

FISHERIES COMMITTEE

OPEN MINUTES

Fisheries Department
Thursday, 8th June 2023
9:00am

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

Present:

The Honourable Teslyn Barkman– Chairperson	TB
The Honourable Roger Spink	RS
Director of Natural Resources – Dr Andrea Clausen	DNR
Dr Alexander Arkhipkin	AA
Ms Sheena Ross	SR
Mr Alex Blake	AB
Mr Michael Poole	MP
Mr Tom Blake	TBI
Mr Drew Irvine	DI
Mr James Bates	JB
Mr Chris Moorey	CM
Andreas Winter	AW
Jorge Ramos-Castillejos	JRC
Veronica Iriarte	VI

Minute Taker: Mrs Beverley Glanville BG

Public: 4

1	Apologies for Absence	ACTION
1.1	Chief Executive- Mr Andy Keeling & MLA Birmingham.	
2	Declarations of Interest	
2.1	Industry representatives declared an interest for all items on the agenda. TB declared an interest in any SAAS related items.	
3	Confirmation of the Minutes of the Meeting held on the 6th March 2023	
3.1	The minutes were confirmed.	
4	Matters arising from the Minutes of the Meeting held on the 6th March 2023	

4.1 There were no matters arising.

5 Fishery Update

5.1 DNR gave a brief update on the fishery.

5.2 DNR explained that there have been a few staff changes since this paper was written:

- We have completed recruitment for the position of Cephalopod scientist, Dr Irina Chemshirova will start with us mid-June.
- We are still processing the paperwork, but we have also recruited a new Finfish scientist from Brazil.
- This week we have completed the interview for a new Data Manager and we are in the process of making a job offer.
- AA has decided to move to New Zealand to take up a role in the Ministry of Primary Industries after over 25 years working in this department. DNR went on to say a huge thank you to AA for all of his time here on behalf of the department. AA and DNR are in talks about how he we can retain support from him whilst he is overseas as he has a huge knowledge of Falklands fisheries and it's therefore in all our interest to continue to have support and advice from AA. TB, RS and the industry thanked AA for all of the work that he has put in over the years.
- Brendon Lee (Finish Scientist) has moved to Iceland for a 3-year career break and hopefully on his return he will bring back more knowledge to use in our fishery.
- Ben Taylor has now left the department but has remained in the islands and we have recruited Trev Law to replace him and he will start on the 3rd July 2023.
- BG will be leaving us for 1-year Maternity leave at the end of August, we have successfully recruited cover for this position and there will be a handover period to ensure it all runs smoothly.
- SR is also moving on from our department, DNR said a huge thank you to SR for all of her efforts as Fisheries Manager and Licensing Officer. TB, RS and the industry thanked SR for her work.

5.3 In Lieu of recruiting an Economist, Steve Cunningham (via MEP) has been asked to do some work on the ITQ fees for 2024, this work has now commenced and DNR noted that he may be in touch with industry during the course of this project. MP asked for a brief description as to what Steve is looking for and which data sources he will be using and confirmed they are also happy to talk to him. TB asked if a visit was needed, DNR explained that in some of the projects that will be the case but for this project it can be done remotely.

DNR

5.4 MP asked for as much time as possible to discuss Steve's report before it goes to ExCo. DNR asked if Industry have given any thought to

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refresh the KPMG report, MP it has been discussed but were waiting for what Steve's report was. DNR suggested that time might become critical if we leave it too long and the fees need to be set by the end of the year. MP said the industry will meet to discuss if it is something they want to commission.

5.5 TB asked if this is going to be ready for the next FAC? DNR hopes for it to be discussed in the closed section at the next FAC, but if for any reason it's late she will hold a separate meeting to discuss.

5.6 DNR explained as with other vacancies she will routinely be looking at the job descriptions and see if anything needs to be changed. DNR explained that cover has been identified for those positions in the meantime. MP asked if DNR has any concerns about anything slipping due to staff changes. DNR said that some project timelines might slip, but because of her, nothing she is leading on.

5.7 DNR said that SR has been preparing a timeline for 2024 Illex licence application packs and we have been talking to industry and will do our best to get them out in good time. In terms of the scoring matrix, that will still apply of those who don't have a letter of comfort and will remain the same as last year.

