**12th Eastern IFCA Meeting**

*“Eastern IFCA will lead, champion and manage a sustainable marine environment and inshore fisheries,*

*by successfully securing the right balance between social, environmental and economic benefits*

*to ensure healthy seas, sustainable fisheries and a viable industry”.*

A Meeting of the Eastern Inshore Fisheries & Conservation Authority took place at The Boathouse Business Centre, Wisbech, Cambs, on 29th January 2014 at 1030 hours.

**Members Present:**

Cllr Hilary Cox Chair Norfolk County Council

Cllr Tony Turner MBE JP Vice-Chair Lincolnshire County Council

Cllr Tony Goldson Suffolk County Council

Cllr Margaret Wilkinson Norfolk County Council

Cllr Richard Fairman Lincolnshire County Council

Stephen Worrall MMO Appointee

Shane Bagley MMO Appointee

Stephen Bolt MMO Appointee

Roy Brewster MMO Appointee

Paul Garnett MMO Appointee

Neil Lake MMO Appointee

Ceri Morgan MMO Appointee

Tom Pinborough MMO Appointee

Rob Spray MMO Appointee

Conor Donnelly Natural England

Roger Handford Environment Agency

John Stipetic MMO

**Eastern IFCA (EIFCA) Officers Present:**

Philip Haslam Chief Executive Officer (CEO)

Andrew Bakewell Head of Finance

Nichola Freer Head of HR

Eden Hannam Head of Marine Conservation

Julian Gregory Head of Marine Protection

Alan Garnham Area IFCO

Ady Woods Area IFCO

Judith Stoutt Senior Environment Officer

Ron Jessop Senior Research Officer

Luke Godwin Marine Environment Officer - Data

Sam Paling Mate / IFCO

Lucy Ritchie Community Development Officer

Dan Steadman Temporary Data Input Officer

**Other Bodies Represented:**

Mike Armstrong Cefas

Richard ‘Gus’ Caslake Seafish

Delyth Dyne Defra

Roger Mason MMO

Emma Thorpe Natural England

**Minute Taker:**

Jodi Hammond

**EIFCA14/01 Item 1: Welcome by the Chairman**

The Chair welcomed members to the meeting and introduced Andrew Bakewell, the new Head of Finance. At this point a message from the recently retired Head of Finance, Christine Hurley, was read out to members, thanking them for their gift.

**EIFCA14/02 Item 2: Apologies for Absence**

The Chair advised that from this meeting onwards apologies would not just be noted, members would be asked whether or not they ‘accepted’ them.

Apologies for absence were received from Messrs Barham and Vanstaen (MMO Appointees), and Cllrs Baker (Norfolk County Council) and Patience (Suffolk County Council). Members agreed to accept them, although Cllr Goldson felt there was concern about the number of meetings some members were not attending. The CEO advised that attendance of members was tracked and the number of meetings attended is captured in the Annual Report.

**EIFCA14/03 Item 3: Declarations of Members Interest**

Messrs Bagley, Brewster and Lake confirmed their already logged Declarations of Interest as Lay holders and WFO Entitlement Holders.

**EIFCA14/04 Item 4: Minutes of the 11th EIFCA Meeting, held on 30th October 2013**

Dr Bolt commented that the date at the top of the minutes was incorrect. On the proviso that the date was amended to reflect the correct date of the meeting, Members agreed to accept the minutes as a true record of proceedings.

**EIFCA14/05 Item 5: Matters Arising**

13/80: PROPAGATION OF PRODUCTIVE FISHING GROUNDS: The CEO advised there had been a productive meeting with members of the Wash fishing community and the matter was ongoing.

13/82: ANNUAL REPORT: Members were advised this had been forwarded and received by Defra.

13/85: DATA STRATEGY: The CEO had contacted NCC with regard to using their expertise to manage digital data, however the process had apparently stalled and he advised that if the timescale was likely to be too far in the future then officers would seek members approval to procure alternative delivery arrangements as the collation of data in an accessible format needed to be done.

13/86: NORTH NORFOLK FLAG: As agreed by members NNFLAG had been advised that EIFCA were able to offer some financial support to the iVMS project, however at the time of the meeting no money had been exchanged.

**EIFCA14/06 Item 6: Health & Safety Risks and Mitigation**

Members were advised that all basic H&S training required in 2013 had been completed.

