1 AT A MEETING OF THE NORTH WESTERN INSHORE AND CONSERVATION AUTHORITY HELD AT TRUCKHAVEN, CARNFORTH, 21st SEPTEMBER 2023

PRESENT – MEMBERS

Mr P. Capper Chair MMO appointee

Cllr. A Markley Cumberland Council

Cllr. G Davies Wirral Council

Cllr. S Clarke Lancashire County Council

Mr R. Benson MMO appointee

Mr N. Baxter MMO appointee

Mr S. Brown MMO appointee

Mr S. Manning MMO appointee

Mr L. Stainton MMO appointee

Mr K. Thompson MMO appointee

Ms C Salthouse MMO appointee

Mr R Donnan MMO appointee

Mr W Friend MMO appointee

IN ATTENDANCE

L. Browning Natural England

S. Johnston MMO

Miss L Tan MMO

Mr M Rowlings, Mr T Davies, Mr S Ward

Mt C Bryden, Mr P Harrison, G Wells Members of Industry

NWIFCA OFFICERS ATTENDING

CEO, Senior Scientist, Clerk

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Cllr. J Hugo Blackpool Council

Cllr J Boak Westmorland and Furness Council

Mr B Leigh MMO appointee

Dr J Andrews MMO appointee

Dr C Mihailovici MMO appointee

Mr D Harpley MMO appointee

Mr R Lomax MMO appointee

2 CHAIRMAN’S ANNOUNCEMENTS (AGENDA ITEM 1)

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting, including Councillor Graham Davies newly appointed representative of Wirral Council, and Ms Leanne Tan from the MMO.

He reminded members to sign the attendance register and declare any interests prior to speaking on the relevant agenda item.

3 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS (AGENDA ITEM 2)

Mr S Manning and Mr Benson agenda items 9 and 10

4 MINUTES OF MEETING 22nd JUNE 2023 (AGENDA ITEM 3)

An amendment was requested regarding the location of the meeting. Clerk to action/

RESOLUTION: FOLLOWING AGREED AMENDMENTS, THE MINUTES BE APPROVED

Proposed: Councillor Markley Seconded: C Salthouse, all in favour, carried

5 MATTERS ARISING (AGENDA ITEM 4)

Mr Manning asked if the BVMG group would be reconvened. CEO said there were currently other matters having to take priority, but other options for engaging with stakeholders were being looked at.

6FINANCE REPORT (AGENDA ITEM 5)

CEO presented the report on behalf of the accountants. He said there had been a small underspend in Q1 due to carrying staff vacancies, these have since been filled. He went on to inform members about the Authority’s reserves and the small change to the way they are now being reported which adds greater clarity.

THE REPORT WAS RECEIVED

7 SUMMARY FROM FINANCE & PERSONNEL MEETING 20TH SEPTEMBER 2023 (Agenda Item 6)

Councillor Markley reported that it had a very good and constructive meeting. Referring to the Job Evaluation and Pay Review which had been previously agreed by the Authority CEO said that £30K in pay rises together with back pay as appropriate agreed to 1st April 2022. It is hoped that all officers will agree the new salaries and grading structure, but an appeals process is being put in place in the event of any appeals being lodged.

A Strategic Asset Review was also agreed to replace our aging and failing fleet of vehicles and RIBs over the next three years. Vehicles would be replaced every five years and ATVs every three years moving forward. What was previously badged as the Vessel Replacement Fund has now been updated to CARF, Capital Asset Replacement Fund, following the substantial investment in North Western Protector, there is no requirement to procure a new patrol vessel in the near future.

It was agreed by the sub-committee to seek ratification of its recommendations at today’s full Authority meeting.

RESOLUTION: TO APPROVE THE JOB EVALUATION, PAY REVIEW AND CAPITAL ASSET REPLACEMENT PROGRAMME

Proposed: Councillor Markley, Seconded: Councillor Clarke, 10 in favour, 3 abstentions

8 SUMMARY FROM TSB 15TH AUGUST 2023 (AGENDA ITEM 7)

Mr Manning declared an interest in this item.

CEO gave a verbal update on behalf of the TSB Chair. He informed the Authority that Mr Brian Leigh and Dr Jim Andrews had been re-elected as Chair and Vice-Chair respectively.

He reported that Black Scar and Perch Scar had opened as a dredge fishery and the committee had recommended that the cockle beds in Morecambe Bay and Leasowe remain closed. It was resolved that Penfold fishery would be opened subject to HRA, all other non-commercial beds would be open for gathering of 5kg per day for recreational use.

Senior Scientist reported that Flookburgh would be resurveyed, and Mr Manning felt this was unnecessary. He went on to ask why Pilling has not been discussed, and requested it be on the agenda for the next meeting. Pilling had already been resolved to remain closed.

It was reported that the Head of Enforcement has been in regular discussions with our partner agencies regarding Penfold fishery, access and ‘tonning up’ operations. The RSPB have agreed to access but not to the provision of loading areas. None of the agencies spoken to will allow this operation on any of their sites. The end result is that the fishery will be access and transit only, no parking and members of industry must source their own facilities for tonning up. It was also considered that boat access would not be feasible and the HRA has been drafted. Mr Brown felt that none of the issues were unsurmountable and said there was a case in law going back many years. He added that past issues related to parking and litter. Mr Thompson said that providing ancillary facilities was not in the remit of the Authority and industry must organise this themselves.

