

**NWIFCA Annual Meeting:
18 June 2020: 11:00 a.m.**

**AGENDA
ITEM NO.
12**

Chief Officer Report January – May 2020

Purpose of Report: Information

Recommendation: Receive the report

Contents:

- i. Covid 19 working**
- ii. Personnel, Health & Safety**
- iii. Communications**
- iv. Byelaw update**
- v. NWIFCA review**
- vi. Association of IFCA**
- vii. Defra**

1. The March NWIFCA meeting was cancelled as Covid 19 spread across UK. On 16 March Government advised against all face to face meetings and introduced strict restrictions from 23 March.
2. This report does not repeat information in the March report. Members may wish to receive both reports at the June meeting.

i. Covid 19 working restrictions

3. Preparations for possible restrictions and home working commenced in mid-February 2020. All Officers were instructed to consider if they could work at home and what additional equipment they would need to work remotely. All Officers were provided with remote access software for their computers instructions on its use and training as required. Restrictions commenced in full on 23 March 2020
4. Government guidance was implemented immediately received:
 - a. All officers instructed to commence home working if possible from 23 March
 - b. An isolation rule imposed for vulnerable officers or their families
 - c. Shore and sea patrols were suspended
 - d. Survey and sampling was suspended
 - e. The NWIFCA meeting on 19 March was cancelled
 - f. One named officer was assigned to work in the Carnforth and Whitehaven offices regularly to receive and send post, issue permits and handle important administration.
5. **By end April:** The Health and Safety policy and all risk assessments were reviewed to identify work which could continue within government guidelines. Officers able to continue working were identified and new work programmes agreed.
6. Weekly manager meetings were instigated from 15 April to review health and wellbeing of officers, monitor continuing work and discuss current issues across all teams.
7. Defra instigated monthly meetings with IFCA Chief Officers COG from 2 April.
8. IFCA Chief Officers Group commenced weekly meetings 1 April,

9. From the start of restrictions all internal, external, statutory and public face to face meetings were cancelled. All meetings listed in the continuing work above and below are held by phone or online using tele or video conferencing. The main software platforms in use are Zoom, Skype, Teams. The Authority has procured a business license for Zoom.
10. Council bodies and Committees including IFCA are required to provide public access to statutory meetings. On 4 April an SI enabled Local Authorities, their committees, joint committees and outside bodies including IFCA to continue business using online meetings. The SI shows the importance attached to the public access provision to ensure the public can join meetings effectively and participate in Authority meetings when appropriate under standing orders.
11. For IFCA with limited IT resources and technical expertise on line meetings were a significant additional burden. By end April no IFCA and few Councils had held any online meetings with public access and NWIFCA had no experience of video conferencing and no software.
12. Nevertheless, the 12 May TSB took place on line without major difficulty. Papers were sent out only electronically. Public access was provided by live stream of the proceedings on the internet.
13. Online meetings do not allow everyone to attend and could cause some to feel disenfranchised leading to complaints. Some people do not have computer, expertise or internet access. The technology limits quality and detail of debate. Discussions take longer. A secure voting system must be operated. Meeting details must be kept secure and access controlled.
14. In April IFCA Chief Officers considered the risk of legal challenge if stakeholders are prevented from attending meetings because they are held online. For IFCA the matters most likely to give rise to challenge are the opening and closing of fisheries and the making of byelaws. Chief Officers agreed that their advice to members would be against making byelaws at online meetings, however NWIFCA agreed by electronic vote before this meeting to go ahead with byelaw making on line.
15. National continuing work coordinated by COG
 - i. Comparison of active fisheries in IFCA Districts and exchanging experience to develop best practice.
 - ii. Liaison with Defra and MMO and provide regular updates
 - iii. Preparation of national working protocols covering key areas of work common to all IFCA
 - iv. Reporting fisheries intelligence to Defra
 - v. Reporting disposition of assets (IFCA vessels and Officers) to Defra weekly
 - vi. monitoring development of responses to COVID nationally and regionally.
 - vii. Continuing non virus related work with MMO such as Member appointments and the national data sharing agreement
16. **Continuing NWIFCA work programmes:** Following sign off of risk assessments by managers and within government guidelines the following work is continuing:

Enforcement team

 - a. Review risk assessment of safe working procedures and equipment to protect health
 - b. Shore patrols in the Dee, Mersey and south of the District.
 - c. Shore patrols from Carnforth
 - d. Shore patrols in Barrow area
 - e. Shore patrols in North of the District
 - f. Collection, collation and national reporting of intelligence collected on patrols
 - g. Reduced enforcement including some joint enforcement with partner bodies such as MMO.
 - h. monitoring of St Bees Voluntary Code of Conduct Netting Closure.