The Moorings at Sutton Bridge continued to be a key operational risk. The risk was being actively managed with Officers establishing both safe systems of work and material safety measures to lessen this risk. The CEO was hopeful that further large scale work to improve the moorings would begin during 2014 thereby significantly improving the overall infrastructure. If improvements were to be delayed indefinitely then the continuing viability of the moorings may be in question if the overall decline of material state is allowed to continue unchecked.

Lone Working devices to provide for the protection of out-stationed officers had been sourced. These provided a tracking facility and also a button to press in case of emergency. It was hoped devices would be trialled in the next few weeks. Initially these would work with mobile phone signals, however, if the coverage was not suitable for all areas of the district it may be necessary to source a device working off satellite signals, which may cost a little more.

Members were provided with a draft policy for managing unacceptable behaviour by a 3rd party, it was explained that this was aimed at moving in line with other public authorities with regard to unacceptable behaviour. The policy was aimed at reflecting occasions when events become unruly and uncomfortable and would empower officers to deal with the situation in a firm constructive manner. It was emphasised that whilst robust constructive debate is quite acceptable there are occasions when emotions become involved and there needed to be a mechanism to deal with this.

**Members agreed to note the report** **and approve the introduction of the Policy for Managing Unacceptable Behaviour by 3rd Parties.**

**Proposed: Councillor Goldson**

**Seconded: Mr Stipetic**

**All Agreed**

**EIFCA14/07 Item 7: Meeting of the Regulatory & Compliance sub-committee held on 28th November 2013**

Members were advised that the key issue of the meeting had been the production of the EMS Byelaw. EIFCA had taken an innovative route when preparing the byelaw, the intention of which was to allow flexibility when managing features within the site.

Part of the process of preparing the Byelaw had been a consultation phase. As a result of this 25 submissions had been received, all of which had been considered. Following the consultation phase there had be continuing correspondence with Defra who had highlighted some minor technical changes which needed to be made, whilst this dialogue was ongoing, reassurance had been received that the process was almost complete. The CEO advised that throughout the process both the MMO and Defra had been very supportive and constructive.

Mr Lake opined that the local fishing industry was not happy with the byelaw and felt that it provided the IFCA with an opportunity to close any area and the industry would not know it was coming. He was assured there would be a set process to be followed before any area was closed to fishing.

Mr Spray added that the Marine Conservation Society were concerned about the flexibility of the proposed byelaw, however the HoMC advised that the MCS had not participated at all in the process during which they would have been able to express their concerns.

Mr Donnelly felt it was worth remembering that the process was about bringing fishing into line with other sectors, ensuring protection of the features. EIFCA were taking an innovative evidence based approach.

**Members Agreed to note the report.**

**EIFCA14/08 Item 8: Meeting of the Finance & Personnel sub-committee held on 15th January 2014**

HR Matters: It was highlighted that agreement had been reached to introduce a Payback Policy with regard to developmental training. This would apply to training which was over and above the essential skills needed to be able to carry out a role.

Members were also advised that the Salary scale point review which had initially been scheduled to take place in April had been postponed until 2015 which would also allow time to review the staff structure and potentially revise salaries to reflect greater responsibilities.

FINANCE Matters: The paper had presented the provisional estimates of expenditure and set out the proposed levy for 2014/2015. The information provided included main variances to the original budget. It was noted the proposed levy was exactly the same as the previous year.

Members were also advised that during the meeting the CEO had received approval to purchase a mobile office trailer from the Environment Agency (EA) to conduct outreach events. Unfortunately at the last minute he was advised the trailer had to go to auction, the EA have been asked whether it was possible to review this decision and the CEO was waiting for their response.

Post Meeting Note: The EA has agreed to honour the sale.

Following full discussion of alternative accommodation options, it had been decided that noting the significant penalties to extract from the current lease, the most financially literate option was to look to lease a nearby building to provide storage and maintenance facilities. Cllr Wilkinson had suggested contacting the fire service as they may be in a position to share some space. This had been explored and unfortunately there had been nothing available in the timeframe required, consequently the CEO was looking into a facility which was fit for purpose on a short term lease.

