

Minutes of CPG on Fishing

24/09/2019

Opening Remarks:

Meeting begins with brief opening remarks of CPG convener Stewart Stevenson MSP noting turnout was perhaps disappointing. Mr Stevenson quickly went over what happened at the last meeting and confirmed that Tavish Scott MSP had now left.

Approval of Minutes:

Mr Stevenson sought approval for the minutes of the previous meeting which was given by the members of the group, noting that Maureen Watt MSP was in attendance at the last meeting and that the previous minutes should be corrected to reflect that. The minutes were approved.

Election of Co-convener:

An election for new co-convener was held and Beatrice Wishart MSP was elected unanimously.

Discussion Regarding the Secretariat:

Mr Stevenson asked for everyone to take their own notes this meeting as the issue of the secretariat will be visited in the next meeting.

Presentation 1:

The first presentation of the evening was by Steve Lawrence, Economics Project Manager at Seafish. Mr Lawrence presented data and fisheries management. He explained the role that these should play in decision making. Mr Lawrence suggested that more robust data would mean better decision making. He went on to state that Seafish gather data from 15% of the UK fishing fleet, data which he explains can be tailored to individual needs. Mr Lawrence offered to share relevant data with members of the Fishing CPG.

Presentation 2:

The second presentation was given by Mike Park, Chief Executive of the Scottish White Fish Producers Association (SWFPA). He presented on the discards ban which is now in full force. Mr Park outlined how the north section of the North Sea is a complex fishing area and that recommended catches for next year are all decreasing. He went on to point out that Cod has recently lost its MSC certificate and that a 63% TAC reduction will likely mean a choke by March/April. He then suggested that focus on the landing obligation was to the detriment of the need to look at the economic and social benefits of fishing. However, he highlighted that the landing obligation is only one issue, issues such as gear conflict and boats being pushed north due to parasites and the movement of shoals are also important.

Presentation 3:

The third presentation was given by James Withers, Chief Executive of Scotland Food and Drink (SFD). Mr Withers highlighted that it was SFD's mission to grow the value and reputation of Scotland's food and drink, and to develop markets at home and overseas. Mr Withers's

highlighted that the organisation wants to increase the voice of the catching sector within the organisation. For comparison he highlighted that Whisky amounts for most exports at £6.3bn while seafood is worth £1bn. Mr Withers ended by suggesting that the focus should be on premium quality similar to what Norway and New Zealand have done rather than a mass market strategy. Mr Withers highlighted the Showcasing Scotland 2019 event to be held in Gleneagles, 1st to 3rd October and the interest in seafood from attendees.

Open Discussion:

There was then an open discussion after the presentations consisting of a wide range of topics. Several points were made about data, including that all vessels could act as research platforms, that Cod migration might play a role in the perceived reduction of stock numbers, and the way in which Norway funds its fisheries research. There was a mention of whether anything more that can be done with nets and gears to reduce the impacts of the landing obligation, the need to understand the squid fishery better and the issues between offshore wind farms and fish. There was also some discussion on electronic markets and the good work that is being done by Shetland on that front, the impact Brexit might have on exporters, and the upcoming Year of Coasts and Waters 2020 which VisitScotland is working on at the moment.

Close of Meeting:

There was a brief discussion about further meetings. Mr Stevenson assured those present that his office would be in contact with information regarding the next meeting in the near future.

Attendee List:

Stewart Stevenson MSP

Peter Chapman MSP

Finlay Carson MSP

Liam McArthur MSP

Steve Lawrence – Seafish

Mike Park – Scottish White Fish Producer’s Association

James Withers – Scotland Food & Drink

Elspeth Macdonald – Scottish Fishermen’s Federation

Charles Millar – Sustainable Inshore Fisheries Trust

Phil Taylor – Open Seas

Anne Birnie – North East of Scotland Fishermen’s Organisation

Alan Coghill – Orkney Fish Producer’s Organisation

Ruby Temple-Long – Scottish Wildlife Trust (on behalf of Scottish Environment LINK)

Erin Simpson – Office of Beatrice Wishart MSP

Anna Coleman – Office of Stewart Stevenson MSP