

Lyme Bay Fisheries and Conservation Reserve Consultative Committee Meeting

Meeting held at the Royal Lion Hotel, Lyme Regis on 10th September 2013

Minutes of the meeting

Present:

Tim Glover, Blue Marine Foundation. (Chair)
Charles Clover, Blue Marine Foundation.
Neville Copperthwaite, Project Coordinator/Committee Secretary.
Andy Woolmer, Fishery Adviser.
Fiona Wheatley, Marks and Spenser.
Adam Rees, Plymouth University.
Simon Pengelly, Southern IFCA.
Sam Dell, Southern IFCA
Nick Wright, MMO.
Jerry Percy, NUTFA
Joana Smith, Natural England.
Bridget Betts, Dorset Coast Forum.
Jim Newton, Beer Fisherman.
Paul Wason, Lyme Regis, towed gear.
Dave Sales, Fisherman, West Bay, static gear.
Angus Walker, Fisherman, Axmouth, static gear.
Alex Jones, Fisherman, Lyme Regis, static gear.
Dave Hancock, Fisherman, Axmouth, static gear.
John Worswick –West Bay, scallop diver.
Aubrey Banfield, West Bay, static gear.
Nigel March, Lyme Regis, static gear.
Arthur Lee, Lyme Regis, static gear.
Mark Machin – Samways
Liam McAleese, Marine Planning
Rowena Taylor, Graphic Designer.
Gus Caslake, Seafish.
Mike Spiller, Angling Trust.
John Shuker, Lyme Regis, scallop diver
Rupert Lloyd, Dorset County Council.
Lawrence Spencer, Open University.

1) Apologies:

Tim Robbins, Devon and Severn IFCA.

Michael Coyle, Marine Management Organisation.

Mike Green, Beer Representative.

Nigel Hill, Fisherman, Lyme Regis, static gear.

Mark Cornwell, West Bay towed gear.

Jim Portus, SWIFA.

Minutes

2) Agree minutes of the 16th Working Group meeting:

The minutes were agreed.

3) Committee membership and associations' members and boats list.

The individual port association agreements were due to be completed and signed by all fishermen by the meeting date. Neville had collected the agreements from Beer and Axmouth and Dave Sales produced the West Bay agreement at the meeting. Alex Jones had not finalised the Lyme Regis agreement with names and boat registrations and said he would post it to Neville ASAP. Tim Glover thanked those fishermen that had signed their agreements.

Neville introduced John Shuker, a scallop diver who has recently moved to Lyme Regis from the Channel Islands.

4) Update on Implementation of Management Plan

a) Potting Study

Adam Reese reported that the potting study was going well and reported the first baseline study had been completed. Adam showed video footage of the seabed which showed a forest of seafans and an abundance of marine life. Rowena said that she could use some of this footage for the website and also at the Blue Conference.

b) Ports infrastructure.

Neville reported that the four Port ice equipment EFF bids seemed to be dragging on and that the MMO had requested even more detailed information before the bids could be finalised. Nick Wright said that the paperwork had been sent back to the MMO Newcastle headquarters from the local office and that this was a good sign.

c) Fully Documented Fisheries project and grant application.

Nick Wright said that the application is being treated as urgent but the MMO wants to ensure that there are no conflicts with the iVMS Type Approval project.

d) Code of Conduct review conclusions

Tim opened the debate to the floor by asking if the individual port associations had been consulted about the voluntary Code of Conduct review details that were put forward at the last meeting. In particular, the extended net length proposal and the cuttlefish egg issue. A debate by the fishermen ensued and through a logical process, the net length figure of 4,000 yards of net with a mesh size of less than 7.5 inches and 8,000 yards of net with a mesh size of 7.5 inches or more was settled on. The rationale for this was explained by Aubrey Banfield; larger mesh nets do not catch as much as smaller mesh nets and are left at sea for twice as long as smaller mesh nets. Therefore, if fishermen are to be able to work every day, then there needs to be twice the length of larger size mesh nets than smaller mesh nets. Andy Woolmer commented that this debate about net details was exactly the way adaptive fisheries management should work and was also a vindication of grass-roots management. It was agreed that the individual maximum net length of 600 yards would remain the same in order to discourage larger boats with bigger net carrying capacity from fishing in the reserve.

