

IPA Minutes of meeting 25th November 2020

Attending:

Steve Parker (SP)

Brian Pawley (BrP)

Beshlie Pool (BP)

Rick Mitchelmore (RM)

David Morgan (DM)

Jim Portus (JP)

Karen Pringle (KP)

Rachel Irish (RI)

Mat Mander (MM)

Sarah Clark (SC)

Martyn Rogers (tried to dial in but failed)

Apologies

Nick Stone

No Response:

Mark Bailie (MB)

Brian Tapper (BT)

Richard Fowler (RF)

MM opened the meeting and wanted to send the Committees' thoughts and condolences to the families of those lost at sea on the FV Joanna C.

Minutes

These were considered and actions noted. There was a request to have minutes out earlier than a week before the meeting.

Membership/Representation

Currently BT represents all the Plymouth Potters but does not attend meetings or respond to meeting requests. The Committee ask that he should be contacted to see if he wishes to sit on the Committee. If not, the Committee could ask someone else to join in his place.

SP suggested that Netting Permit Holders should be included in any suggestions for changes to the IPA chart. BrP suggested this could be to those with a legitimate interest or get involved via SP, as he represents the NFFO SW. DM discussed the point that the IPA chart was set up to separate potters from the mobile fishers and establish temporal and spatial changes if needed. Netters have always been able to use areas where mobile gear vessels do not operate. MM clarified that D&S IFCA will undertake a full consultation across all sectors should changes to the Chart and management measures be proposed.

SP raised the point that the IPA chart no longer looks the same as it did due to changes introduced to protect MPAs. MM explained that keeping the identity of the IPA was essential, as it is a licence variation, and the IPA Management is reflected in the Mobile Fishing Permit Byelaw permit conditions. MM went on to say that access to areas within the IPA is driven by Committee members, but such access needs to be within the parameters of MPAs in the area.

JP expressed the view that there are a number of representatives on the group and others outside the Committee can liaise with Committee members to provide feedback. However JP felt that there needs to be improved representation from the mobile gear sector on the Committee. MM questioned RF's position on the group as he does not currently fish within the D&S IFCA's district. DM suggested that those Committee members who have not attended meetings in the past few years should be contacted to see if they still wish to sit on the Committee and represent their sector. This was agreed by the Committee.

Gear Conflict Reports

The Committee then discussed the reports of infringements. There was general agreement amongst the Committee members that there has been underreporting of gear conflict and

potting gear losses and that reporting by the potting sector of any conflict or losses needs to be encouraged. There was a discussion about communications and D&S IFCA officers feeding back to the fisher reporting any losses and whether an investigation is being undertaken. It was highlighted that communication between the IFCA, and fishing industry needs to be improved. Concerns about the level of compliance by the mobile gear sector were raised. RM told the Committee that overall compliance was good but when the Corridor is opened the level of compliance drops significantly and the towed gear vessels do not stick to the area. JP explained that it is never acceptable to cause damage to gear and not acceptable for the towed gear sector to ingress into a closed area, and that they should take responsibility for damage.

Proposal Received

Proposal 1 – Open up Corridor for two months and Proposal 2 – Close the Corridor were considered together.

JP supported the proposal to open the Corridor for February and March. RM reiterated that if the mobile gear vessels stayed within the Corridor this would not be a problem but unfortunately this is not the case. Several members of the Committee agreed that if there was a year without any reports of gear conflict then they would be happy to consider the proposal but not at this time. There was a discussion with members of the Committee about the level of non-compliance and the validity of reporting of these events. There was a general feeling that IVMS should be used to identify the vessels that are not complying with the IPA management measures. MM explained that the level of evidence to successfully prosecute is very high and every individual situation must be scrutinised, and the evidence reviewed. There are times when officers believe there is sufficient evidence, but it may not meet the high level needed for evidential cases. He explained that IVMS is a very useful tool and with the development of further technologies this will be advanced still further. However a single sweep of demersal gear in a closed area can damage gear and destroy habitats but are difficult to build a case around and therefore not all incursions are taken to court. BrP and JP both agreed that if incursions are causing gear losses then the Corridor should be closed to demersal gear, under a statutory closure. Whilst JP did not want to see the Corridor closed, he recognised that with the continued lack of compliance by certain vessels this may be necessary. He felt that a warning should be sent out to mobile gear vessels indicating that if there is continued infringement into closed areas adjacent to the Corridor then the Corridor will be closed completely. There was a general feeling that there should be a record kept of infringements and investigations even if there is not a successful prosecution. MM explained that all IVMS data is available so if there are reports these can be checked and vessel identified. However D&S IFCA can only report those that have been determined by law to have been fishing illegally.

