

By: KEIFCA Chief Fishery Officer

To: Kent & Essex Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority
– 25 May 2021

Subject: **Outcomes of the fisheries regeneration working group**

Classification Unrestricted

Summary:

This paper will provide Members with an overview and outcomes of the working group that was agreed at the January meeting, and update members on the new groups that have been created to better engage and involve the local fishing industry in fisheries management.

Recommendations:

1. Members are asked to **NOTE** the minutes of the working group and **APPROVE** the formal invitation to Maria Lacunza, Head of Fisheries Funding Policy, Defra to present to the Authority on the historic allocation of grant funds and the opportunities in the new Fisheries and Seafood Scheme.

Working group progress

Following the January meeting and more detail starting to emerge about the outcomes and implications of the new EU-UK Trade and Cooperation Agreement, several informal discussions were held with industry members about the format and focus of the working group. Over a period of 3-4 weeks a wide variety of issues were raised and discussed, and an initial meeting was held on the 23 March to start the process of identifying opportunities, plans or projects that could help our local communities' better access national grant funds as well as develop a stronger local markets for fish and shellfish.

The first meeting brought together a wide range of people from across the district (Thames Estuary Partnership, Kent and Essex County Councillors, Band marketing agency and members of the local fishing industry) and started off by

discussing broad issues to enable the discussion from the meeting to lead the direction of the group. All the members of the working group were given the opportunity to identify and discuss some of the underlying problems for the fishing industry in the district and suggest actions that could be taken to develop stronger local markets for fish (Appendix 1).

There were a wide range of issues and experiences expressed and several key themes emerged:

- The importance of the fishing industry in aiding the regeneration of coastal communities
- The need to find ways to increase demand for local species (like.... Thornback Ray, Smooth hounds, Herring, Mackerel)
- Develop better ways to educate and promote local species
- Promote local supply chains and reduce carbon footprint

As many of the underlying issues from the meeting were the education and marketing of fish, we made contact with Julie Waites the South East regional lead for Seafish to see if we could link in with any of their projects and use their expertise. Seafish are in the middle of a specific targeted campaign -Spring 2021 Love Seafood campaign featuring UK species and indicated that they were happy to attend an online meeting and work closely with our working group. A further action that was followed up from the meeting, was to talk to the MMO grant funding team and discuss how potential projects could be supported by the new Fisheries and Seafood Scheme.

The second meeting built on the key themes of the first meeting and reviewed the resources already available from the current Seafish campaign to the regional Fish Local resources we created last year (Appendix 2). Funding options for potential projects were also discussed. Unfortunately, no one from the MMO grant fund team was able to attend the meeting and Ms Waites was taken ill on the day of the meeting and could not participate but was happy to come to the next meeting.

The key actions from the meeting were....

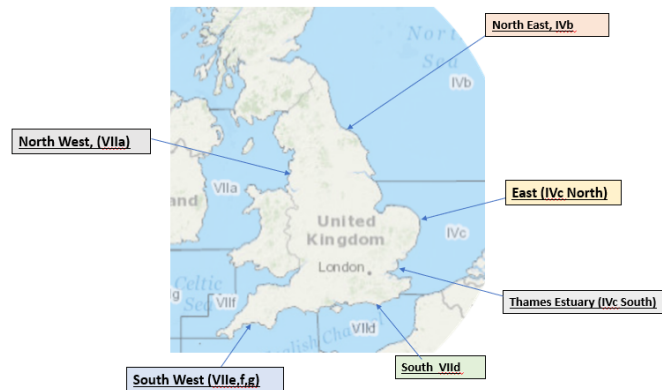
- To engage with DEFRA, Seafish and supermarkets to discuss new ways of selling and promoting regional fish.
- To explore and develop project ideas to brand/ promote a local species for the group to discuss.
- To update the Fish Local website to focus more clearly on educating and promoting locally caught fish.

Regional Fisheries Meetings

Running in parallel with our working group meetings DEFRA have started a new format of engagement by setting up regional fisheries groups as a way of working more closely with the inshore fisheries sector and once up and running, the recreational sector. The groups are based on the existing MMO quota management advisory meetings and create an open and inclusive forum for discussion of fisheries related issues. The first meeting of the VIIId and IVc – South (Thames Estuary) groups were held the last week in April and the Chief Officer attended the meeting.

Goal:

To generate a cultural shift that enables industry to become part of the decision-making process for fisheries management. Recognising that industry, government and the recreational sector have a shared vested interest in developing and maintaining a world-class sustainable fisheries management system that supports local communities.



Aims:

- To give industry more of an active role in regional decision making and provide an opportunity for them to influence regional fisheries management.
- To provide a formal method of engagement predominantly for inshore fishermen and others who may feel they are not represented by a wider national group.
- To build more collaborative and trusting working relationships between policy makers, regulators and the fishing sector at a regional level, recognising the knowledge that they hold.
- To better understand the challenges and opportunities facing the industry at a regional level (particularly the inshore sector), so we can help them to take advantage of opportunities for the future of the industry.
- To enable industry to input into science by using these groups as a vehicle for pilots and trials, and as a forum for involvement in the development of FMPs.
- These groups will seek to support, not replicate, MMO and IFCA functions and legal duties.

Next steps

Although the challenges to meaningfully regenerate a thriving local fishing industry are large and numerous, the working group has started to make some progress in breaking down some of these issues and identifying key areas of action. From the progress so far, forming a close working relationship with Seafish will be vital to achieve real progress in educating and promoting local species to the public. Including DEFRA in the conversation with Seafish might be critical as fundamental and systematic change needs to happen for the current marketing strategy to engage with regional fishers. As we move forward, and actions become more tangible we will again, look to try and bring in more industry voices from around the district.

Unfortunately, less progress has been made in helping our communities better access national funds. On behalf of the working group, we have invited the MMO grant team to talk directly to the group. We had hoped that this would start to form a better link and understanding between the funds available and the needs of the industry and community, as well as breakdown the perception that the funds are hard to access.

To try and progress this issue further we would like to take the opportunity presented for engagement with the Funding team at the SAGB conference by Maria Lacunza, Head of Fisheries Funding Policy, Defra and invite Ms Lacunza to our next Authority meeting. As part of this invite, we would like Ms Lacunza to give an overview of grant spend in the KEIFCA district compared to the rest of the UK, to give an overview of the main projects grants have helped in our district over the last 5-10 years and an introduction to the new Fisheries and Seafood Scheme.

Recommendation:

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