

FISHERIES COMMITTEE

OPEN MINUTES

Fisheries Department
Thursday 15th June 2017
9.00am

These minutes are draft minutes until confirmed by resolution at the next meeting of this committee

Present:	The Honourable Phyl Rendell – Chairperson	PR
	The Honourable Roger Edwards	RE
	Director of Natural Resources – John Barton	DNR
	Dr. Alexander Arkhipkin	SA
	Capt. Chris Locke	CL
	Mr. Drew Irvine	DI
	Mr. Lewis Clifton	LC
	Mr. Tom Blake	TB
	Miss Jackie Cotter	JC

Minute Taker: Miss Sheena Ross

Public: 1

- 1 Apologies for Absence ACTION**
- 1.1** The Chief Executive, Mr Barry Rowland, MLA Hansen, Mr Hamish Wylie, Mrs Cheryl Roberts, Mr Stuart Wallace.
- 2 Declarations of Interest**
- 2.1** Industry representatives declared an interest for every item on the agenda.
- 3 Confirmation of the Minutes of the Meeting held on 1st March 2017**
- 3.1** An amendment was noted in page 4, line 5 to replace cwillosuresl with 'closure will'. **SR**
- 3.2** Terms of reference were discussed in September last year but appear to have been dropped from the Minutes – a more up to date version is available which doesn't address all the issues. The basic terms of reference as to the business of the committee are as discussed and agreed. There remain some outstanding issues in relation to 'committee management', such as declaration of interests and subsequent action. The same issue had been picked up at other committee meetings. Note for Agenda for next meeting

4 Matters arising from the Minutes held on the 1st March 2017

- 4.1** Item 4.1 - CL updated the committee that there had been 6 applicants for the post of Assistant Marine Officer and that he hoped interviews would be held during the first week of August.
- 4.5** Business Plan will be available and will be uploaded onto the website for ease of access. It had been circulated in draft form for comments. SA reported that the results of the rock cod cruise are available and had been uploaded onto the website. LC asked if FIFCA could be updated once details are uploaded. DNR thought there was a procedure for signing up for alerts for new information on the website.
- 5.8** It was queried as to whether the action on 5.8 as to proportion of effort used in 2016 had been done. DNR confirmed the information was included in the email sending out the March minutes.
- 6.1** It was clarified that the point on distribution of fishery protection effort would be included on the next report so for 2017.
- 8.1** Trawl Rubbish – storage and disposal - Likely to be implemented when Loligo fleet returns in early July. Meanwhile SA had prepared a power-point presentation for the afternoon meeting of FFLG which showed some plastic bags and other plastics which had washed ashore at Whalebone Cove, from FI flagged vessels.

5 Fishery Update

- 5.1** It has been a good year so far for Calamari. Illex catches have been ok after a really poor 2016 season and refunds are not anticipated in the fishery this year.
- 5.2** CFL Hunter has arrived and is undergoing a research cruise.
- 5.3** FIPASS – the NW barge survey report has been received and that will be looked at in more detail.
- 5.4** Maritime bill – has been circulated for comments. PR – indicated it has been to ExCo and should proceed to LegAssy at the end of June. It is anticipated that it may be remitted to a Select Committee in July. Any comments and representations are welcome. The document brings together UK and FI Legislation. People may be

more engaged with the Harbours and Ports Bill which is more involved with the practicalities of vessels operations in the Falklands. If possible the Bills will complete the scrutiny process within the current assembly.

- 5.5 Uruguayan Reefer has been reported on extensively – better outcome than might have been the case.
- 5.6 ITQ review – information circulated to Industry.
- 5.7 Thomas Farrugia is now in post and is working on MSC related work for Toothfish and is currently on the CFL Hunter.
- 5.8 DNR drew attention to the summary graphs of catches for the year so far. To 31st May graph for rock cod is flat lining. DI asked what the comparative graph for effort looked like as low fishing effort may be a factor. Effort has been lower than previous years although catches of rockcod have been low as well. There does appear to be a downward trend. It may be that the fish have moved as catches on high seas are quite high.

