collor (KCC), Ms T Ferry (MMO), Cllr M Coxshall (Thurrock Council), Cllr L Parfitt-Reid (KCC), Cllr M Skeels (ECC), Mrs E Gilson (MMO), Mr A Baker (NE), Mr A Oliver (Andrew, Jackson Solicitors), Cllr A Goggin (ECC),

In Attendance: Mr J Cook (Clerk, KCC), Dr W Wright (Chief Fishery Officer), Mr D Bailey (Assistant Chief IFC Officer), Mrs D O'Shea (Office Manager), Mrs K Woods (Admin Assistant)

Members of the Public: Mr A Rattley, Mr A Lengden, Mr J Lengden, Mr L Bates, Mr J Bates, Mr A Lawrence, Mr S Dell, Mr J Sedgwick, Mr T Sedgwick, Mr R Toalson, Mr M Fossett, Mr T Barnes, Mr J Joseph, Mr C Deal, Mr M Browne, Mr M Meddle, Mr S Meddle, Mr G Osborne, Mr R Ashwood, Mr J Elbra, Mr J wood, Mr D Johnson, Mr A Mazirel, Mr B Walpole, Mr A Martin, Mr S Ward, Mr C Marsh, Mr R Foad, Mr A Martin, Mr J Gilson, Mr M Smith, Mr S Ollett

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Prior to the meeting Mrs Gilson had declared a disclosable pecuniary interest and would therefore not be attending the meeting.

The Chairman welcomed members of the fishing industry that had come to the meeting. He informed them than names of those who wished to speak on particular agenda items had been provided to Members. Officers would present their report to Members who would then have the opportunity to debate and ask questions of officers. Stakeholders that had asked to speak would then address Members for up to 2 minutes each on the particular agenda item they had expressed an interest in. Following this, Members would vote on the relevant agenda item.

13. CONSULTATION 1 SUMMARY (B2)

The CFO informed Members that consultation 1 had run from 25 March 2022 to 9 May 2022. An oral evidence hearing had also been held on 20 and 21 April which was attended by 14 people. In total, 342 emails and 208 e-bulletins had been sent to stakeholders and 197 copies of the questionnaire sent and made available on the website. The engagement seemed to work well, and the CFO wished to record his thanks to the Members of the IFCA who had spent two days at the oral evidence hearings. Members were advised that officers intended to bring forward the start of the next consultation period (consultation 2) by 10 days to begin on 22 July 2022 and end on 19 September 2022. They also intended to introduce three days at the beginning of this consultation period (27 to 29 July) for stakeholders to arrange to talk to the CFO and ACFO if they required more information or explanation on the consultation document. A report would be provided by the LSCO which would review the environmental impacts of using a hydraulic suction dredge to harvest cockles. This would be made available to Members for their Special Authority meeting on 6 & 7 July and to the public via the IFCA website following that meeting.

In respect of the main headlines from Consultation 1, Members were informed that:

- most that responded thought the vision was good, although a significant number of those who worked in the current TECFO thought it should reflect the sustainable nature of the current Regulating Order.
- No responses objected to the development of a Regulating Order
- There was support from all stakeholders for some type of small-scale fishery outside a new Regulating Order. However, the trial received less support from those not in the current cockle industry.

In respect of the options provided within consultation 1, Members were advised that:

- ARUBA received minimal support. The hand raking element was supported by a handful of replies however many replies contained very strong objections to this proposal.
- GRENADA had some minimal support, but a significant number of comments reflected that the number of permits issued would be too low and exclusive.
- CAYMAN had a small minority of support, mainly from stakeholders based in the Wash. Responses wanting this option strongly encouraged the issuing of 28 licences.
- JAMAICA was one of the most strongly supported options especially by fishermen who didn't currently work in the TECFO fishery and by some fishermen who worked in the current permit fishery.
- The other frameworks with a significant amount of support were the BERMUDA and HAITI options, which maintained the current TECFO boundaries. Although there was less support for either a small-scale trial or a suction dredge only fishery, there was a very significant amount of support for some type of small-scale permit fishery outside the current regulating order boundary building on the current permit byelaw legislation.
- The vast majority of replies did not support an increase in issuing more licences in a new regulating order; instead, the large majority of both current licence

holders, permit holders and inshore fishers currently not working in the cockle fishery supported keeping the number of licences issued to 14