**Members Agreed to note the report.**

**EIFCA14/09 Item 9: Provisional budget for 2014/2015 and to note the provisional forecast for 2015/2018**

The Provisional Budget for 2014/2015 recommended by the Finance and Personnel sub-committee was presented for approval. In addition the provisional forecast for 2015/2018 was also presented, it was noted that from 2015/2016 it was anticipated there would be a slight increase to take account of higher National Insurance contributions.

The CEO advised that the forecast showed that up to its 7th year in existence the levy would still be less than the £1.32m anticipated at its inception, which proves EIFCA are cutting their cloth well and delivering a significant service at value for money.

**Members Agreed to:**

* **Approve the Provisional Estimates for the period 1st April 2014 to 31st March 2015**
* **Note the Provisional Forecast of Estimates for the period 1st April 2015 to 31st March 2018**

**Proposed: Councillor Goldson**

**Seconded: Mr Morgan**

**All Agreed**

**EIFCA14/10 Item 10: Payments made and monies received during the period 19th October 2013 to 17th January 2014**

The report provided a breakdown of the amounts expended and received during the period.

**Members Resolved to accept the report on payments made amounting to £324,368.12 and monies received amounting to £93,607.18**

**Proposed: Cllr Tony Turner**

**Seconded: Stephen Worrall**

**All Agreed**

**EIFCA14/11 Item 11: Quarterly Management Accounts**

The figures for the third quarter of the year were compared to the budget in real terms, whilst they appeared to be a little low this would be countered by large items due to be paid for in the fourth quarter such as the refit for RV Three Counties.

**Members Agreed to note the Management Accounts**

**Proposed: Councillor Goldson**

**Seconded: Dr Bolt**

**All Agreed**

**EIFCA14/12 Item 12: Sea Angling 2012 survey**

During 2012 EIFCA staff were involved in the collection of data relating to Sea Angling activities within the District. Mike Armstrong from Cefas gave a presentation on the findings of the survey. He explained the piece of work had been carried out to develop an evidence based policy and to ensure sea angling was properly represented. The number of anglers, what they catch, how much they invest and what the social benefits are, were addressed by the survey. In conclusion the survey found that sea angling was a major recreational activity with an economic value of £2bn, and important social benefits.

Having listened to the presentation members thanked Mr Armstrong and advised it was very informative and made them aware of the impact sea angling has in the district. There were questions asked which included whether the survey gave consideration to anglers who fall in the grey area between recreational and commercial, it was felt that anyone carrying out any illegal activity would be unlikely to admit this if they had taken part in the survey. It was also highlighted the survey did not take account of individuals setting nets from the shore, this would hopefully be addressed if EIFCA commence monitoring of monofilament netting.

Councillor Turner then questioned whether registration and licencing would be applied to anglers, whilst Mr Armstrong could see the pros and cons of such a scheme he advised there was divided opinion in the angling community.

The CEO stated that the report had thrust recreational sea angling (RSA) into the spotlight and there was a requirement to ensure that issues affecting sea anglers were receiving due scrutiny. He advised that at the strategic level decisions will ultimately have to be made to balance commercial and recreational fishing activities if the significant economic dividend from RSA activity is to be realised in the region.

**Members Agreed to:**

* **Acknowledge the social and economic benefits of recreational sea angling**
* **Direct the CEO to develop a regional sea angling strategy in concert with local sea anglers**
* **Direct the CEO to consider measures to support regional RSA as part of the byelaw review.**

**Proposed: Councillor Goldson**

**Seconded: Dr Bolt**

**All Agreed**

**EIFCA14/13 Item 13: The Business of Fishing**

Members were given a presentation by Gus Caslake from Seafish, which highlighted what happens outside the commercial catching element of fishing. The film shown emphasised the cost of ‘quota’ which raised the question of how much quota in the UK has not been sold. The MMO have a website which indicates this which is widely used by those looking to source quota.

Mr Pinborough questioned how much of the Seafish levy is spent on Sea Angling, he was advised that generally Seafish aim to market fish consumption generically and to highlight good practice of seafishing regardless of the fishing sector.

Mr Stipetic advised that the quota was originally given free of charge. It is the individual fishermen who have subsequently added the value by selling on their quota. Mr Caslake advised that he envisaged the price of quota increasing with the discard ban coming into place in 2016. This raised the question of whether there was anything Seafish could do to facilitate quota management, however it was thought this would be done by a national PO.

