

## 22<sup>nd</sup> 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 IFCA took place at The Boathouse Business Centre, Wisbech, Cambs, on 27<sup>th</sup> January 2016 at 1030 hours.

### Members Present:

Cllr Tony Goldson	Chair	Suffolk County Council
Shane Bagley		MMO Appointee
Stephen Bolt		MMO Appointee
Roy Brewster		MMO Appointee
Cllr Peter Byatt		Suffolk County Council
Connor Donnelly		Natural England Representative
Cllr Richard Fairman		Lincolnshire County Council
Paul Garnett		MMO Appointee
Ian Hirst		Environment Agency Representative
Tom Pinborough		MMO Appointee
Keith Shaul		MMO Appointee
Rob Spray		MMO Appointee
John Stipetic		MMO Representative
Cllr Tony Turner MBE JP		Lincolnshire County Council
Cllr Margaret Wilkinson		Norfolk County Council
Stephen Worrall		MMO Appointee
Stephen Williamson		MMO Appointee

### Eastern IFCA (EIFCA) Officers Present:

Andrew Bakewell	Head of Finance
Jason Byrne	IFCO
Nichola Freer	Head of HR
Julian Gregory	Acting Chief Executive Officer (ACEO)
Ron Jessop	Senior Research Officer
Simon Lee	Senior IFCO - Compliance
Judith Stoutt	Senior Marine Environment Officer
Stephen Thompson	Research Officer

### Minute Taker:

Jodi Hammond

### EIFCA16/01 Item 1: Welcome by Chair

The Chair welcomed members to the meeting and congratulated Mr Spray on his recent television appearance.

### EIFCA16/02 Item 2: Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from: Messrs Davies & Morgan (MMO Appointees) and Cllrs Baker and Cox (Norfolk CC)

### EIFCA16/03 Item 3: Declarations of Members Interest

There were no declarations of interest to record, which had not already been registered with the Clerk.

**EIFCA16/04 Item 4: Minute of the 21<sup>st</sup> Eastern IFCA Meeting, held on 28<sup>th</sup> October 2015**

Members considered the minutes and requested minor amendments which were agreed to, following which they acknowledged the minutes were an accurate record of the discussions which had taken place during the meeting.

**Members Resolved to sign the minutes as a true record of the meeting.**

**Proposed: Cllr Fairman**

**Seconded: Dr Bolt**

**All Agreed**

**EIFCA16/05 Item 5: Matters Arising**

EIFCA15/82: WASH COCKLE FISHERY: The ACEO advised members that as a result of the incursion into the closed cockle beds Fixed Admin Penalties had been issued to 19 vessels. The majority of these had been paid with a few vessels having opted to go to court.

**EIFCA16/06 Item 6: Health & Safety Risks and Mitigation**

Since the last meeting there had been one incident which involved an IFCO who was dealing with an incident on the beach when the person in question displayed aggressive behaviour and drove off at such speed that the IFCO was showered in shingle. This incident had been recorded as a near miss. The incident was continuing to be dealt with by the MMO as it was a joint working operation.

All other risks remained as previously reported. One new risk had been identified as a result of the two incidents the previous summer. A gap in the risk assessments had been identified and steps were being taken to rectify this with the help of Norfolk County Council H&S Officer.

Members agreed to note the report.

**EIFCA16/07 Item 7: IFCA and MMO Collaboration Update**

Members were reminded that agreement had previously been given to sign up to the collaboration programme with the MMO. The first Programme Board meeting had since taken place to ensure the agreed work streams came to fruition. In summary it was agreed to:

*Immediate cash savings* – not spend any more time considering this as it would be a longer term plan

*Accommodation sharing* – AIFCA would work with the MMO to explore accommodation sharing to improve workspace and reduce costs. EIFCA had an agreement in principle to share office space with the MMO at Lowestoft.

*Enhanced operation joint working and co-operation* – It was agreed in principle that IFCAs/MMO would be cross warranted to enforce all legislation. All officers would be put through the same training programme.

*Intelligence* – Following a successful pilot scheme it was agreed to roll out a national programme as soon as possible, which would provide joined up intelligence systems.

*Enforcement systems upgrade* – this was considered to be a longer term initiative which would require funding to get off the ground.

*Training* – Agreement in principle was reached that all MMO/IFCOs would take part in an accredited training programme.