6. South Atlantic Overseas Territories Commercial Fisheries Management Review 2017

- 6.1 DNR welcomed RSPB initiative that was done on the South Atlantic fisheries. Sacha Cleminson is away at the moment. A background paper was circulated by way of explanation as to how this report came about. There had been a discussion with some members of the fisheries committee as to whether it should have been discussed here prior to circulation and maybe with hindsight it should have been. FIFD had no particular concerns about the fishery being reviewed by a third party. The review may have gone ahead without FIFD participation. The report is now out there and has been circulated. FIFD staff have discussed the report and have considered the recommendations.

SA commented on the report - it's independent and useful to have although not all Fisheries are included in the report, although the main species are. Martin Collins' review of Fisheries Management resulted in S.G. receiving excellent marks while the FI was not so good. Stock assessments for a number of species in FI zones and fisheries were complicated by having less than full data in the absence of any data exchange with Argentina. In the case of rock cod the biomass in FI zones has dropped. Some of this may be due to migration as high catches are now being reported from the high seas. We know it's the same stock on high seas. Recommendations for

finfish fishery improvements – working on them – it's not so easy to address them. Quite a lot of criticism of bottom trawling – it's an issue everywhere. For a number of species there are no realistic alternatives to bottom trawling.

The Falklands have proposed reviving the fisheries data exchange with Argentina, particularly on Illex but no response has been received so far.

PR it's a significant public report – how best to review it – go through the main recommendations?

LC remarked that he was heartened that FIFD are taking such an interest in the report. His fear is that as these reports come through, that the department is not here for the welfare of the industry. Likes the pragmatic view taken by FIFD. Some fisheries were marginal and an additional burden could make them unviable.

PR also observed there had been good rapport and exchange of views with authors.

RE commented that Government does support the fishing industry as Fisheries provides the highest source of income and although the report was not commissioned by Government, it is nevertheless a very important document. RSPB are an NGO and had influence over the blue belt placed around Ascension Island and people do listen to what they have to say – they do have influence. DI concurred with that view – if FIG want a peer review of how they manage the fishery then Terms of Reference should be set by FIG otherwise there is little influence over the process.

SA – FIFD was invited to comment on the report and did so extensively not all the comments were fully taken account of in the final document. The department pays serious attention to such reports and does their best to bring up to date knowledge to this type of report and information published on websites

LC – SA has raised a valid point - if department is resource constrained it needs to focus on priorities and can't necessarily spend too much time on some of these external initiatives. DNR – sorting out every website out there would not be viable.

DNR suggests that rather than going through each item suggests covering 4 broad areas which would capture many of the recommendations made, the detail is in the Fishery Committee paper.

1st point – There are recommendations on re-establishing the South Atlantic Fisheries Commission. This is easier said than done. There are also areas where stock assessments are not as complete or

achievable as they might be due to the absence of the data exchange. Information on some fisheries is incomplete. Some of this relates to stocks shared with Argentina, some of it to the high seas. We would endorse a regional fisheries management approach but it hasn't happened for 10+ years. PR recalled that FIG submitted a straight forward plan for data exchange to Buenos Aires in January – including data format and hoped for a 1st March 2017 start. No response has been received, FIFD has done everything it can.

2nd point relating to finfish management – one of the areas where we didn't score so well. There are quite a few issues as we know. Southern Blue Whiting used to be the dominant species but has declined and Rock Cod has become the dominant species although that now appears to be declining or migrating. These are always likely to be mixed finfish fisheries which bring additional problems. There has been much more hake in recent years which is not a valid species on some license types and the bycatch restrictions have been supplemented by closed areas. The department was investigating options prior to this analysis and report being initiated. We are looking to run a parallel catch control system for 2018. The TAC can be set for individual species and ITQ companies will have a share of that species TAC. The fishery for 2018 will run on TAE as it does now but the parallel TAC system will enable us to assess whether catch control can work. In the longer term catch control could allow for more focused management of individual species rather than the very practical but blunter approach involved with effort control.

TB – idea for catch/tonnage monitoring and policing is a lot more difficult. Problems in Europe with discard of small fish (and not reporting the discards) and keep the larger fish to improve profitability. Spanish partners indicate best system is our effort based system. DNR agreed that the effort based system did have a number of positive features but because of some of the significant problems it is worth investigating the TAC approach and to see what results before making any decision. There is the catch verification and it may be that this becomes more frequent and discharging at FIPASS may become a much more regular thing. There are other surveillance options such as camera systems.

LC – pleased that this has been picked up – no details in minutes but recorded this time. Raised the issues in the September meeting and the minutes didn't reflect his comments.