5.8 DNR was hoping to get an early paper to ExCo regarding Illex into ITQ, but unfortunately was not able to do so and is now hoping for it to be ready for the next ExCo after her return from annual leave. MP mentioned that they hope the collaborative industry feedback would hold a bit more weight at ExCo, compared to letters received by individual companies. DNR explained that all feedback will be used in the decision of the best way forward for the fishery.

5.9 DNR said that she hasn't been able to make any progress with the TAC to TAE for finfish project, but noted that a number of changes to how the finfish fishery is managed have already been implemented and that more changes will be made as needed. TBI mentioned that there is not such an urgency for this now, given the changes that have been made thus far. DNR explained even though the specific project has not been completed the harvest controls for the finfish fishery are now based on TAC that are calculated using the models recommended by MEP. There is more work to be done to ensure the TACs are as robust as they can be.

6. Compliance update

6.1 AB gave a brief update on the paper.

6.2 TBI asked about the fisheries observers on compliance and if they were going to be a full day on the subject. AB clarified that the observer's role will still be primarily science but will include an element of

compliance such as accurate by-catch reporting and net cleaning. DNR added that we already get some information about compliance through our science observers, but this is about ensuring a consistent approach to data collection in regards to compliance. DNR said the observers are expected to mention any compliance matter to the captain in the first instance and then report back to us.

7 Maritime Update

7.1 CM gave a brief overview of the paper.

7.2 CM was pleased to announce the agreement between DNR and DESIS in the use of the Lilibet for SAR incidents.

7.3 MP asked CM about the findings, CM was mostly legislation but a few practical findings and said to MP to pop in have a chat about it.

8 FIFCA Update

8.1 JB gave overview of the paper.

8.2 TB agreed it would be good to have a meeting to discuss the Brexit group. **FIFCA**

8.3 TB congratulated the industry on their stalls at the Barcelona Expo.

8.4 RS asked MP about the prices and the market for Loligo and Illex. MP mentioned that the first quarter prices for Loligo were quite strong, but now in the 2nd quarter the price is dropping slightly, also the demand is still strong. Illex catches were not great, but prices have been pretty good both in Asia and Europe.

8.5 DNR requested that JB send her the market data around early August, until the new data is received, ITQ fee modelling will be based on last year's data.

8.6 DNR suggested that it might be good to add the overarching Accord Action Plan to this item once FIG/FIFCA commence work on the plan.

9. February bottom trawl survey biomasses of fishery species in Falkland Islands waters, 2010–2023

9.1 JRC gave a brief presentation.

9.2 MP asked about the 2017 and the 2023 comparison on toothfish, there doesn't seem to be an exact correlation between the catch in the survey and the biomass estimate. JRC explained how the biomass calculations will also consider the spatial distribution of the catches and the catch per trawl.

9.3 TB asked about the decline in Rockcod and what we are doing to influence this. DNR explained that one of the key areas we can influence is bycatch however we have to be mindful of the other fisheries, for example Rockcod is also found in the Loligo box. DNR further explained that if we do have to move onto a full TAC system, we have to be very careful not to close a fishery down due to the bycatch, it is going to be complicated and a matter of informed risk taking. DNR gave an example of how mesh size can be used to avoid bycatch, as was done in the skate fishery. TB asked if this could be done in the Loligo fishery as well. DNR pointed out that the juvenile rock cod and the loligo are a similar size, so it's not as simple as controlling the mesh size. However, DNR noted that industry also don't wish to catch Rockcod bycatch as they make processing extremely time consuming, so they do their best to avoid it. It is all about a sustainable fishery and we are improving all the time, but the more information we have the more we can improve it. AA noted that the main issue with the historical trend in Rockcod is linked to the "misreporting of Hake in previous years". TB asked what age do they reach maturity, AA said 1-2 years. AB explained from his time as an observer from the mid-1990's through to more recent years, the Rockcod bycatch quantities in the Loligo fishery hasn't really changed that much at and so it wouldn't be reasonable to assume that the Loligo fishery was solely responsible for the collapse of this stock.

10 Finfish Licensing Advice 2024.

10.1 AW gave a short presentation.

10.2 TBI asked how the TAC was calculated by species? AW explained how it depended on if it was a category 5 or category 3 species, we either calculate the TAC as a rolling average of the previous 3 years catches or as an index that consists of the amount of biomass that is estimated from the surveys of the most recent 3 years divided by the previous 2 years.