Members **APPROVED** the actions taken by officers and **NOTED** this report

14. AGREEING A FINAL VISION STATEMENT AND EVALUATION CRITERIA TO USE IN THE PROCESS OF DEVELOPING FUTURE COCKLE FISHERY MANAGEMENT (B3)

Consultation 1 had asked for feedback on the vision statement and evaluation criteria Members had considered at their previous meeting. Members were advised that creating a vision which was clearly understood and agreed with gave a clear purpose to future decisions. Members were reminded that the vision statement consulted on was:

"KEIFCA will seek to sustainably manage the cockle fisheries and wider ecosystem in KEIFCA district and support a viable cockle industry, recognising its important long-term contribution to coastal communities and providing skilled employment."

Members were provided with details of the comments made in consultation 1 responses for their information. Most comments felt that the proposed wording captured the key issues considered important, however a large number of responses wanted the vision to reflect the long term stability and success of the TECFO cockle fishery. The CFO reminded Members that the vision statement should aim to encapsulate the cockle fishery across the district, not just within the TECFO. As a result of the responses from the consultation document, officers had drafted an amended version of the vision statement

"KEIFCA will seek to maintain both sustainable cockle fisheries in the KEIFCA district as well as the wider ecosystem it relies on. Supporting a viable local cockle industry, recognising its important long-term contribution to coastal communities, and providing skilled employment."

A Member suggested that the amended version be altered to read:

*"KEIFCA will seek to maintain both sustainable cockle fisheries in the KEIFCA district as well as the wider ecosystem it relies on; **through this, support** a viable local cockle industry, recognising its important long-term contribution to coastal communities, and providing skilled employment."*

The Chairman invited Mr Rattley to address Members in respect of this agenda item:

Mr Rattley addressed Members as follows:

I am speaking on behalf of the Thames Estuary Fisherman's Association and its members. We as joint guardians with the management of the cockle fisheries, sincerely believe over the past 100 years or so we have evolved to have the best managed and sustainable cockle fisheries anywhere in the world and feel that the evaluation and sustainability is always foremost in all of our actions. On this premise we would support fully the vision developed by stakeholders no 3 in your papers as we feel this captures the past the present and the future and will continue to build for many generations to

come. We would therefore ask that you vote for this option as the preferred vision statement

In response to a question from a Member whether the vision statement could be adjusted to encompass these comments, the CFO advised that all the options provided within the report had the same general themes. Two had been drafted by the IFCA, four by stakeholders. From an officer perspective something shorter and pithier had an advantage.

One Member commented that a mission statement should be punchy as the effect otherwise could be diluted.

The Chair put the options to a vote and the Authority **APPROVED** option 2 (as amended)

Members were provided with details of the comments made in consultation 1 responses regarding the evaluation criteria for their information. The CFO advised that less comments were received regarding the evaluation criteria. Most were positive, although some felt it was too complex and time consuming.

