

Notes of KEIFCA Seafood Sector and Fisheries Communities Working Group meeting held on 10 May 2021 at 7pm

**Present:** Mr J Nichols (Chairman - KEIFCA), Mr A Rattley (KEIFCA), Cllr T Hills (KEIFCA), Cllr A Goggin (KEIFCA), Mr D Ferris (Fisheries sector), Mr M Jackson (Fisheries sector), Ms A Pryor (TEP), Mr J Seaward (Band Agency)

**Apologies:** Ms J Waites (Sea Fish)

**In Attendance:** Dr W Wright (CIFCO), Mr D Bailey (ACIFCO), Mrs D O'Shea (Office Manager)

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The Working Group met with the following aims:

- Look at what is already available - review Seafish education and promotion products
- Review the resources already held in Fish Local and how this could be modified going forward
- Review funding options
- Agree next steps

### **Key Points considered by the meeting**

Since the last meeting officers had taken on board the requirements identified by the Working Group;

- Increase demand for local species (Thornback Ray, Smooth hounds, Herring, Mackerel)
- Develop better ways to educate and promote local species
- Promote local supply chains and reduce carbon footprint an increase in demand for local species, education and promotion of local supply chains.
- Regeneration needed to be a constant through this.

Seafish had been contacted and the aims of the Working Group explained to them. The South East representative, Julie Waites, had been due to attend the meeting to meet with members but unfortunately was unwell. She had indicated that Seafish would want to work closely with the group as part of their out reach programme to assist with projects and to support regional development. Once H&S requirements allowed, they would speak to the IFCA Members at a quarterly meeting to explain their remit and objectives.

The Chief Officer had held a meeting with the MMO funding team to explore funding options for potential projects using the newly released Seafood and Fisheries Fund (SAFF)

The Chief Officer had attended an MMO/ DEFRA ran Regional Fisheries Group meeting

Jesse Seaward had spoken to a number of active fishermen in the District which had helped him to obtain a wider view of the activity and issues faced by them.

### *Seafish*

The aims and objectives of the Working Group were currently being prioritised by Seafish at a national level, particularly the promotion of local species which was a focus of the Defra funding unit and seen as a Government priority. Seafish have rebranded "Catch of the Day" to "Love Seafood". They had run a Spring based campaign focussed on mid market families, showcasing regional fishers and producers, using twitter, Instagram and facebook, together with posters and short videos. A range of species were promoted, however these were not in the main indicative of those found in the Kent & Essex district and on closer inspection there did not appear to be the focus on local species that had been highlighted as the key issue at the previous meeting. Julie Waite did recognise this and was interested in working with the Group to develop a more regional project.

Mr Rattley commented that Seafish's problem was their remit had to be national and it appeared they had gone for the easy route. In his experience, supermarkets did not understand the fishing industry. If the group were able to work locally with Defra and Seafish, to include Fish Local, to put together a campaign to target local species, going through a regional hub and into local supermarkets then there was a chance it could work. Supermarkets did have the ability to buy regionally but it needed pressure from Defra and Seafish to set and convene these meetings with input from the Department of Trade and Industry.

### *Fish Local – Jesse Seaward*

He had concentrated on two of the main aims from the previous meeting – education and promotion. It was important that these aims should be achievable quickly and without problem, while looking towards a legacy and long term goals, and had spoken to industry insiders on how it would look to use Fish Local as a vehicle and voice to take ideas forwards. Those spoken to were Paul Gilson, Dave Ferris, Dale Belbin and Graham and Sally Osborne who presented a reasonable cross section of the industry.

### Education:

The Fish Local website could provide the audience required. A social media presence could be the start of a local audience and could be built on to provide the necessary platform. The website had the content required but it was in the wrong order. The What's Fresh section could be used to spotlight four local species and focus on seasonability, sustainability and stocks. It would be more static and there would not be the need to update as often as at present. Cooking advice would become more relevant if combined with advice on local stocks and seasonality, using a local influence to tailor it to be more to the promoted species and taking away some of the mystique. The suppliers section would work in a similar way but to include the hospitality industry as well. Suppliers would be able to log in themselves, put their own details in – logo, links to their social media etc and to indicate whether they deliver, were fishmongers, fishers. Posters and leaflets were

already available to download. What needed to happen was that the website was reviewed and put back together in a much more acceptable and accessible manner with not so much advertising and more emphasis on local species.