Having answered all the members questions Mr Caslake was thanked for his presentation.

**EIFCA14/14 Item 14: Mussel Fishery 2014**

The Head of Research gave a resumé of the Mussel surveys which had been carried out. All the beds which had previously held mussels had been surveyed, which showed one small area of approximately 30t had died off.

The survey results indicated a total stock of 12,100 tonnes. Where beds showed signs of die off it was generally in the relatively young mussels of about 3 years old. It was felt that the reduction in biomass on some beds was due to the late mussel fishery, although there was indication that some beds were in decline, with densities too low to attract further settlement.

It was felt that with the general state of the beds the mussel fishery had become a limited opportunity for a seed fishery, even when a marketable fishery was opened the mussels were generally put back onto private lays to be cleaned prior to being marketed.

Members were advised by the Head of Research that there were two management options available which where to open the fishery or to take the opportunity to develop stock and keep the fishery closed.

It was also suggested that research be carried out into ways to attract seed. If this was successful in sample areas it may be possible to apply to larger beds which could improve the sustainability of the beds.

Mr Lake noted some of the difficulties in opening a harvestable fishery were due to the conservation measures being applied, one of which was having sufficient Dry Ash Weight, he questioned why the tonnage available in the le Strange fishery could not be included. Mr Donnelly advised that the figures for this fishery were held in commercial confidence and therefore could not be shared but were factored into Natural England considerations when assessing habitats regulations assessments related to any Wash mussel fishery.

Mr Lake then questioned whether the razor stocks could be taken into account when calculating the Dry Ash Weight, The HOMC advised that the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO) had advised the majority of over wintering birds focused on cockle and mussel therefore the razor stock could not be included.

It was generally felt there was a need for research into mussel cultivation in an attempt to regenerate the fishery. It was noted that there had been a mussel regeneration project in the past which had been unsuccessful but part of the project had been to look into materials that may potentially attract seed. The Head of Research advised that the material would need to be relatively easy to acquire in bulk and as such he was hoping to try using cockle shell as he hoped there may be shells available at the end of the cockle fishery.

Mr Worrall then questioned whether closing the fishery for a year would be sufficient to produce more secure, sustainable stock levels. He was advised that realistically spat research would need monitoring over a couple of years, if the stock on the beds does thicken it would give a better mass of mussel byssus thread to attract more spat.

Mr Brewster questioned how much seed would potentially die this year having reached 3 yrs old, which is the age at which mussels seem to be dying. He advised they would not die off if they were moved to the lays, and if the fishery was kept closed and stock levels did not improve they would no longer be a fishery. Also if the stock was not available to fulfil orders the industry would lose the markets currently available to them.

It was then suggested that an additional option could be to open a small, restricted seed fishery with the co-operation of lay holders, however Mr Worrall remained concerned that by removing any stock from the public beds would slow down their recovery. He did however suggest that perhaps the closure of the fishery could be phased, by having a small fishery this year and complete closure the following year.

Mr Lake felt that the industry should perhaps realise that if they insist on fishing this year they could be held responsible for the decline of the fishery, therefore he would reluctantly agree to closing the fishery. The CEO advised that industry members would be fully within their right to exploit a fishery opened by EIFCA and the reputational risk of long term damage to the fishery resides with Authority members.

Mr Bagley questioned whether it would be possible to open the beds if it became evident the stock was beginning to die so that the resource was not totally lost.

The Chair felt it would not be possible to please everyone but a decision needed to be made for the future of the industry.

Members then considered the suggested options. There was widespread recognition that Wash mussel stocks were in overall decline and action is necessary to arrest the trend. To this end, members decided not to approve the first option which was to open the fishery in accordance with previous norms. There was agreement that the second option (to temporarily close the fishery to allow natural regeneration) had merit but perhaps did not achieve the balance between sustainable stocks and a viable industry. A compromise was suggested whereby a third option for a reduced fishery be worked up to allow some exploitation to support local businesses while clearly signposting that an overall closure will be needed in the short term. However there was a need for more in depth discussion between the CEO, Research staff and commercial fishing members on the Authority.