Members **APPROVED** the wording of the evaluation criteria

15. SMALL SCALE TRIAL FEEDBACK AND 2022 PERMITTED COCKLE FISHERY MANAGEMENT (B4)

The CFO advised Members that following feedback from the Listening Phase, Consultation 1 had outlined a proposed trial for a small-scale fishery. The aim was to explore the feasibility of creating a fishery that could be more easily accessed by the local inshore fleet to provide another form of income during the summer. Officers would use the exemption mechanism within the current byelaw to close the fishery in 2022 and allow six derogations to trial small scale fishing gear and operations. Fishers would be allowed to sell their catch. Feedback from Consultation 1 showed that although most backed a small-scale fishery, the majority view was that a trial wouldn't work. Of those who expressed an interest there was mixed support on availability to take part. Members were reminded that the Listening Phase had said there were too many boats fishing for too many cockles in a short space of time. Respondents to consultation 1 had asked that a smaller quantity of cockles were landed, in the region of 1-6 tonnes per trip. Some wanted the boat size to be under 10m, others that it would make no difference as the quantity landed would not be changed dependent on boat size. Officers had considered the responses from the consultations with regard to continuing with plans for a small-scale trial. Members were advised that the current CFFPB provided for two categories of permit, category 1 and 2. The Byelaw also included a provision to reduce the catch by half. If this provision was used then a category 1 permit would land 6.8m³ (6 tonnes) per trip rather than 13.6m³ and a category 2 permit would land 1.7m³ (1.5 tonnes) per trip in multiples of two trips rather than 3.4m³. The current Byelaw gave flexibility which appeared to match most of what stakeholders had requested within the consultation. The CFO advised Members that he suggested they consider adapting and amending the current permit byelaw for the 2022 season, then look at other flexibilities to bring in in 2023.

Members were informed that the TECFO was due to close on 7 October 2022 and the permit fishery would open on 10 October 2022. It was proposed that the tonnage for category 1 permits was reduced to 6 tonnes per trip and for category 2 permits to 1.5 tonnes per trip. Either category would not be restricted to using suction dredges as the existing byelaw did not specify the use of any particular type of gear. For the 2022 fishery 25 category 1 permits and 1 category 2 permit had been applied for. This would result in a fleet trip of 141 tonnes. It was suggested that the category 2 permit be allowed to start to fish 24 hours before category 1 permit vessels to allow the boat to trial gear not used before.

In response to a question from Members, the ACFO confirmed that under the current Byelaw anyone could apply for either category, although that application had to be made by 31 March each year, before surveys were carried out.

A Member noted that the recommendation related only to the 2022 season and requested that it be amended to allow consultation to be made on how the byelaw could be adapted in the future.

The Chairman invited Mr Rattley to address Members in respect of this agenda item: Mr Rattley addressed Members as follows:

It has been evident throughout the 49 responses that trials for the small scale fishery have not been adopted through this part of the consultation. The worrying aspect of this is that the majority of the local fishing fleet that could have participated in this fishery over the many years have not understood they were able to be involved, this is worrying that a local fishery is very misunderstood by its local incumbents and shows very poor engagement from the IFCA although not intentional to the industry to ensure that all are included. The part that comes across very strongly is the financial costs, all fishing effort has a cost element and investment needs, if the initial commitment is not there to invest then it will never be successful for the fishers. This fishery has the potential if correctly managed and farmed on a small scale IE: limited TAC and Limited vessels to be very successful. The majority of the local boats that want to enter this fishery are just wanting to supplement incomes when other fishing is poor or they are catching cockles as a by-product. Nomadic vessels from outside of the local area want to come and dredge in this fishery yet do not support dredging in their own fishery that is poorly managed and virtually collapsed due to poor management, we as guardians of our fisheries along with the management cannot allow this to happen in this fishery. We have been approached if we would have any objections to the 1 category 2 vessel that has applied to work this fishery be allowed to start 24 hours before the rest of the fleet, in principal we have no objection to this but seek assurance that this will not set precedence in the future for this fishery and that it is a one off to allow a younger fisher to make sure his equipment is working efficiently. Maybe it would be a good idea for an officer to be on board with him. For clarity that is the category 2 permit fisher starts on the Sunday 24 hours before the main participants. We support the management of this fishery for this year.