*Miscellaneous* – the MMO had secured a budget of £30k to get the work streams moving, it was hoped IFCA would be able to match this funding. Dr Bolt advised that AIFCA had some funds set aside for IVMS which could be used for match funding, or training, Defra had agreed for the money to be used in this way.

Mr Pinborough questioned whether there was any progress on harmonising data collection for the under 10m fleet to avoid the discrepancy between IFCA and MMO figures, he was particularly concerned by the huge hole in fin fish data. The ACEO advised this was not anticipated in the near future, he had attended a workshop which was looking into potential growth in satellite systems and how they could be used together with other data sources for MPAs etc.

The ACEO advised that he had expressed his concerns and had emphasised the importance of catch data measures.

Mr Garnett urged caution with regard to putting too much emphasis into technology as sometimes feet on the ground were more effective.

Mr Williamson expressed concern that whilst the training/enhanced operations were worthwhile, there may not be enough fishermen left to warrant it.

Having read the report Cllr Turner requested that in future all reports could be written in 'plain English'. He gave examples of where he felt the report was poorly written and also advised it would be more beneficial to have a summary on one A4 page with additional information available if members required it.

Members Agreed to note the report.

***At this point as the ACEO prepared to set up a presentation for the following agenda item the Chairman advised members that the CEO would be extending his secondment to the MMO for a further 12 months. It was questioned whether the MMO intended to keep the CEO after the additional 12 month period, the Chair advised that although he had been advised this was not the case no one could foresee what would happen in a year's time.***

***The Executive team would be taking on additional work and a 'Staff Officer' would be appointed to support the ACEO. The ACEO advised that the CEO would not be taking an active role in Eastern IFCA to avoid any confusion for staff and stakeholders. He would, though, be available for support and advice to the ACEO if required and the ACEO would keep him apprised of developments. The CEO would provide operational oversight when the ACEO is on leave and they will seek to co-ordinate their Annual Leave where possible. Dr Bolt queried whether this had been formalised as he felt that with the CEO not actually working for the IFCA whilst on secondment there may be issues with him providing advice, in the absence of the ACEO, in the event of an incident. Mr Pinborough suggested there may need to be a legal consultancy type of agreement. It was agreed this would be investigated***

***and a paper would be prepared as an action item for the next meeting. It was anticipated the CEO would be 'hot desking' in the EIFCA office a few days/month in line with the joint working policy with the MMO.***

**EIFCA16/08    Item 8: Update from Regulation and Compliance sub-committee**

The ACEO advised members a presentation had been prepared to ensure members were aware of what was going on with regard to the Plan of Works, the Byelaw review, Whelk management, and shrimp management.

*Plan of Works:* members were provided with the matrix defining the plan of works and anticipated deadlines. It was noted the Whelk and Permitting byelaws were a high priority due to the time constraints. The Protected areas byelaw was almost complete with just the need to add the new protected area to it.

The ACEO advised the Plan of works was substantial and that Officers were at full capacity but it was all being dealt with.

*Byelaws:* Members were advised that a house keeping exercise had been carried out on the existing byelaws to see which ones remained relevant. Most of those inherited from NEIFCA were considered to be redundant so a new byelaw would be put in place to revoke those and extend EIFCA byelaws to cover the whole of the district. The formal consultation phase for this process had been concluded and no objections had been received.

Following on from the emergency whelk byelaw Officers had been working on a permanent byelaw which would replicate the temporary byelaw as well as introducing a new mechanism for information gathering, it was anticipated this would be agreed at the next Regulation & Compliance sub-committee. Formal consultation had revealed a mixed view on the maximum number of pots which should be permitted, but all concerns would be given due consideration.

The Permitting byelaw would introduce a flexible mechanism to allow measures to be put in place to protect stocks or less stringent measures to be followed if the situation permitted. It was intended that in future there would be a single permit in place which could be endorsed for a variety of species as applicable. Formal consultation for this had revealed concerns about possible limitations under a permitting byelaw, all of which would be considered. The ACEO also advised the intention was not to introduce a tradable commodity; the intention was to maintain sustainable fisheries.

Cllr Turner questioned whether the Crown Estates had been involved in the byelaw review as he recollected in the past there had been issues with the le Strange Estates. The ACEO advised it was in the work plan to consider private fisheries and byelaw application. Mr Donnelly advised that NE had been in discussion with le Strange Estate to agree to sustainable management for quite some time and negotiations were progressing.

