

Kent & Essex Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority

MINUTES of a meeting of the Authority held in the Council Chamber, Gravesham Borough Council, Windmill Street, Gravesend, Kent at 10.00am on Thursday 22 January 2015

Present: Cllr J L Lamb (Southend BC) (Chairman), Mr J Nichols (MMO), Cllr J Jowers (Essex CC), Cllr A Wood (Essex CC), Cllr M Harrison (Kent CC), Cllr D Baker (Kent CC), Cllr S Liddiard (Thurrock Council), Mr W Baker (MMO), Mr L Roskilly (MMO), Mr A Rattley (MMO), Mr B Smart (MMO), Mr M Sharp (MMO), Mr P Wexham (MMO), Mr S Abbotson (MMO), Dr L Fonseca (MMO), Mr C Hazelton (EA), Mr J Labbett (MMO), Ms I Chudleigh (NE)

Apologies Cllr P Channer (Essex CC), Cllr K Tolhurst (Medway Council)

In Attendance: Mr P Wickenden (Clerk, KCC), Ms B Gibbs (Financial Adviser, KCC), Dr W Wright (Chief IFC Officer), Mr D Bailey (Assistant Chief IFC Officer), Mr J Wiggins (Project Officer), Mrs D O'Shea (Office Manager), Mrs K Woods (Admin Assistant)

The Chairman welcomed Ms Lisa Readdy (Cefas) to the meeting.

48. 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 interest may not vote on that Agenda item.

The following Members declared interests:

- Mr J Labbett – agenda item B5– personal interest & pecuniary interest (lease holder on River Roach)
- Mr S Abbotson – agenda item B4 – personal interest (no reason provided)
- Dr L Fonseca – agenda item B3,4,& 5 – personal interest (Defra employee)
- Mr W Baker – agenda item B5 – personal interest (participates in Blackwater fishery)

49. MINUTES (A2)

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meetings held on 21 November 2014 were correctly recorded and that they be signed by the Chairman.

Matters Arising:

In relation to item number 38 (smoothhounds) Members were advised that the catch data had now been received and that the CIFCO would be contacting all those involved to arrange a date for a meeting. This would be advertised and not restricted to the recreational sector only.

1. BUDGET MONITORING 2014/15 (B1)

Members were provided with details of the estimated revenue outturn as at the end of December 2014.

This showed an estimated underspend of £29,735; the figure had altered from that forecast previously due to unexpected repairs on Tamesis.

In response to a query as to what these repairs were, the ACIFCO advised Members that a crack in the aft deck had been investigated by the MCA and the boatyard, who had recommended that additional strengthening was required and that a bearing that had seized be replaced. These issues had been communicated to the boatyard who were building the replacement vessel so that they were aware of the potential problems. It was not possible to apply to the boatyard who built Tamesis for redress as it had gone out of business. A Member suggested that officers may be able to make a claim through the Marine Insurance Act.

RESOLVED that the report be approved

51. DRAFT BUDGET 2015-16 (B2)

Members were presented with the draft budget for 2015/16 showing a levy of £889,600 to be divided between the constituent authorities. This levy remained the same as the previous year, as agreed by Members at a meeting of the Authority on 24 January 2014.

The Financial Advisor to the Authority informed Members that a 1% pay increase had been allowed together with an allowance for career progression. A total of £36,300 would be used from reserves as follows:

- Research £25,000
- Training £7,000
- GIS £4,500

Members were advised that payment for the replacement patrol vessel would be completed by the end of the financial year 2014/15 and as a result the renewals reserve would be reduced to £464,000. Members were reminded that it was important to maintain the renewals reserve at a healthy level in order to have the option to purchase a replacement vessel in future years.

Members discussed the implications of the New Burdens Funding (NBF) being discontinued. The Chairman advised Members that the Minister had made it clear that NBF would continue for the financial year 2015/16 but was not in a position to confirm for future years because of the elections due to be held in May 2015. If NBF were to be withdrawn then the responsibility for the payment of the additional sum would fall on the constituent authorities. The Chairman suggested that it would be prudent for Local Authority Members to put pressure on central Government to continue this funding as if the constituent Authorities were unable to find additional funding then IFCA's would not be able to continue to act as they currently did. He advised Members that the

Association of IFCA's is already doing so and would continue to do so. He also said that he would be happy to draft a suggested letter which Members could take back to their Local Authorities.