Members **APPROVED:**

- i. amending the current Cockle Fishery Flexible Permit Byelaw as described in the report;
- ii. opening the 2022 cockle fishery rather than running a small-scale trial as outlined in Consultation 1; and

- iii. including in consultation 2 a request for views and opinions on the future development of running the fishery

In respect of the recommended management of the 2022 permit fishery, the ACFO advised that Area 7 only would be open to be fished following surveys that had taken place earlier in the year. The Fishery would open on 10 October 2022 at 0900 and close on 14 October 2022 at 1200. Category 1 vessels would be permitted to undertake three trips and category two vessels, six. The TAC was set at 420 tonnes

Mr Rattley asked Members if it were possible to allow the start date of the category 2 permit holder to be 9 October and for the category 1 permit holders start date to remain at 10 October.

Members **APPROVED:**

- i. The provision contained within the byelaw to reduce the permitted landing tonnage by half would be implemented for the 2022 fishery;
- ii. The Total Allowable Catch (TAC) would be set at 420 tonnes which based upon the number of permits being applied for being 26, results in, for category 1 permits, 3 trips per vessel of a maximum volume of 6.8m³, and for the category 2 permit, 6 trips of 1.75m³;
- iii. All areas other than Area 7 would be closed; and
- iv. The fishery would open on Sunday 9th October 2022 for category 2 permit holders and on Monday 10th October 2022 for category 1 permit holders and would close on Friday 14th October. Fishing will be permitted between 0900 on the Sunday until 1200 on the Friday for category 2 permit holders and between 0900 on the Monday until 1200 on the Friday for category 1 permit holders.

16. FRAMEWORK OPTIONS TO TAKE THROUGH TO CONSULTATION 2 (B5)

The CFO informed Members that a number of new options had been proposed in the feedback from Consultation 2. The consultation had helped to achieve consensus on where people agreed and where there were issues. Officers had developed a detailed report of each of the options which had been provided to them with their papers – Results of Consultation 1 – Management Options. There had been significant support to develop a new Regulating Order for the main cockle beds with a permit byelaw to be used to manage the beds outside the area.

Consultation 2 would explore the different methods, systems or criteria that the Authority might use to manage, limit or control access to a specific cockle management area. At the end of this step in the process the Authority would agree the final framework model and access arrangements/ criteria to develop further and move into the technical development phase.

In respect of the amendments to the consulted options. Members were advised:

Aruba – New Aruba - this had been altered to amend the number of licences from 15 to 20 to 14 to 20 and to change the small-scale trial to adapting/ changing the permit byelaw to make it fit for purpose for a small-scale fishery

Haiti – New Haiti - this had been altered to amend the number of licences from 15 to 20 to 14 to 20 and to change the small-scale trial to adapting/ changing the permit byelaw to make it fit for purpose for a small-scale fishery

Jamaica – New Jamaica - this had been altered to amend the number of licences from 15 to 20 to 14 to 20 and to change the small-scale trial to adapting/ changing the permit byelaw to make it fit for purpose for a small-scale fishery

Bermuda – New Bermuda - this had been altered to amend the number of licences from 15 to 20 to 14 fixed licences and to change the small-scale trial to adapting/ changing the permit byelaw to make it fit for purpose for a small-scale fishery. Members were reminded that feedback from the consultation was that a fixed 14 licenses would maintain what was currently in place.

The CFO explained the process to take forward a maximum of three options from the seven suggested framework options

Members would be required to decide if they wished to consider options that included a small-scale fishery or options that were suction dredge only. Members would then choose which of the remaining options to take through to the Consultation 2 process. Taking into account the Authority members comments in selecting the options in the first place and the feedback from Consultation 1, officers had divided this step into two parts; the first part consisting of two recommended options and the second a choice between the remaining options or an agreement just to take two options into the Consultation 2 stage.

VOTE 1

Choosing between two types of options

- Options that include a small-scale fishery
- Options that are suction dredge only and don't include a small-scale fishery

Members were informed that the overwhelming feedback from both oral and written evidence, from across all stakeholders supported the developing of small scale cockle fishery and suction dredge fishery options (NEW JAMACIA, NEW HAITI, NEW BERMUDA, ARUBA, ARUBA+ CAYMAN) rather than suction dredge only options (CAYMAN and CAYMAN (28)).