Mr Bagley questioned whether there had been any advance in the boundary lines for the private fishery, to which the ACEO advised a court decision was being awaited. He advised that if there was a feature which required protection on the boundary line then under MaCAA the IFCA could protect it. Mr Donnelly reiterated that an Environmental Impact for that corner of the Wash was being looked into, it was anticipated it would put in place a measure to ensure low risk which would be in line with IFCA management measures already in place.

Referring to the work plan Mr Garnett felt there was a lot of work being undertaken in the period up to May and a lot of consultations would require consideration, he was concerned this may be too much for the industry to take on-board in such a short timeframe. The ACEO acknowledged this and advised the timescales were outside his influence.

Shrimp Management: The SMEO advised the shrimp management measures had a deadline for completion of December 2016.

Investigations had revealed shrimp fishing had an impact on sub-tidal habitats which necessitated measures being put in place. Throughout this process stakeholders were being liaised with to keep them informed of the decision making process and the closed areas being drawn up.

It was questioned whether closed seasons had been considered, rather than closed areas. It was acknowledged that this had been considered. A suite of 7 options had been considered by the sub-committee who had reached the conclusion that the option of closing areas within the WNNCSAC with water depths below 10m would be the best solution, further advice had suggested this may not be the best solution. Officers had considered potential closed area which would keep the area most important to the shrimp fishery open. Consideration had also been given to use of specific gear types, however there was insufficient evidence available to support the theory that certain gear would not be harmful to the fishery, therefore caution needed to be taken where there was uncertainty. However, it was anticipated gear trials would take place in the future.

To sum up the ACEO advised that all work streams were on track to meet the deadlines and whilst it was a lot of management measures to put in place for the industry to adhere to the IFCA were trying to ensure a balanced approach was being taken. Mr Pinborough questioned whether there was any flexibility in the work stream, to which the ACEO advised there was very little room for flexibility but that officers are very adaptive and responsive, however sometimes there is no option but to say no.

Mr Garnett advised there was concern about the suggested closed areas right across the shrimp grounds, there was already no available mussel fishery meaning opportunities were limited to shrimp and cockle and with so many suggested closed areas there was concern the shrimp fishery would become unviable. Mr Brewster questioned whether it was the shrimp or the ground which was being protected. The ACEO advised it was the ground, which left Mr Brewster to question whether this meant in future every fishery could be closed as they could all be deemed to damage the ground. The SMEO advised that assessments take into account the level of interaction between gear and the ground. Mr Brewster questioned where the additional damage was coming from as the grounds had been trawled for over 200 years. He also advised that since the NetGain project, when the industry had been advised any information they provided would not be used to close the fishing areas, which had not been the case, it was very difficult for the industry to provide information relating to fishing areas when it would potentially put them out of business. The ACEO appealed for industry members to work with officers and advised that not providing the information may be counterproductive inasmuch as any closures may not account for industry preferences. Ultimately, management measures had to be put in place, and the timescales were out of his control as duties had to be met.

Dr Bolt supported this sentiment by advising that IFCA are trying to balance precautionary and proportionate, working carefully to get the balance right within the deadlines which had been set.

Mr Pinborough was concerned there may be insufficient consultation responses, and a more detailed evidence driven response would be better for the decision making process. Mr Garnett advised that industry members he had spoken to were wary of giving evidence which would affect their livelihoods. Mr Williamson acknowledged IFCA were being tasked with this process but he felt it was pitting the IFCA against fishermen, and whilst each project only seems to take a little area when these were all added up it was a massive closure, he questioned when enough would be enough, could the IFCA go to the government and ask them to stop squeezing out the fishermen and if not could the government pay them out rather than forcing backroom decommissioning.

Members discussed in detail the need to protect soft sediments and how this would affect fishermen, docks etc and how windfarms were able to be built on sabellaria sites or cable routes could cut across closed areas.

It was noted the intention was to achieve well managed fisheries and a Maximum Sustainable Yield by 2020, to ensure better protection and management for the benefit of others.

The Chairman accepted the Authority had a role to play but he felt there comes a point where it needs to be said that enough is enough and he felt AIFCA could be asked to say this. As the process could be delayed until the April statutory meeting it was the Chairman believed there was time to get in touch with Defra. He suggested the industry, IFCA and the Councillors should write to Defra as there was more chance of being listened to. The ACEO suggested that given the level of concern about potential management measures in the shrimp fishery it might be better dealt with by the full Authority as opposed to the Regulation and Compliance sub-committee.