Science team

- i. Shellfish sampling for Councils to maintain vital shellfish classifications.
- j. Scientific survey of shellfish beds for possible fisheries through 2020
- k. virtual meetings of TAG to develop an online resource - IFCA Science, Research and Environment Officer training package
- l. weekly science team meetings
- m. TAG representation at meeting of Defra Blue Carbon Working Group
- n. communication with Bivalve mollusc working Group via email
- o. communications with MMO and Natural England over MMO fisheries assessment of Shell Flat SAC
- p. completion of MMO consultation on North West Marine Plan

Administration

- q. Communication with NWIFCA Authority members
- r. Preparation for statutory meetings on line
- s. Updates to website
- t. Issue of fishing permits
- u. Office administration in Carnforth & Whitehaven
- v. General administration in all areas of work including answering phone queries and processing mail
- w. All finance & HR processes including payroll, paying suppliers, issuing invoices, pensions, budgeting, monthly reconciliations, year end, VAT returns
- x. Ordering equipment and supplies for NWIFCA
- y. Vehicle administration & maintenance
- z. Vessel maintenance
- aa. National co-ordination with other IFCA's, MMO, Defra
- bb. IT co-ordination and setting up of virtual meetings
- cc. Management meetings, team meetings, staff welfare
- dd. Recruitment to short list stage

ii. Personnel, Health & Safety

17. Members Four MMO members were appointed to NWIFCA following interviews in January. They are

- Mr Nick Baxter
- Mr Wayne Friend
- Mr Gary Piddock
- Mr Lewis Stainton

The Authority welcomes all the new members and looks forward to their contributions to Authority business.

18. Mrs Bryony Pearce resigned as MMO appointee in January because of family circumstances. The Authority thanks Bryony for 18 months service.

19. The Authority has one vacancy for an MMO appointee. We do not know when MMO will be able to launch a recruitment. Three MMO appointees will reach the statutory limit of 10 years' service to the Authority in 2020. MMO has still not decided how it will solve the problem of large numbers of appointees across all 10 IFCA reaching this limit in 2020, however in response to Covid 19 MMO has extended by 6 months the terms of all appointees whose appointments end in 2020. I have not been notified of any extensions in NWIFCA. In order to properly track member's appointments please inform the office if you have had such an extension. IFCA Chief Officers continue to press MMO for a longer term solution to issues of appointments.

20. Officers: As planned and reported in the report for the cancelled March meeting, Mrs Irene Andrews last day as Clerk to the Authority was 6 May. Irene leaves with 31 years' service. I still intend to invite Irene back to the next meeting of the Authority in person to give

members the opportunity to say farewell properly. The appointment of a new clerk together with a science officer and one IFCO has been delayed by the difficulty of holding interviews, and starting a person with the training and induction required. These recruitments will take place as soon as restrictions are sufficiently relaxed.

21. Health and Safety: There have been no notifiable incidents in this quarter January to March 2020 however the H&S policy has been extensively revised and updated to take account of the requirements of the Covid 19 outbreak. This work has been carried out mainly by HOE, SS and Whitehaven Office Manager with advice from the Authority's retained H&S consultant Elsa Mason.

22. Complaints: there are no outstanding complaints

iii. Communications

23. In February, all officers were provided with working IT facilities to enable work outside the main Carnforth and Whitehaven offices. Use of these offices has been limited to one person part time at each site since 23 March.

24. Database updates and supply of permits have been maintained.

25. The website is being updated.

iv. Byelaw update

26. The following byelaws are in development:

- a. **Byelaw 3 Cockle and Mussel permit scheme:** This byelaw and RIA were sent to MMO for confirmation in January 2020. Extensive comments were received in February. Amendments have been made to the byelaw which will be returned to MMO for confirmation. The RIA requires further work before it can be resent to MMO. The existing byelaw remains in force and remains effective
- b. **Potting byelaw:** This is on the agenda to be made on 18 June.
- c. **MCRS Byelaw:** This is on the agenda to be made on 18 June.
- d. **North Wirral Foreshore Bivalve Mollusc Emergency byelaw:** This byelaw was made and came into force on 3 June 2020. A report was circulated to all members on 5 June. Chairman and Vice Chairman have given approval. Defra have acknowledged receipt of the byelaw. The byelaw immediately prohibited all shellfish gathering in the area defined in the byelaw. At the time of writing (8 June) the Authority estimates more than 100 people per day were stopped from shellfish gathering after the byelaw came into force. The Authority lacks resources to prevent all fishing over a 6 mile length of coastline.
- e. **Netting byelaw:** Consultations with industry and stakeholders are underway to agree and develop the measures to be included in this byelaw.