THE AUTHORITY UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the draft budget of £889,600 and levy as set out in Agenda item B2 be approved. The total amount of levy payable by each Local Authority being as follows:

• Kent County Council	£383,600
• Medway Council	£67,200
• Essex County Council	£383,600
• Thurrock Council	£33,700
• Southend-on-Sea Borough Council	£21,500

52. HYTHE BAY AND FOLKESTONE POMERANIA BYELAWS (B3)

Members were advised that since the last Authority meeting the MMO byelaw team had been consulted on the wording of the proposed byelaws for both these sites. Officers had also met with fishermen in Folkestone, Rye and Dungeness to discuss these byelaws and had been advised that they accepted the wording of them. In respect of the byelaw relating to Hythe Bay, fishermen were concerned at the cost of the electronic vessel monitoring system (IVMS). The CIFCO informed Members that the cost of each IVMS would likely be in the region of £2000 to £3000 for the equipment and then £200 pa in telephone costs. Devon & Severn IFCA were currently trialling this system in their District and were looking for match funding within the EU to assist with the cost. Members were advised that this was something KEIFCA could consider and that the fishermen wanted it to be stressed to them that the initial cost of this equipment would be a lot of money for them to outlay and they would ask the IFCA to try to assist and offset the cost of IVMS to them.

In response to questions by Members the CIFCO advised them that the number of vessels that potentially would require IVMS would be twelve. Data from the IVMS would be held by the MMO but an individual vessel would be able to access its own data and the IFCA would be able to do so by means of a Memorandum of Understanding with the MMO

With regard to the management plan for Hythe Bay, Members were informed that this had been modelled on the management plan developed for the cockle permit fishery byelaw as this allowed the IFCA flexibility to change it if necessary, although only after consultation with Members and stakeholders.

With regard to Folkestone Pomerania, Members were advised that a byelaw had been drafted that replaced the existing bottom towed gear byelaw with one that includes all areas where bottom towed gear is banned. This would now include Folkestone Pomerania.

Members were pleased with the level of consultation that had been carried out with the industry and they were happy with the wording of the proposed byelaw. They thanked officers for the work and consultation that they had been carried out on it.

RESOLVED that:

- officers would consult with Devon & Severn IFCA to discuss progress with funding for IVMS
- an extraordinary meeting be held to make the Hythe Bay Permit byelaw and the Bottom Towed Gear Revised byelaw

53. SEA BASS MANAGEMENT (B4)

Members were advised that a meeting had been held on 14 January 2015 at the EU to discuss emergency bass measures. The latest information from that meeting was published on their website on 19 January which stated that by the end of the month (January 2015) pelagic trawling of bass would be banned until April 2015 in offshore waters.

Members were informed that records showed that landings of bass had increased across Europe. In 2013 70% of bass landed was by France with 20% by the UK. Of the quantity landed in the UK, 15% of this was landed in the Kent & Essex district. Members were advised that this would suggest that introducing any management measures solely within the KEIFCA district would have a limited benefit to overall stock. It was suggested that following an international management plan and working with others to achieve this would best focus resources. However in the absence of this type of plan, Members were advised that there were options open to them as follows:

Nursery Areas

Members were reminded of the four such areas currently designated under existing byelaws. It was suggested that a review could take place by developing a data base and consulting with local communities. A technical panel could then meet to review the evidence for each site and make recommendations for a full Authority meeting to discuss and potentially instruct draft byelaws to be drawn up. This would be a resource intensive initiative which, Members were advised, would utilise the same officers within the IFCA who were currently working on the European Marine Sites (EMS) review. Defra and the Minister would need to be made aware of the impact on the delivery of EMS as a result.

Bass Spawning Areas

The IFCA could work alongside other national and international agencies (Cefas, Defra, other IFCAs, Dutch and French Governments) to establish an effective research programme. This would enable a much larger area to be studied

Increasing the minimum landing size for bass

The science behind the increasing of minimum size was well understood and Members were advised that this option is being given consideration but that in order for it to be effective it

should be introduced on as large a scale as possible, otherwise the burden of the management falls disproportionately on specific local fishermen.