**Members Agreed to note**

- **the agreed plan of works regarding Eastern IFCA Regulations;**
- **the decision to put the Eastern IFCA Application and Exemptions Byelaw to formal consultation;**
- **the decision to put the Eastern IFCA Permitting Byelaw and Whelk Byelaw to formal consultation**

**Members Resolved to note the direction of travel regarding shrimp management but requested that it be dealt with by the full Authority, with an update at the Statutory Meeting in April for further discussion**

**Proposed: Chairman**

**Seconded: Mr Pinborough**

**All Agreed**

**EIFCA16/09 Item 9: Meetings of the Finance & Personnel sub-committee held on 14<sup>th</sup> January 2016**

The Head of finance advised that decisions had been taken to put in place decision making mechanisms to ensure appropriate decisions could be taken at appropriate times. The structure of the enforcement team had also been reviewed in line with the resignation of an enforcement officer.

A verbal update was provided to members to update them on the progress of the accommodation project, it was anticipated the project would be complete in the next few weeks. With regard to the ICT project there was a timeframe in place for the ICT provision to be taken over by KLWN Borough Council, this whole process had proved to be more complicated than was first anticipated.

**Members Agreed to note the report**

**EIFCA16/10 Item 10: Provisional budget for 2016/2017 and to note the provisional forecast for 2017/20**

The Head of Finance advised that the figures provided in the paper included the CEO in the normal structure, his extended secondment should yield some savings in the coming year, which would be put to good use.

Dr Bolt advised members that New Burden funding had been committed to 2020 which he considered to be a massive endorsement to the IFCA structure.

Cllr Byatt questioned whether the Authorities vessels have a sale value, the Head of Finance advised the Officers always seek to get best value.

**Members Resolved to Approve the Provisional Estimates for the period 1<sup>st</sup> April 2016 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2017, and to note the Provisional Forecast of Estimates for the period 1<sup>st</sup> April 2017 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2020.**

**Proposed: Dr Bolt**

**Seconded: Mr Worrall**

**All Agreed**

**EIFCA16/11 Item 11: Payments made and monies received during the period October 2015 to January 2016**

Members were advised that amongst the expenditure was £82k which was part payment for the purchase of the new enforcement vessel. The majority of money received was due to reclaiming VAT.

Cllr Turner questioned what the legal expenditure had been related to, and was advised this was for a 'one off' byelaw consultation.

**Members agreed to receive the report.**

**EIFCA16/12 Item 12: Quarterly Management Accounts**

Members were advised that at the  $\frac{3}{4}$  point of the year expenditure appeared to be below budget, however whilst this was partially due to savings in salaries it was also because large expenditure such as the refit of *RV Three Counties* was still to take place.

The Head of Finance did anticipate ending the year with a small amount of savings which he would suggest should be allocated to reserves.

Mr Garnett noted that the training budget appeared to be constantly underspent and suggested that perhaps more training should take place. The Head of Finance advised there was some planned training which would likely take place in the fourth quarter.

**Members Agreed to note the report.**

**EIFCA16/13 Item 13: Mussel Fishery 2016**

The Senior Research Officer gave a presentation of the mussel surveys carried out in October. All known intertidal beds were surveyed, which covered 20 areas.

The main results of these surveys were highlighted for members benefit.

In 2009 results had reached a good position but since then regular die off of fairly young mussel was affecting the management of the fishery. Stock levels at this time were below the target for both total stock and adult stock. There was a gradual increase due to older stock growing in size, however there was no significant juvenile recruitment so once the older stock dies off it was likely there would be real problems as already the declining areas were outweighing the increasing stock. The exception to the pattern being noted throughout most of the beds was Herring Hill where the mussels grow more slowly and seem to live for longer.

There was also improvement on Scotsmans Sled where there had been some growth and the bed had increased in size due to settlement. It was not adding much to the biomass but it was hoped with more growth this bed would re-establish.

Survey results showed total stock of 9,376t and 5,147t adult stock, when considering the opening of a mussel fishery the conservation levels to be met are 12,000t total stock and 7,000t adult stock. There are occasions when it is possible to open a fishery when the stocks are slightly below these levels if it can be demonstrated there is a likelihood the stock levels will bounce back due to good spatfall. It was not anticipated this would happen in the foreseeable future therefore it was not possible to recommend an intertidal mussel fishery this year for either harvestable adults or seed relaying.

The exception to this would be the Welland Bank, this fishery grows on rock which cannot be dredged and the bed seemed fairly well self-sustaining so it was felt this fishery could continue.

