

Lyme Bay Working Group

Next Steps

Meeting held at the Royal Lion Hotel, Lyme Regis, on 6th December 2011

Minutes of the meeting

Present:

Charles Clover, Blue Marine Foundation.
Tim Glover, Blue Marine Foundation. (Chair)
Neville Copperthwaite, Project Coordinator.
Andy Woolmer, Fishery Adviser.
Neil Wellum, Marine Management Organisation.
Tim Robbins, Devon and Severn IFCA.
Ian Carrier, Southern IFCA.
Simon Pengelly, Southern IFCA.
John Warswick, Fisherman, West Bay, scallop diver.
Dave Sales, Fisherman, West Bay, static gear
Paul Wason, Fisherman, Lyme Regis, static gear.
Angus Walker, Fisherman, Axemouth, static gear.
Dave Hancock, Fisherman, Axemouth, static gear.
Jim Newton, Fisherman, Beer, static gear.

Apologies:

Chris Wason, Fisherman, Lyme Regis, mobile gear.
Bret Newton, Fisherman, Beer, static gear.

Guest Speaker

Will Anderson, director, Keo Films accompanied by Lucy Meadows, producer.

Minutes

Will Anderson gave a 30 minute presentation to explain his film company's involvement with Hugh Fearnley Whittingstall's Fish Fight series and a forthcoming series commissioned by Channel Four TV. Will suggested that it could be advantageous to the Working Group to allow filming of the process leading up to the introduction of best practice fishery management measures within Lyme Bay which could be publicised by Fish Fight and held up as a model fisheries and conservation template for others to follow.

1) Agree minutes of the inaugural meeting:

The Chairman introduced the new Working Group (WG) members to each other and the minutes were corrected and agreed.

2) Over-arching principles:

Charles Clover reminded the WG of the three over-arching principles of the project and sought agreement on them. These were:

- i) best practice in protecting biodiversity within a European special area for conservation,
- ii) best practice in managing fish and shellfish stocks and
- iii) creating the maximum long-term benefits for coastal communities of adopting the best practice.

Charles reported that he had spoken to Natural England which was not aware of the fishery and conservation problems caused by the implementation of the Lyme Bay SAC. Some thought would need to be given as to how to make these problems public and how to ensure the WG's contribution to conservation objectives was validated.

The Chairman asked the Regulators to advise on appropriate management structures that would facilitate implementation of the principles.

In response, Neil Wellum said that from a national perspective, it must be ensured that the three principles do not conflict with the IFCAs' responsibilities although on the face of it, he didn't think that they did. Neil was also of the opinion that this Lyme Bay initiative could be a test case for future MPAs around the country and that the MMO was taking a keen interest in the unfolding events.

Ian Carrier reported that there is a lot of pressure on the IFCAs to deliver fishery management and harmonise their regulations: for instance both Southern and Devon IFCAs have to rationalise their regulations by 2015.

Discussion was entered into by the group in general to ascertain which suite of regulatory instruments would be appropriate to enable the practical day to day management of the area.

Charles asked how, for example, would pot limitation be enforced. What system would be used?

Ian pointed out that individual bylaws are time-consuming to enforce taking anything up to 18 months to introduce and are therefore not reactive enough.

Neil reported that bylaws will now be introduced more quickly with a maximum time of 12 months.

Simon Pengelly suggested that a single 'Permitting Bylaw' may be the most practical solution. This is an amalgamation of the Bylaw and a permit system. This would enable conditions to be placed on each permit as and when deemed necessary which would negate the need to apply for a new Bylaw every time conservation or fishery requirements changed. This would facilitate a more fluid management system which could adapt quickly to changes in circumstances.

Tim Robbins cautioned against rushing the licence process which could lead to displacement problems.

Neil pointed out that the permitting bylaw would be in addition to the national fishing licence, not instead of it.

The over-arching principles were taken to be agreed, as worded.

3) Objectives by March 31st:

Andy Woolmer had distributed questionnaires to the fishermen which would help ascertain the current state of the fishery. All questionnaires were returned which is encouraging and also shows a level of enthusiasm among the local fishing community. This baseline information will highlight the unforeseen consequences resulting from the Lyme Bay closure area and can now be used to work up a comprehensive management plan.

4) and 6) Development of a management plan from now until April

It was suggested by Jim Newton at the previous WG meeting that a structure should be considered for the WG and its relationship with regulators in order to impart a level of security for all parties as to the on-going form and purpose of the Group.

Andy Woolmer has advised that a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) would be the way to go on this. The MOU is a voluntary agreement that would morally bind all parties.

Everyone around the table said they would sign up to the MOU which will be called 'The Lyme Bay Fishery and Conservation Reserve Memorandum of Understanding'.

To avoid drafting an MOU from scratch, Ian Carrier said that he would take a template copy of a standard MOU that the IFCA's currently use so that we can adapt it.

An MOU was agreed in principle. A text will be presented for agreement at the next meeting.

5) Examples of best practice:

Examples of best fishery practice from around the world had been sent to working group members in the form of a printed document prior to the meeting, for information. This prompted debate and methods discussed included pot limitation, pot tagging, bio-

degradable panels for pots, closed seasons, policing, and vessel monitoring systems (VMS), vessel sizes and engine sizes.

Jim Newton reported that his fishermen's association had come up with some specific suggestions for the Lyme Bay area, such as a 300 pot limit per boat, a 200 yard net limit and VMS on every boat.

Angus Walker thought that an upper size limit to lobsters as well as a ban on landing crippled or bobtail lobsters should be considered.

With regards to lobsters, Ian Carrier said that although a ban was in place regarding the landing of berried lobsters, the IFCA consultation on lobster stock management was not that successful.

Paul Wason asked whether some of the SAC would be opened-up to scallop dredging in view of the early success of the VMS trials.

Neil Wellum thought it premature to be able to answer this but he did point out that the French were looking at Zonal Management for towed gear due to the availability of VMS.

Dave Sales said that he would not have a problem with limited access to the closed area by local scallop boats but he did not think that nomadic scallop boats should be allowed in.

6) Any Other Business.

The Chairman asked what the process would be if we wanted to use the WG as a management committee.

Tim Robbins' response was that the WG could act as an advisory group to the IFCAs. The IFCAs would then have to consult internally on received advice.

Dave Sales said that track-records should be done away with as he thought this was a prime reason why young men were not coming into the fishing industry.

Angus Walker wanted to make the point that this Lyme Bay initiative will be the first of its kind and he believes it will spread nationally and enhance fish prices generally and with this in mind the WG should embrace Keo Films and Hugh's Fish Fight and make use of the publicity they could bring.

Duration of meeting: 6pm – 9pm

7) Date of Next Meeting

Tuesday 17th January 2012, 6pm at the Royal Lion Hotel, Lyme Regis.

Agenda Attached

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