**Members Resolved to:**

* + - **Discount Option 1.**
    - **Approve Option 2 as presented as a viable and sensible approach.**
    - **Direct the CEO, Research Staff and commercial fishing members on the Authority to generate a potential third option to explore the viability of a smaller fishery to support local business as a step towards a more complete closure.**
    - **The Chair and Vice Chair would then be asked to review approval of option 2 in light of option 3 and decide accordingly. The outcome would be provided to the Authority Meeting in April 2014.**

**Proposed: Councillor Goldson**

**Seconded: Mr Brewster**

**10 votes in favour**

**0 against**

**0 abstentions**

**EIFCA14/15 Item 15: Wash Fishery Individual Quotas**

Members were reminded that the CEO had previously been approached and asked to explore the possibility of issuing individual quotas for Wash Fishery stocks. As a result consultation had taken place, the outcome of which was that there was no appetite for this to be explored further.

Mr Lake stated that in terms of numbers of entitlement held, the request had only been narrowly outvoted. It was explained that a significant numbers of individuals had responded to the consultation which indicated a clear desire from a cross section of Wash Entitlement holders. Mr Lake added that if the number of crew onboard vessels and the comparison of full-time and part-time vessels had been taken into account the result would have been different. It was stated that the direction provided to officers was to consult with Entitlement holders as individuals not to factor in crew or working practices. The HoMC advised the remit had been to consult the Entitlement Holders, which was what had been done, it would make more sense if the industry tried to work in unison and come up with a combined proposition which united the whole industry.

Mr Spray moved that members should acknowledge that officers had completed the task as directed and that members should agree that the piece of work had reached a conclusion.

**It was Resolved that the Authority acknowledge the work had been done, unfortunately the result had not pleased everyone.**

**Proposed: Mr Spray**

**Seconded: Mr Pinborough**

**Agreed – by all those able to vote on the matter**

**EIFCA14/16 Item 16: Wash Lay applications update**

Luke Godwin gave a brief background on the situation with lay leases and the food availability study. Expired leases had been reissued, although it was hoped a revised more modern lease would be developed shortly. A necessary part of the lay renewal process is to deliver a more robust biosecurity plan, which would provide better protection against disease and invasive species. This was provided for approval by members.

Members were advised the next steps in the process were modernising the lease and considering new lay applications to ensure they met Habitats Regulation assessments and were therefore sustainable and would not affect the EMS.

Members raised a variety of questions relating to the Biosecurity Plan including:

* what was covered by the ‘Wash Production Area’?, - *the whole of the Wash*
* would all vessels have to be disinfected when coming from outside the area, would it apply to shrimp vessels as well? – *the feasibility of this was being considered.*

The CEO advised that the plan was an essential part of the process to preserve the infection free status of the Wash and, as with other forms of agriculture, bio-security was a mandatory requirement and any new or revised management measures would represent a cost for doing business in the Wash.

**Members Agreed to note the update on progress made towards processing outstanding lay applications and Resolved to endorse and publish the new Biosecurity Plan.**

**Proposed: Dr Bolt**

**Seconded: Mr Spray**

**All Agreed**

**EIFCA14/17 Item 17: Progress of 2013/2014 Marine Environment and Research Plan and outlining the 2014/2015 Plan**

The HoMC presented members with an update of the projects undertaken by the Research & Environment Team to date and advised of what they need to achieve during 2014.

The Chair thanked him for an interesting presentation and also noting this would be his last meeting with EIFCA as he was leaving to work with WWF thanked him for the hard work he had put in during his employment with EIFCA.

**EIFCA14/18 Item 18: Quarterly Progress against Annual Plans**

This report was included for information only, Mr Worrall thanked Authority officers for their efforts in delivering much of the output in the annual plan against the backdrop of a very busy year.

**EIFCA14/19 Item 19: Marine Protection Quarterly Reports**

The Report was included for information only.

**EIFCA14/20 Item 20: Marine Environment Quarterly Reports:**

This report was included for information only.

**EIFCA14/21 Item 25: Update of HR Activity**

Mr Morgan questioned what the comment “we are on a journey” meant in relation to the IIP status. The Head of HR advised that following an assessment in November it was considered some areas needed to be worked on by the end of this year.

**EIFCA14/22 Item 26: Any Other Business**

It was noted that another staff member would be leaving shortly, Lucy Ritchie was thanked for the work she had carried out, particularly in relation to Community Engagement.

There being no other business the meeting closed at 1427 hours.