The SRO updated members of progress of the Mussel Regeneration Project. It had been identified that mussels prefer to settle on a hard surface, with a raised matrix of mussel and byssal thread being ideal for recruitment, consequently a cultch of cockle shell had been tried on a trial basis. 6 small areas made up the experiment, 3 with shell and 3 without to act as a control to compare the results to. It was noted the shell had sunk quite dramatically however they had attracted some mussel although mostly it was larger mussel which had rolled there rather than spat fall. As there had not been much spat settlement throughout the whole area it was felt it was an unclear result. A further years' growth in the area had shown areas of very small mussel which was an encouraging sign that this could be a successful method of regenerating the mussel fishery.

A decision had been made to repeat the experiment on a larger scale however it was not until now that two suitable sites had been identified. It was anticipated that shell would be put down in varying densities to see if there could be a longer term solution to sustain these beds.

Cllr Turner questioned if there was any known reason for the decline in mussel stocks. The SRO advised that since 2010 there had been big die offs which were thought to be due to a parasite in the mussels, normally this would reduce the meat yield rather than kill off the stock but the number of parasites in each mussel was proving to be too great for the mussel to survive. Members were advised that it was very difficult to control disease in the marine environment it is just hoped that over time the mussel will build up an immunity to the disease.

Cllr Fairman queried whether, as mussels like hard ground, there was any likelihood the lack of recruitment was due to beach regeneration in the area. The SRO advised that mussels do produce their own mud but it was possible the regeneration could be having an effect.

Mr Williamson advised that if EIFCA mark out the areas to be stocked he would be happy to put cockle shell in the area free of charge.

Mr Garnett queried whether it was possible for someone to investigate the reason for the die off in the mussels as it had been going on for several years. The SRO advised that Cefas had carried out experiments on samples but once they discovered mytilicola they stopped looking for anything further as they faced financial cutbacks. In order to carry out such an investigation on a large scale would be costly and was not something which could be done by EIFCA officers. Members discussed various possibilities for funding streams or ways to achieve such a project, or whether the mussels could be modified to become resistant to the disease. Genetically modifying was not thought to be an idea which should be encouraged, however, Dr Bolt thought it might be possible to attract a PHD student to carry out a project of this nature, he would make some enquiries.

Mussel Fishery      **Members Agreed to:**

- **Note the results of the 2015 autumn surveys described in the report**
- **Note that the survey results show the total mussel biomass and the adult mussel biomass are both below the SSI Conservation Objective targets**
- **Note that at these levels the current mussel stocks do not provide a buffer above Conservation Objective targets with which to operate fisheries or absorb natural die-offs**
- **Note that the majority of the beds are in a state of continued decline and are in poor condition**
- **Note that the survey results show there has been a poor settlement this year that will delay future recovery.**
- **Agree that there are insufficient mussel stocks on the intertidal beds to support either a harvestable fishery or a seed mussel relaying fishery without having an adverse impact on the sustainability of the stocks and the favourable SSSI condition of the site.**

**Proposed: Dr Bolt**

**Seconded: Mr Pinborough**

**All Agreed**

Mussel Regeneration Project      **Members Agreed to:**

- **Note that the Authority conducted a research project during 2014 to explore methods that could help to regenerate the inter-tidal mussel beds**
- **Note that although after the first six-months this project had only had a moderate success at attracting mussels to the experimental areas, significantly more seed had been attracted to the site during 2015**
- **Note that the members gave approval in January 2015 for the project to be continued during 2015 and this would involve relaying 200 tonnes of cockle shell cultch within a depleted area of the Trial Bank mussel bed**
- **Note that due to widespread settlements of cockle spat in 2014 throughout the Wash, including within the proposed**

experimental area, the 2015 project was delayed while alternative sites could be identified.

- Agree for the project to be continued. This will involve laying 200 tonnes of cockle shells into identified sites in Mare Tail and the Gat sands.

**Proposed: Mr Stipetic**

**Seconded: Cllr Turner**

**All Agreed**

**Members also requested that funding streams be looked at to carry out research into the cause of die off in mussels**

**Members Agreed to note the report.**

**EIFCA16/14 Item 14: Revision of WFO licence tolls in line with inflation for the 2016-2017 financial year**

The Head of Finance reminded members that in 2012 a mechanism had been put in place for licence tolls to be reviewed annually by the rate of inflation at the end of February. In the event of negative inflation the tolls would remain the same.

