

16th 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 29th October 2014 at 1030 hours.

Members Present:

Cllr Hilary Cox	Chair	Norfolk County Council
Cllr Tony Turner MBE JP	Vice-Chair	Lincolnshire County Council
Shane Bagley		MMO Appointee
Peter Barham		MMO Appointee
Stephen Bolt		MMO Appointee
Roy Brewster		MMO Appointee
Connor Donnelly		Natural England representative
Cllr Richard Fairman		Lincolnshire County Council
Jacqueline Foy		MMO Representative
Cllr Tony Goldson		Suffolk County Council
Roger Handford		Environment Agency representative
Dr Ian Hirst		Environment Agency representative
Neil Lake		MMO Appointee
Cllr Keith Patience		Suffolk County Council
Tom Pinborough		MMO Appointee
Rob Spray		MMO Appointee
Stephen Worrall		MMO Appointee

Eastern IFCA (EIFCA) Officers Present:

Philip Haslam	Chief Executive Officer (CEO)
Andrew Bakewell	Head of Finance
Nichola Freer	Head of HR
Julian Gregory	Deputy Chief Executive Officer (DCEO)
Stephen Thompson	Research Officer
Ady Woods	IFCO

Other Bodies Represented:

Emma Thorpe	Natural England
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Minute Taker:

Jodi Hammond

EIFCA14/86 Item 1: Welcome by Chair

The Chair began the meeting by welcoming Cllr Patience who would be attending the meetings until such time as Cllr Byatt was back from sickness absence. Dr Ian Hirst was also welcomed to the meeting.

EIFCA14/87 Item 2: Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from: Cllrs Baker & Wilkinson (Norfolk County Council), Mr Stipetic (MMO Representative), and Messrs Garnett, Morgan, and Vanstaen (MMO Appointees).

Members considered the reasons given for not being able to attend and formally agreed to accept the apologies.

It was noted that Jacqueline Foy would act at MMO Representative in the absence of Mr Stipetic.

It was agreed to accept the Apologies for Absence

EIFCA14/88 Item 3: Declarations of Members Interest

No declarations of interest were recorded.

EIFCA14/89 Item 4: Minutes of the 15th EIFCA Meeting, held on 29th October 2014

Members agreed to sign the minutes as a true record of proceedings.

Proposed: Councillor Goldson

Seconded: Councillor Fairman

All Agreed

EIFCA14/90 Item 5: Matters Arising

14/72 ANNUAL REPORT – Members were advised the report had been published and a copy had been received by Defra.

14/74 LAYS IN EXCESS OF 10 HECTARES – As instructed at the previous meeting the Minister had been written to, to seek retrospective consent for lays in excess of 10 hectares.

The CEO advised as a result of The Openness of Local Government Bodies Regulations 2014 meetings could now be recorded, filmed, or live blogged whilst in progress. The EIFCA Constitution had been amended accordingly. Cllr Goldson advised that within SCC any member who did not wish to be visibly recorded did not have to be, the CEO had been advised otherwise but agreed to enquire further.

EIFCA14/91 Item 6: Replacement of Environment Agency Additional Member

The CEO advised that Mr Handford was no longer in a position to be the EA Representative and Dr Ian Hirst had been put forward by the EA as his replacement.

Members agreed to accept Dr Hirst as EA Representative on the Authority, thanked Mr Handford for the vital role he has played as a member of the Authority and wished him luck for the future.

EIFCA14/92 Item 7: Health & Safety

An update on H&S issues was given by the CEO. Since the last meeting there had been 5 incidents. Four of which required no further action but

one on-board a fast RIB had resulted in an internal investigation which was being reviewed by NCC. The outcome is likely to identify improvements to be made to the safe system of work including upgrading FPV PISCES with additional seating to accommodate 4 crew members.

The CEO advised that despite efforts being made to ensure robust H&S practices were in operation within EIFCA there were still some practices which were not quite at the level required. Consequently an NCC officer had been to sea to conduct an audit of standards and practices and would forward a report identifying areas requiring improvement. A similar process would also be carried out within the office.