Small Mesh Fisheries – KEIFCA District

Reviewing the management of small meshed gear and developing management options could help to provide additional protection for small and juvenile fish across the district. This would involve obtaining more detailed information regarding the number of vessels, times of use and developing specific management options.

Mr J French, a local fisherman, addressed the Authority. He advised them that he felt that if a lot of measures were decided on then a lot of people would go out of business. He was prepared to work with the Authority to discuss what needed to be done.

Members' attention was drawn to appendix 2 which contained a report by Mr Sharp and a letter from Andrew and Johnny French on behalf of West Mersea Fishermen's Association.

Members discussed this matter at length and made the following pertinent comments:

- Bass required time to reach maturity and to spawn. Increasing the minimum landing size would achieve this.
- Bass was semi resident in the district and could live for 20 years or more. If too much of the local stock was taken then they would not return. The IFCA needed to look carefully at its measures to ensure a sustainable fishery for the future.
- The EU were looking at various types of technical measures, including limiting landings to 1 tonne pcm for commercial vessels, bag limits for recreational anglers, changes to the minimum landing size and an increase in mesh sizes.
- The IFCA should recognise that bass was spawning in the district. Although Members were aware that resources were not available, scientific evidence was required to establish this
- The IFCA could approach other agencies and the EU to work in partnership with recreational anglers and the commercial sector to understand bass spawning, eggs and larvae in the district
- There was a need to concentrate on the distinction between nursery and spawning areas. The IFCA had information on its nursery areas but not on spawning.
- Consideration should also be given to the effect on bass of the seal population in the Thames estuary. An adult seal would eat 4 tonne of fish per year and there were over 1200 seals in the estuary.

RESOLVED that a technical panel meeting be held to discuss this matter in more detail and to make recommendations concerning the implementation and time line for delivery of the options provided.

54. BLACKWATER/CROUCH MCZ MANAGEMENT MEASURES AND RIVER ROACH ORDER (B5)

Native Oyster management within the Blackwater, Crouch, Roach and Colne MCZ area

Members were provided with the results of the 2014 native oyster survey from which estimated total populations of key species were recorded as follows:

Native Oysters	58 tonnes
Gigas Oysters	138 tonnes
Slipper Limpet	1,330 tonnes
Empty oyster shells	5,963 tonnes
Empty slipper limpet	1,064 tonnes

Members were reminded that the second annual Full Stakeholder Native Oyster Workshop had been held on 12 November 2014 at West Mersea. Presentations had been provided by Natural England and KEIFCA regarding the current status of the project. A presentation was also given by the Blue Marine Foundation who had shown an interest in being involved.

A meeting of the working group had taken place on 21 January 2015 which included representation from Blue Marine Foundation. This group discussed the possibility of hatchery reared oysters for further regeneration and to proceed with a grant application, the development of a website and the possibility of the IFCA looking at byelaw legislation as a way of managing the MCZ.

Members were advised that the working group had recommended that a formal record of any voluntary work that was undertaken by individuals for the restoration of native oyster populations be introduced. This voluntary work would be required to follow guidelines and conditions set by KEIFCA, Essex Native Oyster Restoration Initiative (Essex-NORI) and Natural England. This record could be used as a criteria for decision making with regard to the future issue of licences or permits to fish for native oysters once stocks had recovered. This scheme would be advertised to ensure all potential participants were aware of it.

Members expressed some concern on the implications of maintaining a formal record in that it may be biased against those who were not already fishing. They did not want to be put in a position where the fishery would be limited to a certain number of permits. The CIFCO advised Members that the community wanted to recover the oyster stock and were looking at ways that this could be developed. Local fishermen were prepared to spend their time and money in doing so but had asked that this be recorded in a formal way as it could take a minimum of 5 years to restore the beds. The question being asked of the Authority was whether they would recognize this voluntary work.

RESOLVED that maintaining a formal record of voluntary work undertaken by fishermen to achieve restoration of native oyster populations and native oyster beds be approved.

12:05 Mr Labbett declared a prejudicial interest and left the room

River Roach Oyster Fishery Order

Members were advised that leases had been offered to the four previous leaseholders. Two leases had been granted with the remaining leaseholders having indicated they did not wish to take up the new leases. These layings were now being prepared for use.