Cuttlefish management was overlooked in the original Code of Conduct and so it was agreed to include within the Code: to leave pots in the water that had been encrusted with cuttlefish eggs until they hatched out. Angus Walker said that the wording should include 'where practically possible' due to the odd instances when pots would have to be brought ashore because of gales. Tim said that the draft revised Code of Conduct would be circulated prior to the next meeting so that it could then be ratified.

e) Inclusion of a towed gear code of conduct.

Tim reported that Teri Portman had taken the lead on organising this but unfortunately was not present. Neville said that Terry had told him that SWIFA already had a code of conduct and that the plan was to modify this to suit Lyme Bay. Simon Pengelly verified the existence of the SWIFA code of conduct and said that the original intention of this was to protect the sensitive areas of the SAC. Dave Sales cautioned that a mobile code of conduct and iVMS would lead to the re-entry of trawlers into the area. Paul Wason questioned whether there was any point in having a mobile code of conduct and Charles Clover said that it had always been Blue's intention to help with product branding for displaced mobile gear vessels that fished responsibly and the code was crucial to this.

f) Seafish Responsible Fishing Scheme update.

Gus reported that he now has a few fishermen signed-up to the scheme and he was keen to get on with further coaching and auditing. Angus said that while everyone will agree with the aims of the scheme, the title was incorrect and misleading because it did nothing to further responsible fishing, instead, it concentrated on care of your catch. Fiona Wheatley said that whilst this was the case with the title wording, the scheme had never set out to claim to promote responsible fishing and that this was well understood. Gus said that the scheme is being regionalised and these elements will be part of the independent audit linked to the Lyme Bay sustainability, traceability and quality initiative. Andy Woolmer said that the independent audit trail makes the whole package really strong. Gus said that the Lyme logo as well as the Seafish logo will be printed on the tallies.

As part of the RFS scheme, Blue had decided to find some money from existing project funds to supply a limited amount of thermal insulated fish boxes to the fishermen. This would be in addition to and totally separate from the EFF Port Improvement applications and would be linked to the recently signed fishermen's Association Agreements. The Lyme Regis Association Agreement had still not been completely signed-up but as soon as this agreement is submitted to Blue, advice on box numbers per boat will be sought from Seafish and the boxes sourced for all four ports.

g) Marine Planning (Guardline) study.

Liam McAleese reported the three components of the study are progressing and next week he will be sending the review report to IFCA's for a technical review. He said that it was vital that fishermen's information is included and is available for analysis. This will require them signing a data release letter for the MMO. Liam said that he realised this information is confidential so he wanted to reassure everyone involved that the information will be collated and then aggregated so that everything is anonymous. Once the work is in draft form, the Group will be able to check it and add comments. Liam left Data Release Forms with the port representative for dispersal to all the fishermen, to be collected as soon as possible to enable the study to push-on. The study is relying on the return of these forms asap.

5) Communications

a) Managing MPAs Conference – September 18th.

It was reported that the conference was now full and included a good complement of fishermen. Charles informed the group that a wide cross-section of interested parties will be present and that inevitably controversial subjects will be raised. He said that he had asked Cefas to do a report on Bass stocks and that this would go out to the press.

b) Website

Rowena Taylor said that a local group called Turning Lyme Green had been following our website at www.lymebayreserve.co.uk and had arranged a meeting with herself and Neville with a view to linking with the group to promote practical environmental changes locally. Their main campaign at the moment is to encourage all shops in Lyme Regis to use bio-degradable bags. They are also considering a campaign to introduce biodegradable fishing line. A view was not given by the group regarding linking with them. Rowena said that she was also interviewing fishermen in order to put a weekly article on the website called 'A day in the life of a fisherman'.

c) Interpretation Boards.