It was recommended that the Authority voted for suction dredge and small-scale framework options, which would mean the CAYMAN and the CAYMAN 28 outline frameworks would be discarded from the process.

VOTE 2

Part 1 - Choosing which options to take through to Consultation 2 process

Of the five remaining options it was recommended that two basic frameworks (NEW JAMAICA and NEW HAITI) were taken through to Consultation 2 to develop further. These options were strongly supported by Members when agreeing the options to consult on and captured a significant amount of the suggestions and comments from stakeholders from the oral and written consultations.

Part 2 – Members choose between the remaining options or an agreement just to take 2 options into the Consultation 2 stage

The report that laid out how the whole process would run provided to Members at the November 2021 Authority meeting suggested that three options would be taken through to the next step of the process. The remaining options were either very specific, narrowing down future flexibility or received a lot less support from a broad range of stakeholders during consultation process. Authority members were asked to discuss and review the remaining options (NEW BERMUDA, ARUBA+CAYMAN and ARUBA) and either vote for their preferred framework or to vote to only carry 2 frameworks through to the next stage.

The Chairman invited those stakeholders who had applied to address Members to make their comments:

Statements made to Members by these stakeholders have been written verbatim within these minutes

Mr J Bates

Agree that vote 1 should discard the options as they were not viable. With regard to vote 2, part 1, New Jamaica could have a long term detrimental impact on the main TECFO fishery as it would create a more concentrated fishing effort on the other areas. The importance of areas 11, 13 and 15 should not be overlooked. There were times when the TECFO fishery relied on these grounds to make a living. These areas were vital to avoid concentration of fishing in other areas to maintain sustainability in the Thames fishery. These were removed if you move forward with the New Jamaica option. We only have 38 days of work this year from our boats and one of these was from area 15. In our recent meeting Dominic said it was possible we would be able to make more trips in area 15 if stocks allowed, however the total number of fishing trips within the TECFO would not be changed. This is to allow the opportunity to relieve the pressure off areas 5 and 6 and to ensure sustainability in future seasons. This completely contradicts the reasoning behind the Jamaica option. The officers state Jamaica was one of the most strongly supported options especially by fishermen who didn't currently work in the TECFO fishery as well as some fishermen that worked in the current permit fishery. But out of the 49 papers returned to the IFCA, only 9 papers supported the Jamaica option. The document feels quite manipulative in the way it ensures New Jamaica is voted through even the options in vote 2, part 2, its there as if implying it would already have been passed

For vote 2, part 2 new Bermuda is the only clear option that has a proven track record reinforced by MSC accreditation. The officers' report says the New Bermuda would limit opportunity. This is strictly untrue as with the current Regulating Order the Authority have had the opportunity to increase the amount of licences issued if the TAC allowed. Surely this could be included in any new Regulating Order. The New Bermuda option had overwhelming support in the submissions to date yet is has been hidden within a vote of various other terrible options including hand raking. It is currently one of four options you can vote for rather than the existing yes/no option. Due to a tremendous amount of work from the Authority and Industry we have achieved one of the most sustainable and innovative fisheries in the world. This is not a stagnant fishery requiring an overhaul but rather a renovation in its current state would be a huge achievement.

Mr L Bates

Safeguarding the MSC accreditation of the Thames cockle fishery should be a top priority for every person in this room given that the entire world is now awake to the sobering issue of environmental sustainability. Some of the new and experimental changes proposed today seem irrational and risk blowing the accreditation apart. We took a huge leap forward when attaining this accreditation so let's put our names to safeguarding its success and building on what we have already achieved. I believe voting for the New Bermuda option gives an opportunity to do this. I must also point out that maintaining the TECFO in its current form is an exciting proposition for our local coastal communities. The majority of the licence holders continue to invest locally, provide training, quality jobs as well as creating new opportunities for local people and businesses. A stable framework such as Bermuda builds confidence that allows this to continue for many many years into the future

Mr J Lengden

In all of the frameworks put forward in consultation 1 there is a sentence that reads, "Authority members concluded that a large increase in suction dredgers could have a significant negative impact on the long-term sustainability of the Thames cockle fishery" The New Jamaica option significantly reduces the size of the regulated fishery area and in turn increases the impact of the suction dredgers who would be confined to a smaller area.