There was discussion concerning the level of inflation and how could agreement be made without knowing what the rate would be. It was noted that in the event of extremely high inflation an alternative decision could be made.

**Members Resolved to an increase to WFO licence tolls in line with inflation for the period 1<sup>st</sup> April 2016 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2017.**

**Proposed: Mr Pinborough**

**Seconded: Mr Worrall**

**All Agreed**

**EIFCA16/15 Item 15: Quarterly progress against Annual Plans**

This item was included as a matter of information to keep members up to date with progress. It was noted that all work streams were on track with the exception of the bio-security plan.

The ACEO advised that in future years it was intended to produce a five year Business Plan rather than an Annual Plan.

**Members Agreed to note the report**

**EIFCA16/16 Item16: Marine Protection Quarterly Reports**

**Members Agreed to note the report.**

**EIFCA16/17 Item 17: Marine Environment Quarterly Reports**

**Members Agreed to note the report**

**EIFCA16/18 Item 18: HR Update of Activity**

**Members Agreed to note the report**

**EIFCA16/19 Item 19: Any Other Business**

Mr Pinborough read through a letter that had been sent to the Minister from a recreational sea angling group regarding new management measures for bass which had been put forward by the EU. These measures put in place very strict restrictions on regulation for bass for commercial fishers with no landings permitted between January and the end of June 2016. During this time there is an exception for the hook and line fishery and for fixed gill netting, which had been assessed as being sustainable. These fisheries been given an increased landing allowance to 1.3t/month but could not operate during February and March.

Mr Pinborough felt fixed gill netting should be brought in line with other fisheries, however it was Defra's opinion that it had a low impact and was sustainable. Mr Pinborough felt sustainability depended on how the nets were set up and he asked members to consider bringing in an emergency byelaw to put a moratorium on fixed net fishing for bass for the same period as other commercial fisheries were affected, or to at least consider the option when carrying out the byelaw review.

The ACEO acknowledged Mr Pinborough's concern and advised that as these management measures had been considered at an EU level if EIFCA were to take a different view there would need to be a strong case because it would effectively be contrary to EU & UK advice. He also advised that an emergency byelaw for bass had previously been considered and not pursued because it was questionable whether the criteria for such a byelaw could be met. Given the circumstances it was likely to be the case again.

Mr Pinborough countered this by reminding members that the previous Emergency Byelaw was only stopped because EU was bringing out regulations.

The ACEO advised that the Strategic Assessment 2016-17 had not identified bass as a priority species because of the measures already in place and about to be introduced. It had, though, identified unregulated netting as a priority, which would impact upon bass fishing. He further advised that in order to be effective any restriction would need to cover the bass spawning area, which was on the edge of the Eastern IFFCA district in the south and would require a mirror approach by the MMO outside the 6nm limit and with KEIFCA. The ACEO had briefly discussed it with KEIFCA and their previous position of not supporting the introduction of measures by IFCA's had not changed. He advised that given these factors, if an emergency byelaw was introduced to further restrict fishing for bass there may be an increased potential for challenge because the supporting case would not be strong. He also advised that introducing an emergency byelaw would require a review of the current workload, which had been presented earlier in the meeting when members had been advised that there was little spare capacity. The ACEO suggested that in light of the factors he had outlined and given the comprehensive approach to bass management at EU and UK levels and the limited impact that any measures introduced by Eastern IFCA would have, it was not appropriate to develop additional measures unilaterally.

Mr Spray felt the initial concern with Bass was the un-licenced netting being un-measurable; he therefore requested a counter argument to the one put forward by Mr Pinborough.

Mr Shaul advised that under the new rules relating to minimum sizes he had hauled his nets and found he needed to return 100 fish to the sea,

consequently he changed his nets and was currently returning about 7 fish to the sea. He felt those not conforming could benefit from Fishery Officer intervention and suggested a review of net size would be better than a ban on fishing.

Mr Pinborough again requested a decision on when this could be discussed in more detail and the ACEO advised that it would be managed alongside other priorities for the next financial year. Mr Pinborough pressed the ACEO for a timescale to be attached and the ACEO advised that he couldn't put specific dates to things now but that it would be a priority for the year and that it would be managed as such and reported to the Authority.

The Chair then closed the discussion, saying that the matter would be further considered by officers and reported to the Authority in due course.

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There being no other business the meeting closed at 1335 hours.