Cllr Hills commented that that seasonality was important. The public needed to learn to go back to this; a lot of species could be caught but are not as they don't sell.

Mr Nichols suggested that use could be made of the cookery school at East Kent College in Broadstairs to look for their help in the development of promotional videos etc

Mr Rattley stated that this was where Seafish needed to be involved, especially from an educational point of view as the reality was that if this was to work for the future then the youth should be encouraged to eat more fish. It would be twice as hard otherwise.

The Chief Officer informed the group that there was a charity that was actively looking to encourage the uptake of fish in schools. They had expressed an interest in Fish Local when the matter had been discussed at an all party Parliamentary group meeting. He could contact them to see if they wanted to become involved.

#### Promotion

To stand a better chance of obtaining support it would be necessary to develop a project that was by, rather than for, the fishing industry. In respect of the rebranding of a local species, Dave Ferris had suggested Thornback Ray and Smoothounds could be considered. This had been talked about with the industry insiders mentioned previously. All thought that rebranding would be useful in improving demand and margins and would be of benefit to other industries, however individually were able to make lots of different points as to why it wouldn't work. These points could quite easily be answered if the right people came together. It was important that projects were developed with local Industry and be relevant to them. By bringing together the right skills then a conceptually simple project could be entered into with the knowledge that there would not be a massive resistance from the Industry for a project that had not been thought through. The aim of rebranding a species would be to lift general demand but underlying this would be that the fish could be harvested sustainably and could be marketable. A comment had been made that it was all very well bringing in the fish but it then had to be got rid of.

#### *Funding*

The MMO were running the SAFF grant scheme until April 2022. KEIFCA had established a lead contact with the MMO who would be able to assist and work with Thames Estuary Partnership (TEP) in making an application for funding. Maximum funding was £300,000 and TEP would be eligible for a rate of 75%. This new scheme was supposed to be more user friendly, although it would still be necessary to be clear on what was needed and to have clear budget lines as once an

application was granted it would be difficult to amend at a later date. To obtain the additional 25% there were some companies/bodies that could be applied to:

- London Gateway. – London Gateway had already contributed to the Fish Local project and it would be likely to be willing to provide additional funding. However they historically have had a difficult relationship with industry so this may prove controversial.
- Crown Estates,
- Fishmongers Hall
- New infrastructure developments in the Thames

Mr Nichols advised that he and Mr Jackson had recently met with the Harbour Master at Ramsgate to discuss a funding application that Thanet DC were looking to make to the Government's £4.8billion Levelling Up Fund to improve the fishing opportunities at Ramsgate Harbour.

Mr Ferris commented that trying to develop local markets was not enough to provide sufficient income to fishermen. The time and effort involved would not give a big enough impact. He felt that there was a need to move away from local projects and look to supermarkets, MSC accreditation; big national projects that would make the product more valuable nationally. Supplying locally would mean that the supply must be there week in week out. If unable to supply one week due to weather conditions etc then the customer would move on and it would be difficult to bring them back. He felt the value was in branding.

Mr Rattley and Cllr Goggin stated that it was therefore important to push the education side so that people understood the principles of seasonal produce.

Mr Nichols advised that this was why a central hub would be important to make the principles of the project work. Fishermen were good at fishing, but then wanted to get rid of it. The three species mentioned needed a lot of processing which it was unlikely the supermarkets would undertake. The hub would therefore be used to take care of this and to ensure continuity of supply.

The Working Group agreed that the Fish Local website would be rebranded/refocused to concentrate on local fish if funding was forthcoming and that enquiries be made to set up a meeting with Defra, Seafish and supermarkets to explore how they could be used to promote local species.

Meeting closed at 20:55