Rowena reported that a planning application for the siting of the interpretation boards has been submitted to East Devon District Council and we are awaiting a decision. Once successful, we will then submit an application for the interpretation boards that are to be sited in the West Dorset District.

d) Exhibitions, festivals & displays.

Samways had kindly offered to display promotional material in their window. Rowena will arrange this next week. She reported that we had a presence at the Nature Rocks event in West Bay in August but she felt that it was not really a suitable event for the Lyme Bay project.

e) Lyme Bay Brand

Tim said that before the Lyme Bay brand could be launched we would have to get all the component parts of it in place. This will include the RFS scheme, the EFF Port Improvement scheme which includes fishermen's ice facilities, the Codes of Conduct, and traceability measures. We should aim to get all these measures in place by the spring on next year.

6) MMO/IFCA update

Nick reported that the iVMS supplier's workshop had taken place in July and Type Approval will be completed by the end of this year. Devon and Severn IFCA will progress their permitting bylaw and they could implement iVMS early next year. He cautioned that EFF will not fund something that is required by regulation and this may have implications on your EFF application. Aubrey asserted that because there was a precedent, the authorities would have to fund the installation of iVMS if they imposed its use. Andy Woolmer highlighted to Nick that the Bylaws were not directed at static gear vessels but were directed at the management of mobile gears within the SACs. As the majority of vessels operating from Lyme Bay ports in the project were static gear vessels iVMS would not be a statutory requirement for them and so the EFF funding should be unaffected. Simon Pengelly advised the Group to write formally to both IFCA's to express concern about fishermen having to pay for iVMS. He said the IFCA's were looking to implement iVMS for mobile gear boats only as he sees iVMS as a special tool to implement access around special features.

Regarding the Bottom Towed Fishing Bylaw that will come into effect in April, Simon said that they will draw boundaries as close as possible around sensitive areas, including buffer zones. Natural England and Southern IFCA has had concerns about these areas and subsequently He and Sam Dell has surveyed these areas using Aubrey Banfield and his boat from West Bay. If and when DEFRA revokes the SI then an amendment must be carried out. Simon said that they are prepared to look at other low confidence reefs if these are made aware to us. This data will be used for the group.

Sam reported that in response to the recent illegal fishing incursions into the SAC area, Southern IFCA had purchased a new fast response patrol boat which is trailered and can be launched from any port. The boat is named Protector.

7) Funding update

Tim reported that the application for £16,000 from the Rita Lila Howard Foundation for the education program had been successful. He also reported that first Tranche of DEFRA funding for the potting study had been received.

8) A.O.B.

Alex Jones said that a West Dorset District Council had changed their policy regarding moorings in Lyme Regis which would lead to his mooring and others losing monetary value and would also lead to an influx of fishermen from outside the area. He thought that this would have a detrimental effect on the Code of Conduct. John Worswick reminded Alex that the Group had always been against a private fishery. Charles proposed that in the first instance we establish the facts of the matter by engaging with the West Dorset Authority. Dave Sales said that the West Dorset Harbour Manager was Nick Thornley. The Chairman will contact him and report at the next meeting.

Charles reported that there had been a judgment about quota following the recent Judicial Review of Article 16(a) of the reformed Common Fisheries Policy. The Minister is now compelled to use transparent and objective criteria including those of an environmental, social and economic nature when allocating fishing opportunities. This also requires the Minister to endeavour to provide incentives to fishermen who deploy selective fishing gear and who use fishing techniques with reduced environmental impact. Charles said that as Lyme Bay fishermen have currently done more than most to tick these boxes he suggested writing a letter to Minister Benyon saying that it would be appropriate if Lyme Fishermen could be first in line when there is a quota reallocation. Jerry Percy thought that this was an astute move that would realise the aims of the Judicial Review.

Date of next meeting.

29th October, to be held at the Royal Lion Hotel, Lyme Regis at 6pm.

Duration of meeting:

7pm – 9:30pm.

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