Mr Browning stated that the whole area had multiple designations as an SSSI including Haul Road and Mr Manning felt there were wider implications as this area had an established use and disputed some of the features, feeling that both Natural England and RSPB were being difficult. Mr Benson said it would be most helpful if our representative from Sefton Council would attend meetings, both CEO and the Chair have made efforts to engage with councillors, but this is not always fruitful.

No further vote needed the Authority will open the fishery subject to the HRA and stakeholders will be updated accordingly.

9 CHIEF OFFICERS REPORT (Agenda Item 8)

CEO presented his report for information.

CEO welcomed Councillor Davies representing Wirral Council he also updated members on the appointment of Councillor Hugo Deynem who has filled the vacancy at Cheshire West and Chester Council.

The pay review and Unison recognition had been covered by an earlier agenda item, as had the Authority finances. He added that the internal Policy Working Group were working to progress the development and implementation of new policies and procedures.

The search continues for new office premises at Carnforth and Whitehaven.

Following a recent recruitment campaign, we have recruited two new IFCOs into Whitehaven and an Engineer. The two-year fixed IFCO role which is DEFRA funded has also been filled and is placed in Barrow.

He reported on an event held in Wallasey inviting members of the public in the North Wirral area to discuss their concerns regarding gillnetting in the area. Officers intend to hold more regular events around the region to aid engagement with both public and stakeholders.

The Byelaw Working Group has also been resurrected to progress the development of byelaws which will inform discussions with TSB. Byelaw 1 is still awaiting ministerial sign off.

Officers have attended meetings regarding the Dee Estuary and the Authority will be updated accordingly. Mr Manning raised a concern about the issuing of permits should NWIFCA take overall control, but at this stage discussions are at a very early stage.

THE REPORT WAS RECEIVED

10 PATROL AND ENFORCEMENT REPORT (AGENDA ITEM 9)

In the absence of HOE the CEO referred to the report for information.

He informed members that the Authority had now received the Gold Award from the Ministry of Defence Employer Recognition Scheme, where we had previously been awarded silver.

The procurement of drones for both the science and enforcement teams is progressing at pace and pilot training will be undertaken by officers in October.

Repairs to North Western Protector are nearing completion and she will shortly be moved to Workington for routine annual maintenance and the installation of the jet drives.

HOE has continued to Chair a multi-agency group relating to Penfold Fishery in response to issues raised by partner agencies last year. Officers are seeking to implement new management which will reduce the impact of ancillary activities.

Under GDPR we are required to ensure data we hold is accurate and up to date, therefore it is intended to undertake a review of the Byelaw 3 Permit Waiting List. Councillor Markley and Mr Manning said it was essential that we protected future generations of fishers. Mr Terry Davies asked about the possibility of apprenticeship schemes and Mr Rawlings suggested a point system. It was agreed to put this item on the agenda for the November TSB.

PROPOSAL: TO ADD BYELAW 3 PERMIT WAITING LIST TO TSB AGENDA

Proposed: Councillor Markley, Seconded: Mr R Benson, 15 in favour, 1 abstention, carried

RESOLUTION: THE REPORT BE RECEIVED

11 SCIENCE REPORT (AGENDA ITEM 10)

Senior Scientist presented her report for information, which updated members on work undertaken since the last meeting.

The priorities of the science team have been to complete cockle and seed mussel surveys and initiate a summer whelk sampling programme alongside drone training, fisheries management plans and mussel MLS work.

All cockle beds in Morecambe Bay, Southport and Leasowe were surveyed and reports submitted to TSB on 15th August. The mussel beds were inspected a number of times over the past three months. South America and Falkland were surveyed later these were sometimes hampered by the dates of the spring tides.

Following final inspection on 3rd and 4th August conditions were deemed suitable for a dredge fishery on Perch Scar and Black Scar at Fleetwood.

Mr Stainton queried the minimum landing size for whelks, responding she reported that the national MLS is 45mm, but preferred option which would protect the maturity of the whelks would be increased to 55mm then 65mm ending at 75mm, Mr Stainton said that this would have a detrimental effect on fishermen. He added that he had not had any scientific evidence to support this. Mr Donnan reported that he had witnessed the landing of undersize whelks and there was a need to allow them to grow on. Mr Brown added that science input had been taken from outside the district.

RESOLUTION: THE REPORT BE RECEIVED

Proposed: Ms C Salthouse, Seconded: Mr N Baxter, all in favour, carried

12 ANNUAL REPORT (Agenda Item 11)

CEO presented the Annual Report for 2022-23 and asked members to read the document outside the meeting. No further comments were received.

RESOLUTION: TO RECEIVE THE REPORT

Proposed: Councillor Markley, Seconded: Mr W Friend, all in favour, carried.

13 ANY OTHER BUSINESS (Agenda item 12)

Mr Brown raised concerns regarding the new sea defences at Rossall and the toxins withing the limestone used. Councillor Clarke said he would speak to contacts at Wyre Council and relay our concerns.

The Chair thanked members for their attendance and closed the meeting at 14.15pm,