3rd point relates to ecosystem approach. This is a laudable objective and what qualifies as an ecosystem approach has possibly evolved since it was first identified so there are more options. At one time the ecosystem approach anticipated acquiring information on a mass of biological, chemical and physical processes to describe the ecosystem. The Fisheries Department scientists have done well in

investigating and researching many aspects of the fishery and their record stands up well in the area. However it is a big area with finite resource. It is not the North Sea where research vessels from 5-6 different countries are doing research and probably still have some unknowns. We have access to one vessel and some additional research cruises.

DI – Presumably we can't look at this area in isolation anyway due to migrating stocks which must be difficult to monitor. – DNR agreed and again it raises the issue of whether any cooperation on data exchange etc can be re-established with Argentina. DNR also indicated that some FI fisheries were always likely to be bottom trawl fisheries. However these fisheries happen in well identified areas following the same trawl tracks. The definition of fishing areas is such that trawling should not extend into new areas. SA noted that even in the Calamari/Loligo fishery there are significant areas which are not trawled due to the roughness of the terrain.

The 4th point relates to bycatch and seabird mortality mitigation. A number of measures including closed areas have been used to control bycatch. Seabird mitigations in the longline fishery should be a non-issue because it's so easy to solve, and seabird mortalities in the FI longline fishery are negligible. Seabird mortality in the trawl fisheries is more complicated to solve but a lot of good work has been done on this. Bird scaring lines are used. Fixed aerial arrays have been developed by a number of companies to keep seabirds away from warps. Waste management systems are being investigated and installed. Significant investments are being made in this area by vessel owners.

SA – recalled that a well known fisheries scientist, Ray Hilborn, has done much work in relation to bycatch and ecosystem issues and the objective should be to manage fisheries sustainably not necessarily to ban them.

The recommendation on peer review was discussed and is something which could be programmed with appropriate terms of reference.

7 Total Allowable Effort and Catch -2018

- 7.1** DNR – This is an annual paper which is routinely considered by the committee at this time of the year. The document is in 2 parts – Part 1 should be a relatively straight forward read through without excessive fisheries science equations, which is presented here. Part 2 is more technical and has more equations, etc in it. It has not been tabled here but is available. There is a quick reference guide in section 6. PR indicated FIFD have done a good job of producing a readable document and this is an opportunity for industry to comment. The final version taking account of any comments needs to

be set by October. Comments are requested either collectively from FIFCA or individually from companies by 11th August 2017.

DNR highlighted main points on individual fisheries:

Calamari/Loligo: no real change – if conservation issues arise then the season may be closed early. It anticipates the normal fleet of 16 vessels.

Finfish – licence category ‘A’ – no particular change – that is the one that allows access to Hake – FIFD encourage ITQ holders in this fishery to catch Hake as they have that available whereas other licence types don’t, and have to contend with a dearth of rockcod.

In the case of G and W effort – overall effort reduced by 15% and a precautionary allowable catch of rock cod is proposed to be maintained but reduced from 30,000 to 20,000 tons.

No change to Skate, Restricted finfish – Pelagic, or Toothfish longline.

DI had pointed out there was an error in W licence fishing time where Cat 6 vessels should be 20.4 not 16.9 months

SA Not much to add, the decrease in restricted finfish fisheries (apart from Hake licences) is not only because of rock cod - we have looked at other finfish species and it looks at the moment unfortunately the abundance of some of the main bycatch species like red cod and kingclip are also in decline. It may be partly due to migration in which case the decline may not be so marked.

Skate – by catch is a problem. Small skates are discarded and sustainability in the fishery would be improved if they were not caught in the first place. PR asked about the make up of the skate fishery. SA indicated 4 main species but 12 others are fished. Not enough manpower to deal with individual species so all reported together. Spanish vessels don’t separate into different species/types but Koreans do. TB – one is kept whole by the Spanish fleet because that is sold to the Koreans. In the longline fishery one of the MSC requirements is for it to be reported by species. This can be done when scientists are present but also need fishermen to be able to do this.

TB – G and W licence fees need to be looked at. There is a 10% reduction in effort this year but the licence fees remained the same so effectively it was an increase and with another proposed 15% reduction next year, if the fees are kept the same, this is effectively a 30% increase in fees over the last two years. For the ‘G’ effort in 2016 only 61% of the allocated effort was used and only 69% of W

effort is being used. Companies are not using all their effort because it's not viable to do so – the hakes catches make it extremely difficult to do so.

