

DARD/AFBI Inshore Fisheries Strategy Project Steering Group – Inaugural Meeting.

Dundonald House Wednesday 11th May 2011

Present: - **Paddy Campbell** **DARD**
 Dr Carrie McMinn **AFBI**
 Dr Matt Service **AFBI**
 Lynn Gilmore **Seafish**
 Dick James **NIFPO**
 Ben Diamond **Marine Task Force**
 Myrtle Ferguson **DARD**

Welcome and Background

Paddy Campbell welcomed everyone to the meeting and provided background to the project.

DARD remains committed to the NI Inshore Fisheries Strategy but progress has been slow due to resource constraints. However funding has now been obtained under EEF for AFBI to progress the strategy project and ongoing inshore fishery management for non quota species.

Matt Service is the project manager and Carrie McMinn is the project leader. The project will last for 2 years having been initiated on 01st April 2011.

Steering Group

The Steering Group will oversee and agree:

- the project team objectives and timeline;
- provide answers to project team queries and guidance as the project progresses;
- Comment on the emerging strategy ;
- agree how to engage with stakeholders, and;
- a communication plan.

Matt Service raised the point that there may be a need to co-opt more members on to the group if the need arises for specific expertise.

Ben Diamond was concerned that the group was too fisheries orientated and a representative from CNCC should be involved to widen the representation especially with regard to providing marine environment expertise.

Lynn Gilmore cautioned for the need to ensure that industry did not think that the project would be biased against them.

Presentation by Project Team

Carrie McMinn gave a power point presentation of the project including the draft Terms of Reference (TOR):-

- To establish a draft inshore fisheries strategy that commands the support of inshore fisheries stakeholders and forms the basis for the development of policy
- To establish a draft scientific work programme that meets the requirements for an improved knowledge base on the inshore fisheries sector
- Identification of a stakeholder role in data collection whilst setting a basis for scientists and fishers to work together to deliver a credible evidence base for management of the inshore sector
- A GIS approach to the inshore sector which recognises the varying spatial and temporal extent of inshore fisheries and the variety of other pressures on coastal/inshore habitats and resources e.g. renewable energy, MPAs
- An integrated and enhanced science programme in place and working successfully with stakeholder participation
- An increased understanding of the socio-economic future of the inshore sector.

Matt Service followed this with the assurance that the team will engage with fishery stakeholders, socio-economic specialists and DARD to develop a draft inshore fisheries strategy for consultation. He pointed out that already previous meetings with the industry had shown that while they were supportive of v-notching they were not so happy with C-Mar project so this may be an opportunity to approach QUB to re-visit the situation. There were also issues which may arise with SACs off Skerries, Maidens and Rathlin as well as the Pisces Reef which may result in changing some aspects of the TOR.

The Terms Of Reference (TOR) were broadly agreed.

Discussion of strategic priorities

Paddy Campbell stated that this project was timely and data on inshore fisheries was essential to inform marine policy and planning decisions, such as DETI policy on offshore renewable energy and DOE policy for marine spatial planning.

Dick James said that historically the inshore fisheries lagged behind the offshore fisheries and as the off shore scene has changed there is now more pressure on the inshore grounds. He said he would like the project to look at the potential for new fisheries such as razor clams and spider crabs which are not currently exploited in NI.

Paddy Campbell urged the project to look at the health of the industry not just to-day but in 5-10years time. The strategy needs to focus on a sustainable fishery and how this can be maintained in the future. Issues that need to be addressed include management of inshore fishing effort, managing access and regulation of gear types. Dredge fishing and its impact on the marine environment will have to be addressed. Paddy pointed out that there is scope within NI legislation to issue "inshore" permits to NI vessels if required to restrict fishing.

Lynn Gilmore commented that the Brown Crab project was nearing completion and a agreement had been reached on a wide range of issues one of which being the further exploration of the issue of an overall NI permit system for brown and velvet crab and more science information on crab stocks.

Paddy Campbell said it was important not to have “scatter gun approach” and asked the Group if there were priority fisheries. Dick James said that winkles were an understated fishery with little or no information as “gangs” of foreign nationals were a problem. Matt Service agreed that we needed to know what is going on.

Paddy Campbell also said that boats visiting from the South under the Voisinage agreement were also an issue for the inshore fishery and future access may have to be discussed. Access might be limited by referring to a vessels track record or limiting access to vessels from adjacent areas to adjacent areas, e.g. Donegal and Londonderry or Louth and Down. .

Ben Diamond raised the issue of the NI Marine Bill etc and that any new NI strategy should be in line with these objectives. Paddy agreed that everything needs to be transparent to all stakeholders and Matt said that the key thing was to address the future not so much the present.

Communication plan

Matt Service said that a dedicated web site with possible e-mail alerts would be set up. Paddy urged that a press release should be put into the Irish Skipper and Fishing News. As it was probably too late to draft and agree a statement for the next issue of the Irish Skipper Dick James offered to “mention” the project in his column.

Lynn Gilmore suggested that the project could be officially launched at the final Brown Crab project meeting which would introduce Carrie McMinn to the stakeholders and enable her to make contacts for further meetings.

Paddy Campbell also said that the Steering Group needed to see and approve the Press release and web site and that everything must be transparent to avoid criticism from all sides of the industry and stakeholders.

Actions

- DARD to prepare draft press release by end of May for issue and website launch simultaneously by mid June 2011;
- Stakeholder visits to be completed by July 2011;
- Carrie McMinn to contact Wales, Scotland Cornwall and South inshore fisheries;
- Paddy Campbell to consider with Ian Humes on his return, further environmental expertise on the Steering Group e.g CNCC or NIEA.
- Dick James to make a preliminary mention in the June edition of Irish Skipper;
- Lynn Gilmore to advise of date of Brown Crab project meeting and to assist the project team by facilitating meetings with stakeholders.

Date of next meeting

Thursday 7th July at 10.00am in Dundonald House