In conclusion to this discussion it was agreed:

- Any pot losses or damage should be reported as soon as possible (having regard for the longer time left unattended during winter) to D&S IFCA/MMO and SDCSA.
- JP to talk to the mobile gear sector explaining the threat of closure of the Corridor if infringements continue. Likewise if there are no infringements then the possibility of an extension to the opening time for the Corridor may be considered by the Committee.
- D&S IFCA can report successful investigation cases e.g. those vessels that accept a Fixed Administrative penalty for incursions or when an official written warning is given. A report of the number of investigations can be given including those still live but not necessarily the outcome.
- D&S IFCA will write a letter to the mobile gear sector together with the 2021 IPA Chart explaining that due to year-on-year infringements into closed areas adjacent to the Corridor, the Corridor would remain closed for 2021. The letter would detail that the Corridor will be monitored throughout 2021 and if there are no infringements that, an extension to the time period it is opened would be considered by the Committee

for 2022. However the letter needs to explain that if there is a lack of compliance again in 2021, the 'Corridor' may be closed completely in 2022. DM requested that a draft of the letter is circulated to the IPA Committee before being sent out to Mobile gear permit holders.

Action for SC to draft letter and circulated to Committee members for comment before sending out to Mobile Fishing Permit Holders.

Proposal to open up bottom of the triangle one month earlier on 1st May:

D&S IFCA produced information relating to the use of the area by mobile gear sector throughout the month of May. BrP would like to have seen the area opened up to potting gear one month earlier but as the data shows it is used and has been used over the past two years then he accepts that this proposal is not likely to be passed. DM suggested that the status of this area remains the same.

Proposal to rotate potting boxes with trawling/scalloping boxes.

JP suggested that most of the potting areas were not suitable for trawling (apart from the top of Zone 2 – the Triangle) and this proposal was not accepted by the Committee.

IVMS

MM discussed the national project and explained that it was still on-going and did not have anything more to update the Committee on this item.

Electronic Charts

MM explained that he did not have an update on this item, SP explained that Dale Rodwell of NFFO has been involved in this and he could ask Dale look into this and request information from Seafish.

Action for MM to e-mail SP to ask Dale Rodwell for his assistance

Communications

MM explained that he will keep the lines of communication open and will ensure D&S IFCA officers report back actions and information to fishers reporting infringements in the IPA area.

JP suggested that the Committee meet more than once a year. He proposed a meeting in February prior to the Corridor being opened. This meeting could highlight the sensitivity of the future of the Corridor and the importance of compliance. BrP supports what JP has suggested and think another meeting should be held in February. MM supported this proposal. MM also explained D&S IFCA's process of consultations to try and engage with stakeholders and permit holders. He agreed that more regular meeting might be beneficial.

An action was given to SC to have the minutes drafted and circulate in a few weeks after the meeting and potentially these could be circulated through the MMO

Action for SC to contact Mark Baillie, Brian Tapper and Richard Fowler to find out if this still wish to continue to site on the Committee.

Action for SC to contact the Committee members regarding a meeting in February 2021

AOB

BrP informed the group that Defra is in the process of forming a regional working group to progress fisheries management. BP too wanted to raise awareness of this group.

Action: RI agreed to find out about IFCA's involvement in the group.

A discussion, on the probable outcome of the end of the Brexit transition period and what this could mean to access by non UK vessel into UK waters, ended the meeting.