10.3 MP said as they haven't had time to canvas all of their finfish operators' opinions on this matter and asked if we could arrange to show this presentation to the Finfish sub group over the next couple of weeks and get into more of an in-depth conversation about it there. TB asked for there to be a report of that discussion and summary of any points made, to be brought back to the committee. MP mentioned that the majority of the conversation in amongst the Finfish operators will be about the (close) to 20% reduction in A day's next year, compared to this year. MP feels that this will impact hundreds of fishing days and this will have an impact to vessels and operations and would like some more explanation on this. MP said that G Licence days will probably be talked about also.

10.4 TBI understands the maths in the reduction of the Hake, but asked why

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we are using 2021 data and 2021 Vessel units as a basis which arguably weren't appropriate for that year. TBl mentioned that there doesn't seem to be any evidence of any damage or overfishing of the Hake abundances, particularly because it is straddling stock and the Falklands proportion is relatively small, is it really necessary to have the 20% reduction. Also, with the increase in the W Effort, wouldn't that mean that more bycatch was being taken? AW explained how the algorithm that checks itself back and forth, from one year to the next. AW said he is open to a change in the algorithm if there is a clear rationale. AA explained how we are not assessing the MSY here because of recommendation from our external contractors in the 2022 paper (and the fact we don't have enough data to calculate the MSY). AA said that the problem here is that the higher the proportion of the bycatch the less fishing days you have to target your permitted species, and in 2022 there was a small proportion of Hake caught as bycatch and so this has resulted in a higher number of days being allocated to W.

11 G Licence proposal

11.1 SR gave a brief overview of the paper which essentially recommended that once the jigger fleet have left the FICZ, the trawlers fishing on a G licence would be carefully monitored for by-catch of non-permitted species and consideration would be given to closing the fishery for the year.

11.2 TBl said in terms of when the jiggers have left, it might be difficult for industry to work out if there is sufficient Illex for Trawlers. AA explained about the life cycle on the high seas compared to what is on the Falklands Shelf, as the trawlers and jiggers here are catching the same stock on the shelf, these are the mature squid migrating through the Falklands Shelf in March/April, at a depth of 150- 200 metres and they are greatly attracted to the Jigger lights which is why they have good catches. On the high seas it's a very different situation. Later in May the deep-water trawl fishery on the High Seas (and Falklands Waters may be catching squid at a depth of 400-700 metres, as they migrate off the shelf to their spawning grounds. These squid are less likely to be attached by the Jigger lights. This is the main reason why in the 2nd part of the season that trawlers sometimes have better catches than the jiggers.

11.3 TBl asked if another option was to do further spatial restrictions to control the catches. SR said that we already have a restricted area for this licence type, particularly in May. DNR said we are open to feedback and that any proposed closure will be done carefully and in consultation and with notice to the industry.

12 Compensatory days

12.1 SR gave an overview of the paper and mentioned an example of a single

vessel calling a bad weather day, when the remainder of the fleet were fishing. The suggestion of a weather forecast mentioning the word 'Gale' would provide some rationale for what may be a reasonable request.

12.2 MP said they have concern and explained they need more time for this to go back to the LPG to talk through some of the concerns.

12.3 DNR said that there has been guidance in place for some time regarding compensatory days, but as a result of a number of queries this past season, a review was carried out and a draft is presented today. We had provided more flexibility over the COVID period when there were issues with reduced crew numbers and rest, however, it seems that not all vessels are using this time as was intended. RS agreed that there should be a policy as otherwise your competitor could get treated in a different way to you.

12.4 DNR suggested that the industry comes back with comments about this and a final policy can be noted at the next FAC.

13 MMO Program LOL 2022-X

13.1 VI presented the findings of the 2nd Season 2022 MMO programme.

14 Participation in ACAP meetings, 14-19 May 2023

14.1 VI gave a short presentation on the ACAP meeting she attended in Edinburgh in May 2023.

14.2 MP asked who represents the UK government in the ACAP meetings? VI explained how she was part of the UK delegation, but also there were people from JNCC and others.

15 Date of next meeting

15.1 Thursday 14th September at 09:00am

Exclusion of the Press and Public

The Committee resolved to exclude the press and public on the grounds that the next items of business to be considered were exempt within the terms of paragraph 4 & 9 of Schedule 3 of the Committees (Public Access) Ordinance 2012.

16 Inshore fishery proposal

16.1 A discussion regarding a proposal for an Inshore fishery took place. Industry were invited to provide feedback prior to this being discussed with MLA's

Minutes confirmed this day of September 2023

Chairman

Secretary

DRAFT