Mr Barham questioned the wording used within the H&S risk register and advised he would like to see evidence of where the risk of staff stress through exposure to unacceptable behaviour by stakeholders had been addressed through the corporate communication strategy to engage stakeholders.

Members agreed to receive the report.

EIFCA14/93 Item 8: Finance and Personnel Sub-committee meeting held 15th October 2014

It was noted that under HR matters the results of the Best Employee Engagement Survey 2014 showed an improvement on those when the survey was carried out in 2012. Cllr Goldson felt this was a good reflection of how EIFCA was moving forward.

Members Agreed to note the report

EIFCA14/94 Item 9: Marine Protected Areas Sub-committee meeting held 15th October 2014

Members were advised that the Lay lease had been reviewed with suggested amendments being discussed and agreed by the Sub-committee. Amendments included dealing with movement of seed in and out of the district, limiting stocking density, marking out of lays and an appropriate process to account for the death of a lay holder.

Nine lay applications were also considered. Whilst some were provisionally accepted dependant on the presence of seed/brood at the time of marking out, others had been deferred until the Minister had responded regarding the allocation of lays in excess of 10 hectares and/or the current settlement of seed cockle was reviewed during the spring surveys.

Members Agreed to note the decisions made by the MPA sub-committee

EIFCA14/95 Item 10: Payments made and monies received during the period Jul 2014 to September 2014.

Members were provided with an overview of where money had been spent during this period and funds received. It was noted the majority of expenditure was on salaries, and additional income was recorded due to the sale of EIFCA vehicles.

Members Resolved to approve payments of £450,459 and receipts of £46,620 during the period 10th July – 15th October 2014.

Proposed: Stephen Worrall

Seconded: Connor Donnelly

All Agreed

EIFCA14/96 Item 11: Quarterly Management Accounts

Members were advised that at the end of the second quarter there were savings of approximately £89,000 compared to the budget. This was largely due to less salaries than anticipated being paid out. As the staff were now running at full complement it was unlikely this saving would continue. However it was anticipated that at the end of the year there would probably be some saving, subject to unexpected expenditure being incurred.

The method use for the sale of EIFCA vehicles was questioned. The CEO advised that three had been sold to a local dealer and the 4x4 had been sold on a local auction site. All had received competitive prices.

Members Resolved to formally note the Quarterly Management Accounts.

EIFCA14/97 Item 12: Bass Stock Management

The CEO advised members that whilst Bass had always been an important species to the RSA Community they were becoming increasingly valuable to the commercial sector which was putting a lot of pressure on stocks. Current ICES advice indicated that to keep stocks at a sustainable level it was necessary to reduce the amount fished by 80%.

Members had been provided with a comprehensive paper on legislation applicable to the species and potential management methods. It was noted there was a rumour that EU and Defra may be planning to put in place measures at the international and national levels by the end of the year but this was yet to be confirmed and the CEO believed EIFCA should be proactive and take local steps within its power to protect the species.

It was noted that the focal point for bass within the EIFCA district was in the estuaries in Suffolk and around Sizewell but they had also been noted running throughout the district. Members also discussed the variance between sea bass and river bass, as well as the numbers which were farmed and imported, the increasing number being farmed around the UK and the increase in landings which was reducing the adult bass stock.

Various means of improving stock levels such as increased MLS and the introduction of closed nursery areas were considered as was the level of stock removed by the commercial sector compared to the RSA sector, as well as the number taken by seals.

It was apparent there was not sufficient data to provide all the answers but Mr Barham was sure there should be sufficient data available to prepare an Impact Assessment, he also advised looking at catch per unit effort (CPUE) compared to catch and natural predation. He believed Option 4 (as presented in the paper) was the best option provided there were measures in place to monitor the impact of introducing the option to check whether it had an effect.

There was also discussion about the methods of fishing as it is not only commercial fishermen and anglers who take the stock but also other methods of fishing which land the species as a bycatch.

Members considered the recommendations provided in the paper and considered that whilst Option 5 would be the only way to ensure a reduction in landing of 80% it was not an ideal solution and could have ramifications for local businesses therefore Option 4 would be the best step to take in the first instance, with the proviso that if necessary the fishery could be shut if there was no improvement.