Areas 10 and 14 are equally viable for the permit fishery to fish.

It is a common misconception by the inshore fleet that these areas are within the current regulated area and closed to them.

The new Jamaica option takes an unnecessary leap from not opening areas 10 and 14 for the inshore fleet, to taking important fishing grounds away from the current TECFO fleet.

The new Jamaica option will not benefit the local fleet but would benefit the wash fleet. The new Bermuda option is an option that has been created by the fisheries officers and the current TECFO fleet, both experts in their fields. The New Bermuda option safeguards our future and the future of the cockle industry. It looks at what has been created so far and looks to include local fishers in the permit fishery in a better way moving forward. Limiting the amount of licenses to 14 is widely supported not only by the cockle industry but also by the Thames fisherman who recognise that all fishing activities within the Thames affect each other.

The New Bermuda option has sustainability at its core as did the original regulating order 30 years ago.

Mr A Lawrence

For 27 years the TECFO has been and is now one of the most successful cockle fisheries in the world, with MSC accreditation. Which is gold standard for all sustainable fisheries. In the evaluation criteria written to outline the look of this new fishery, you have described the existing fishing we already have today, so why are we here today to discuss five options. When there is only one option to choose which is the new Bermuda. The other four are not fit for purpose, if you have read and understood these options, you will understand what I mean.

Why are these options being considered when it appears that only a minority have suggested the other options? Why aren't the majority being heard?

It is the current TECFO and the local fisherman that have all agreed that the TECFO works and should remain as it is.

As long as there is a small-scale permit fishery for the local boats to supplement their income during periods when other species are harder to catch.

I will finish off by saying that in the evaluation criteria it doesn't mention visiting boats. Are you aware of the current situation in the wash fishery, where over exploitation and bad management has resulted in the sustainability of the fishery to collapse? Is this how you want our fishery to go?

Mr S Dell

New Jamaica Option:

The Jamaica option shows a complete lack of understanding about how the fishery has worked for the last 50 years.

It is not by chance that the current regulating order covers the area that it does.

The grounds that would be outside the new regulated area are crucial to the fishery.

The practice of taking landings made from these areas from the TAC has taken pressure off the main beds and has helped ensure stocks for the future.

Cockles only fall on these grounds infrequently and in no predictable manner and do not survive long.

But these stocks have, on occasion, been invaluable.

The reduced area will put even more strain on the main beds and an increase in license numbers will lead to reduced profitability for the existing industry. This would be disastrous.

New Aruba:

Hand raking has not been practiced in the Thames since 1970. Suction dredging was introduced 1968 because cockle stock densities were reducing so much that hand raking was becoming unviable.

All this was well documented at the time. Stock densities have never returned to the levels that made hand raking practical.

Suction dredging made the fishery viable once again and has proven to be successful and sustainable for the last 52 years!

The industry cannot afford to lose areas 1, 2 and 3 as they contribute to the TAC and give us some where to work in poor weather.

Areas 1 and 2 incorporate bathing beaches, boat moorings and support bait digging.

Area 3 incorporates a bathing beach but is also MOD land, which they do exclude us from on occasion. Etc.....

Again an increase in license numbers would be very BAD.

Aruba and Caymen option:

Would mean the end for the Thames cockle industry as the enlarged area offers no significant increase in the amount of stock and the resulting reduction in income would make cockle fishing unviable.

New Haiti option:

Right area but any increase in license numbers would be disastrous for the existing industry.

New Bermuda option:

The only option presented that should be considered! It is the most similar to what we have now. A system that is tried and tested, is widely acknowledged as successful and is independently verified to be sustainable. If it ain't broke!