RE- is that a result of how the licence fee or how they fish? TB difficult to use licences sometimes. Can't fish for Hake on these licences and it's so widespread that it's very difficult to use those licences. Pressure to catch the fish as fees have to be paid regardless.

LC – understands the processes and basis for catch verification. However the cost to his company was c. £100,000 due to lost fishing time plus the cost of inspection. No prosecution or charges ensued. 2 of his vessels have had a verification in 12 months. DNR indicated there is little alternative to verification and vessels are chosen randomly, unless there is information which makes a vessel a priority. Companies have to buy the licence and if there is pain and gain, everyone should share it. Raised it in some detail in September last year. Nothing was done about it. Pain that FIG is inflicting (and I use that in the widest possible sense) is huge. We have a failed (for the want of a better expression) finfish fishery – modelling that was done on SBW and then on the rock cod. There is now a surplus of Hake for the 3rd year. Their distribution is such that it is difficult to fish on restricted finfish licences. The need to move from grid to grid to reduce bycatch was clear but now there is a blanket ban so then when we decide to go out and fish on the high seas as there are possible catches of 40 tons of Rock cod they are told that they can't and they have to come in for catch verification. A huge penalty imposed by fisheries management.

DNR – there is little alternative to catch verification and there are a number of reasons for introducing it. The misreporting in 2015 was one of the obvious factors. LC making the point in his own case. Recent years have seen high hake abundance and catches in the zone and that may persist for some time. Whether it becomes a permanent feature remains to be seen. There has been some debate about what should be done with Hake as it has become the main species in the fisheries, whether you go with effort or catch control – would you leave hake as a 10% by-catch or another amount. Hake are pretty voracious predators and with the influx of hake are we making as much use of the resource as we could? It is difficult to quantify the impact on other species and fisheries but it is likely to be there at some level. Some vessels that have access to the fishery don't always use the licences at the peak Hake times so again that is something that needs to be discussed with the industry.

LC – reduction in fishing effort further penalises industry. Also reiterates the point made last September that there are very significant financial penalties as a result of catch verification.

SA – there has been significant misreporting and maybe companies should make their own effort to avoid misreporting from their own vessels. Suspicions inevitably arise if there are mediocre catches inside FI zones, and vessels go to high seas and show hake catches of say 30mt per day, only to return to FI zones to resume mediocre catches. This is an area where companies could be more proactive.

LC indicated the scientists didn't believe the catch on his vessel and the ship was brought in prior to catch verification being put in place. The catch was proved to be as reported. Can understand the need for accurate reporting but concerned at the financial burden imposed. Needs to be an even handed approach.

LC is there some way of ensuring there will be some momentum – FIG has to share some of the pain/gain. PR indicated it was still early days for the process. DNR indicated there are more things that we will have to go through in more details with industry members to look at finfish and restricted finfish licences. Catch verification will be shared around and everyone should have a go at it, including operators in the Calamari fishery. It is done randomly and we do try and share it around but if we are suspicious of any vessels they are prioritised. We probably went through a phase where we weren't suspicious enough.

PR invited any other comments on this paper.

Paper out for consultation until 11th August, if companies can respond with individual representations or FIFCA wide representation. We will seek to take account of comments where we can in producing the final version. Once we have a final document the key information should be gazetted 3 months before 2018 so basically by 1st October.

**FIFCA/
DNR**

SA indicated that the earlier any comments are made the better as it will give fishery scientists time to address them.

8. Date of next meeting

8.1 The date of the next meeting is **7th September 2017 at 0900.**

9. Exclusion of Press & Public

The Chairman moved as follows:

“I move that the press and public be now excluded on the ground that the next items of business to be considered are likely to disclose exempt information under Paragraphs 4 & 9 of Schedule 3 of the Committees (Public Access) Ordinance 2012.

10 Fishing Access Fees – 2018

10.1 A paper on fishing fees was presented. This compared actual fee/revenues to the guideline target of 10%. The paper was presented for comment not for any recommendations to be considered. It is an opportunity for the industry to comment on any of the detail. FIFCA were invited to include any comments in a letter to be submitted by the end of June.

FIFCA

Minutes confirmed this day of 2017.

Chairman

Secretary