Members Agreed to note that bass stocks at a national and international level are under significant pressure and at risk of collapse, they also agreed that the evidence presented drove a need to take local management action.

Members Resolved to introduce incremental regional Bass management measures as set out at option 4 in the papers. It was Agreed that this would be an additional output over and above the priorities stated in the Annual Plan 2014-15 which may cause a re-direction of resources with the attendant impact on previously agreed outputs.

Proposed: Cllr Goldson

Seconded: Mr Worrall

All Agreed

EIFCA14/98 Item 13: Horseshoe Point cockle fishery

As part of the transition to EIFCA, the Authority inherited the Horseshoe Point cockle beds, and the byelaws and permitting scheme applicable to them. In recent years there has been insufficient stock to warrant the opening of a fishery, consequently the water and shellfish quality for this area had not been sampled or classified.

Having conducted cockle surveys this year the Research Team found stock which would permit a fishery amounting to 600t if it was opened in spring 2015, providing the local authority could have the water classification in place. Due to the lack of access by vessel this would be a handwork only fishery.

Members noted this paper was provided as a matter of information, however, Mr Barham advised that he believed under marine planning any unused or new fishery needed an Environmental Impact Assessment and had to be treated as a new plan or project. The CEO advised that as standard practice it would be subject to a test of likely significance and a HRA, however he would investigate further.

Mr Donnelly advised that he also thought it would be treated as a plan or project and advised there would be a need to discuss management controls such as how much stock would be taken etc.

The CEO advised that it was the intention to provide a fishing opportunity if possible but all checks and balances would be gone through prior to opening a fishery.

Mr Lake questioned the permitting process and whether there would be limitations on the number of permits issued. The DCEO was unsure whether EIFCA would have the ability to limit the number of permits. Mr Lake felt this was a cause for concern as he believed there would be large numbers from the west coast who would wish to take part in the fishery.

Members Agreed to note the report

EIFCA14/99 Item 14: Renewable Energy development Commercial Fisheries Working Groups

Members were advised of the role being played by the CEO at Commercial Fishing Working Groups which were set up to ensure co-existence between the two industrial sectors.

It was noted that the CEO had taken on the role of Chair at these meetings as he was completely independent and had nothing to gain or lose whatever the outcome. To a certain extent this had ensured meetings had moved along smoothly. However, this was only the case when the meetings were held in appropriate venues and were publicly advertised and minuted, providing a transparent basis for any business conducted including the formulation of mitigation measures where disruption to fishing practice is proven. The CEO advised that he would be reluctant to continue acting in the capacity of Chair should the basic rules of the meeting be ignored and no evidence base was being applied to base decisions on.

Mr Barham believed the exploitation of the seabed was only going to increase and he fully supported the CEO in chairing these meetings, however he felt it was important to have the option to withdraw in order to maintain the credibility of the Authority, equally he advised the CEO needed to make it clear when he took on the role what his terms of reference were.

Members Resolved that it was appropriate for EIFCA officers to take part in Commercial Fishery Working Groups and that the CEO be delegated the authority to accept any invitations to chair such meetings if by accepting the invitation the statutory duties of the Authority were furthered. It was also Resolved that the CEO could withdraw from any position of Chair of a CFWG if there was evident risk that the impartiality and/or reputation of the Authority would be brought to disrepute.

Proposed: Mr Barham

Seconded: Cllr Patience

All Agreed

Mr Bagley questioned whether it was possible to have one large chart with all the dredging, windfarm sites etc, in the area displayed on it. The CEO agreed to take such a chart to the next meeting.

EIFCA14/100 Item 15: Calendar of Meetings to October 2015

Members were provided with a list of proposed meeting dates for 2015.

Members Agreed to the meeting dates for 2015 as set out.

EIFCA14/101 Item 16: Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) Reform Update

The DCEO provided members with a brief update on changes being made to the Common Fisheries Policy. It was stated that the original CFP having failed in some areas which had consequences such as declining fish stocks. The new CFP had been applicable from 1st Jan 2014 and would radically change the fishing industry.