27. Byelaw review A second meeting of a byelaw review group consisting of TSB Chair and Vice Chair was held on 29 May online. A meeting planned for March was cancelled by virus restrictions. The outcomes of this meeting will be reported to TSB before recommendations are brought to the Authority.

v. NWIFCA review

28. As reported for the cancelled March meeting, 2 valid quotes were received within the tender deadline. They were from: North West employers and Risk Policy Analysts (RPA). The quotes were scored by the CEO using the criteria and scoring method set out in the tender documents.

29. The scores were reported to the Chairman and review subcommittee. No proposal on appointment of a consultant been taken.

vi. Association of IFCA

30. The December meeting of AIFCA was reported in the CEO report for the cancelled March meeting of NWIFCA. The March meeting took place in Southend courtesy of Mayor John Lamb, previous AIFCA Chairman. Minutes have not been circulated. The June 2020 meeting of AIFCA is cancelled.

31. A symposium, 'Management of the English Blue Belt' was organised by AIFCA and held on 9 March at Fishmongers Hall. The programme is at Annex A. Head of Enforcement and Senior Scientist attended. Proceedings expected to be circulated.

32. Dr Stephen Bolt, AIFCA CEO resigned in January 2020, leaving the post on 6 April. The post was advertised nationally and interviews have been held. An appointment will be confirmed as soon as possible... All members express appreciation to Dr Bolt for his 10 years' service to AIFCA and wish him well in his future career.

vii. Defra

33. Negotiations with EU are continuing over Brexit and the withdrawal agreement and are reported on Defra website.

34. The UK fisheries bill is continuing to work through parliamentary stages. The latest information can be obtained from the Defra website.

35. The Benyon report on Highly Protected Marine Areas was published on World Oceans Day (8 June) and is available from the Defra website. The report recommends that HMPA should be established within existing designated sites however, no sites have been identified. Defra indicate that implementation of the report is not expected to commence for several years.

36. IFCA Chief Officers have had monthly meetings with Defra in April May and June. Defra are regularly asked about future funding of IFCA. In June we were informed that the financial burden from Covid 19 is likely to result in cuts across government which may impact IFCA.

Main meetings attended 4th quarter

19 Jan	Chief Officers Group London
3 March	AIFCA Southend
19 March	NWIFCA Cancelled
20 March	Chief Officer's group online
2 April	Defra / IFCA Chief Offices meeting on line

Annex A: Management of the English Blue Belt Symposium
Monday 9th March 10:00 – 16:00 Fishmongers' Hall, London Bridge, EC4R 9EL
Agenda

10:00 – 10:30 Registration and refreshments

10:30	Welcome	Jamie Small AIFCA
10:35	Chair: Opening remarks	John Humphreys Southern IFCA Chair
10:45	Minister's speech delivered by Defra	Simon Brockington Defra
11:00	The MPA journey from expectation to delivery	Sam Davis Cornwall IFCA

Session 1 How is effective MPA management developed?

11:10	'Where has marine management come from, where does it have to go and how can it get there?'	Mike Elliott University of Hull
11:30	Partnerships to support evidence-based management in the NIFCA District	Clare Fitzsimmons Newcastle University
11:50	Community Voice Method: incorporating participatory democracy in marine management	Peter Richardson Marine Conservation Society
12:10	Developing appropriate fisheries management for Kingmere MCZ	Audrey Jones Sussex IFCA

12:30 – 13:15 First break: Lunch and refreshments

Session 2 What benefits can effective MPA management bring?

13:15	The Lyme Bay MPA case study: benthic recovery, storm impacts and lessons learnt	Emma Sheehan University of Plymouth
13:35	Benefits beyond boundaries: Cooperative monitoring highlights MPA value for enhanced seabed integrity	Jean-Luc Solandt Marine Conservation Society
13:55	Co-management delivering ecosystem and economic benefits in an MPA	Sarah Birchenough Southern IFCA Tom Russell Poole and District Fishermen's Association
14:15	Restoring native oysters in the Blackwater, Roach, Crouch and Colne Estuaries Marine Conservation Zone for biodiversity, ecosystem services and for a sustainable fishery	Alison Debney Zoological Society London Allan Bird Tollesbury and Mersea Native Oyster Company

14:35 – 15:00 Second break: Sweet and refreshments

Session 3 MPAs, what does the future hold?

15:00	Engaging with the community and delivering effective compliance within MPAs	Robert Clark Southern IFCA
15:20	Developing a participatory approach to the management of fishing activity in UK offshore MPAs	Declan Tobin JNCC
15:40	Panel Q&A and closing remarks	
16:00	End	

The Association of IFCAs would like to thank Fishmongers' Company's Fisheries Charitable Trust, the Chair and all of our speakers for kindly supporting the symposium.