RESOLVED that the report be noted

12:10 Mr Labbett returned to the meeting

55. SALE OF FPV KEN GREEN (B6)

Members were advised that the FPV Ken Green had been put up for sale using Century Marine Services as a broker with a commission of £10,000.

Should the Ken Green be sold before receipt of its replacement then either Tamesis would undertake more days at sea or the IFCA could charter a RIB from another organisation to undertake any specific operational requirements.

RESOLVED that the use of Century Marine Services to broker Ken Green be approved.

56. NEW PATROL VESSEL – BUILD UPDATE (B7)

Members were advised that the hull and wheelhouse were completed with the internal hull structure nearing completion. Engines were also now on site. The boatyard were still confident that the completion of the vessel would remain on time for June 2015.

Pictures taken of the vessel at a recent site visit were distributed for Members' information.

Members **NOTED** the report

57. NAMING OF PATROL VESSEL (B8)

Members were provided with suggestions of names for the new patrol vessel and the RIB. Members were asked to consider these or suggest any others. Once a decision had been made then the names would be registered with the UK Register of Ships.

RESOLVED that:

- Members would consider the following names for the patrol vessel:
 - I. Marine Protector
 - II. Coastal Protector
 - III. Inshore Protector
 - IV. Invicta

- V. Icení
- Members would consider the following names for the RIB:
 - I. Interceptor
 - II. Seax
 - III. Boudica; and
- Members would email their preferences to the office

58. AN UPDATE ON THE KEIFCA WHELK FISHERY AND AN INITIAL ASSESSMENT OF ITS CURRENT MANAGEMENT MEASURES (B9)

Members were provided with a summary of the harvesting of whelk stocks in the district from November 2011 to November 2014 showing details of the amount and value of whelks landed and where these whelks were harvested from.

They were also advised that the IFCA were working with the University of London to look at the size at maturity of whelks from four areas in the district with the project continuing throughout 2015.

Members were also provided with the results of the latest consultation with the industry with regard to their perceptions of the fishery and their views on future management measures.

RESOLVED that:

- the report be noted; and
- the current Technical Permit Requirement remain as:
 - i. The maximum number of whelk pots that may be set by the holder of a Category One Permit (*full time fishermen*) **CURRENTLY 300**
 - ii. The maximum number of tags to be issued to the holder of a Category One Permit (*full time fishermen*) **CURRENTLY 300**
 - iii. The maximum number of whelk pots that may be set by the holder of a Category Two Permit (*hobby fishermen*) **CURRENTLY 10**
 - iv. The maximum number of tags to be issued to the holder of a Category Two Permit (*hobby fishermen*) **CURRENTLY 10**
 - v. The size of the riddle (*the size of the gauge used to measure the riddle*) **CURRENTLY 22mm**
 - vi. The minimum number of escape holes **CURRENTLY 2**
 - vii. The diameter the escape holes (*the size of the gauge used to measure the hole*) **CURRENTLY 22mm**

59. DRAFT ANNUAL PLAN

Members were advised that the plan would be sent to Defra once ratified and would be shared with other local IFCA's and publicised on the website. Members were asked to contact the office directly if they wished anything to be altered.

RESOLVED that the report be noted

60. MATTERS FOR REPORT

Members received:

- the quarterly report of the Kent IFCO (C1)
- the quarterly report of the Essex IFCO (C2)
- the quarterly report of the patrol vessel 'Ken Green' (C3)
- the quarterly report of the patrol vessel 'Tamesis' (C4)
- Sea Angling report (C5)
- Communication Update (C6)
- Enforcement report (C7)
- Crouch Harbour Authority minutes and Chairman's report

The Chairman then advised Members that Miss Evanna Lyons who was employed as an IFC Officer would be leaving the Authority to return to Ireland. He thanked Miss Lyons for the quality of her work and the support that she had provided to the Chief Officers. Her leaving would be felt as a big loss to the Authority and he wished to register and record the thanks of all Members. Miss Chudleigh from Natural England informed Members that she had worked closely with Miss Lyons over the last few months and wished to thank her for the work she had carried out with them.

In addition the Chairman mentioned that he was aware that for some MMO appointees this may be their last meeting. He thanked them for their hard work, diligence and contribution to IFCA meetings and technical panel meetings.

The meeting closed at 12:45hrs