Members noted there was nothing immediate to concern IFCA's but they would be kept informed of any progress which may mean additional work streams for EIFCA.

EIFCA14/102 Item 17: Quarterly Plans again Annual Plans

The CEO advised most work streams were progressing on schedule with some items having been completed and signed off.

- The Mussel Regeneration Project was underway with the cockle shell having been laid down which had attracted 16 times more spat than the control area, hopefully this would be sustained throughout the winter.
- The RSA strategy had been published, despite contacting the district councils there had been no response, however the CEO was ready to provide advice as soon as it was requested.
- The Lay Application process was progressing in accordance with the timetable.
- Community engagement projects for the year were mostly complete with one school visit pending.
- Community Engagement meetings were organised for November with the Wells and Suffolk events utilising the office based trailer.

Members Agreed to note the report

EIFCA14/103 Item 18: Marine Protection Quarterly Reports

The DCEO advised there had been some confusion over the accuracy of data and reminded members that the area officers only record estimated landings not definitive figures. It was hoped that in the future it would be possible to provide more robust landing data.

Members Agreed to note the report

EIFCA14/104 Item 19: Marine Environment Quarterly Reports

Members noted the content of the report and acknowledged that the majority of the work was focused on the management of EMS.

Members Agreed to note the report

EIFCA14/105 Item 20: Update of HR Activity

The Head of HR gave a brief resumé of the main HR activities which had taken place during the quarter. It was also noted that upcoming activities would include IIP accreditation and a development day for line managers.

Members Agreed to note the report

EIFCA14/106 Item 21: Community Engagement Meeting Dates

Members noted the meeting dates and Agreed to attend the meetings where possible.

EIFCA14/107 Any Other Business

SEA GOING ASSET REVIEW: The DCEO provided members with a paper updating members on the review of seagoing assets. They were reminded that in the past they had agreed to the use of Cabin RHIBs as enforcement vessels, which had brought about the purchase of FPV JOHN ALLEN. This vessel had been operating for 16 months during which time it had been found fit for purpose and would be retained as an enforcement vessel. The F&P sub-committee had agreed to a number of upgrades for this vessel and members were being asked to agree to the use of Redbay Boats as a sole supplier for these upgrades. The reason behind this request was based on continuity of quality of fixtures and fittings.

In addition to this members were also asked to agree to the Vessel Procurement Panel (Chair of the Authority, Chair of F&P, CEO and DCEO) being delegated powers to continue to oversee the purchase of a second cabin RHIB. The tender process for this RIB was already underway.

Councillor Fairman expressed concern about the tender process if Redbay Boats were to tender, as they would already have the design for the original vessel and would have an outside advantage over other tenders. The DCEO advised that EU legislation process would have to be met so Redbay would not be at an advantage, he also advised the next vessel would differ to the current RHIB. Councillor Fairman remained unconvinced and questioned whether the criteria for the new vessel came within a design already on Redbays books. The CEO advised that Redbay subsequent to the Authority's initial purchase, had built a bespoke enforcement vessel for the Northern Ireland fisheries but that vessel was in response to a bespoke capability requirement. There was no evidence to suggest that Redbay boats enjoyed an advantage over other bidders.

Councillor Turner questioned whether the origin of the components of the vessel would be investigated to see if they were UK or European. He advised the LCC tried to legally ensure the majority of their suppliers were based in Lincolnshire. The DCEO advised this was the intention. Mr Pinborough emphasised the need to be clear and transparent with everyone being given the same opportunity.

Members Resolved that Redbay Boats be engaged on a sole supplier basis for upgrade works.

Proposed: Cllr Goldson

Seconded: Mr Barham

All Agreed

Members Resolved that the Vessel Procurement Panel would oversee the procurement of the new enforcement vessel, approve the selection of a bid to supply the vessel and agree the contract with the successful bidder.

Proposed: Mr Donnelly

Seconded: Mr Worrall

All Agreed

There being no other business the meeting closed at 1250 hours.