Mr J Sedgwick

Everyone wants a cockle licence. However, if that were the case we wouldn't be here now as the grounds would be ruined and the vessel turnover would be poor with no investment and unsafe working practices. The current fishery is the most successful in Europe, MSC accredited and this is due to the management and enforcement. If it was self-management it wouldn't have survived. The Wash was poorly managed and look what happened. I was told that the local boats went to the Wash and why shouldn't outside boats come and fish the TECFO. Well you can't just go to the Wash now and catch shrimps, you need a track record. Anyone who went cockling had to sign their vessel over to gain a permit, so I don't know how that worked. Everyone thinks they can go and catch cockles but you must be safe you just can't put a tonne of cockles on your deck. Any permit should suit the boat, stability books, roll test etc. The current fishery is very safe, they invest heavily on safety. The CMZ byelaw needs to address the number of licences and permits, it can't be a free for all as it is now. Kent & Essex needs to try hard to open areas so there are other places to go fishing. VMS and electronic log books on all vessels working within the district should be compulsory and therefore make it safer and easier to manage and catches could be monitored. As far as the options go Cayman and Cayman 28 are not in anyone's interest and should be discarded. Personally as an outside permit holder I like the New Jamaica option as it gives us more grounds, however I feel the Thames fleet should stick to 14 as it works and has proved very successful. If these can't go through then maybe the New Bermuda should stay and the IFCA help us to look for grounds and actively open up grounds so that we can go and search for cockles. Doing a trial is very expensive and hard to establish whether successful and hand raking on the coast, I'm on the RNLI at Southend and we have enough trouble with calls from people stuck in the mud without another 30 vessels with people running around blasting cockles everywhere.

Mr A Rattley

We are disappointed to see so few Authority members present considering the importance of today's votes.

On behalf of the 14 licence holders, we have serious concerns that the options being put forward for voting today seem to be of a conflicting nature and not a true reflection of the 49 responses received or of the video sessions that took place. We agree with vote 1 that these options should not be carried forward.

Vote 2 part 1. These grouped options are not similar in nature it is therefore difficult to understand how and why they have been grouped together. The Jamaica option didn't have the total support of the Local fishing fleets in fact it only had 9 in support out of 49 responses., this sends an important message to you that it is not an option, yet it has the implication in vote 2. part 2 that it will be approved.

We question why so much emphasis has been placed on the New Jamaica and New Haiti options to be voted through

Vote 2 part 2

The New Bermuda option is the much-preferred option by the local fleets and clearly has the overwhelming support of the majority responses.

The 14 TECFO licence holders fully support a small-scale fishery and will not apply for permits in that designated fishery if the New Bermuda option is carried forward and adopted by the authority, should the New Jamaica option be carried through we would have no choice but to apply for permits as too much ground would be lost to what we currently have.

As requested by the Vice Chairman we confirm this in writing to the Chairman.

Clearly the local fishing Industry does not support hand raking look what's happened in the Wash. and please remember 21 people lost their lives in Morecambe Bay in a hand raked fishery. The Current TECFO has not been carried forward as an option.

We ask that if the authority members have not read each and every one of the responses fully and not just relying solely on the summaries that are confusing, that they postpone the vote to a later date as this review will affect not only the current cockle industry but all the support industries to the cockle catching sector.

The Chairman thanked all those who had spoken.

A Member asked Mr Rattley to confirm that the 14 TECFO licence holders would not apply for a permit in the outside area. In response Mr Rattley said that the 14 current TECFO licence holders would have an expectation of right for 14 licences in whatever the new fishery was but would not apply outside of the Regulating Order.

Members were asked to vote on the options presented for consideration on step by step process.

Members voted on the options for progression to Consultation 2 – following the voting, which took place in 3 parts to address different aspects of the option selection, the resolution of the Authority was;

The Authority resolved;

That suction dredge and small-scale fishery framework options should be included within the consultation; and

That NEW JAMAICA, NEW HAITI AND NEW BERMUDA framework options be taken forward to Consultation 2.

15:00 Meeting ended

