

Lyme Bay Working Group

4th Meeting

Meeting held at the Royal Lion Hotel, Lyme Regis, on 15th March 2012

Minutes of the meeting

Present:

Charles Clover, Blue Marine Foundation.
Tim Glover, Blue Marine Foundation. (Chair)
Neville Copperthwaite, Project Coordinator.
Andy Woolmer, Fishery Adviser.
Nick Wright, Marine management Organisation.
Ian Carrier, Southern IFCA.
Simon Pengelly, Southern IFCA.
Sam Dell, Southern IFCA.
Dave Sales, Fisherman, West Bay, static gear
Angus Walker, Fisherman, Axemouth, static gear.
Dave Hancock, Fisherman, Axemouth, static gear.
Jim Newton, Fisherman, Beer, static gear.
John Warswick, Fisherman, West Bay, scallop diver.
Martin Attrill, Plymouth University.
Mike Smith, CEFAS.
Matilda Bark, Dorset Coast Forum.

1) Apologies:

Neil Wellum, Marine Management Organisation.
Tim Robbins, Devon and Severn IFCA.
Chris Wason, Fisherman, Lyme Regis, mobile gear
Paul Wason, Fisherman, Lyme Regis, static gear.

Note; Other commitments prevented TR from attending the formal meeting but he met with several members of the WG prior to the meeting and signed the MOU)

Minutes

2) Agree minutes of the 3rd Working Group meeting:

The minutes were agreed.

3) Signing of the MoU:

The MoU was signed by both Southern IFCA and Devon and Severn IFCA Officers, all the fishermen present representing their respective ports and associations and the Blue Marine Foundation. Nick Wright reported that the MoU was yet to be signed by the MMO and had to be submitted to the Chief Executive Officer, James Cross. Charles Clover informed the Working Group that Nick Prust and Jim Portus of the South West Fish Producers Association as well as the Devon and the Dorset Wildlife Trusts had been consulted and would be sent copies of the MoU.

4) Proposed Management Plan:

The IFCA's were asked where they were regarding the estimated time-scale for introducing a permitting bylaw. Ian Carrier reported that he had only that day received legal advice on this subject and that he had not had time to read through it and therefore was not in a position to proceed. Ian did however estimate the bylaw procedure would take at least 2 years. Nick Wright suggested that an interim bylaw could be introduced by the MMO but that this would not be an ideal solution as the MMO are reluctant to go down this route; an assessment would be needed as well as a demonstrable background in gear limitation. Ian suggested that there are three options. One, do nothing. Two, enter into a voluntary agreement and three, go for a bylaw.

All the regulators agreed that, initially, the introduction of a voluntary code would be an influential first step towards the introduction of a bylaw

Dave Hancock questioned how a voluntary agreement would stop nomadic fishermen entering the cSAC.

Angus Walker stated that 'we are ahead of the game in trying to protect Lyme Bay for ourselves and it would be unfortunate if we had to wait 2 years for a bylaw'.

Dave Sales said that we should not let bureaucracy rule the day. 'Let's get on and do something. We should try and bring in a Ministerial Order.

Charles said if the law was not up to the job Blue could package it up and present it them to a Minister with a view to seeking a ministerial order until a bylaw could be put in place. This met with approval from the fishermen present.

Andy Woolmer said that a static gear code of conduct would demonstrate that fishermen in Lyme Bay were operating in a sustainable way and were leading the way by asking for

changes to management. He went on to highlight how a voluntary code can include ways of working that are considered 'best practice' that may not be suitable for statutory regulations. Andy thought that a voluntary code would help the case for a Bylaw change or a Ministerial Order.

A discussion ensued with regards to the content of static gear code of conduct, summarised thus:

- A net limit of 2,000 metres divided into two 1,000 metre nets.
- A crab pot limit of 250 pots divided into twenty five 10 metre strings.
- A whelk pot limit of 510 pots divided into seventeen strings of 30 pots.
- Net crab-crushers to be banned.
- No undersized fish/shellfish to be used as bait.
- Provide escape hatches in pots.
- All inshore vessels within the Lyme Bay cSAC to be equipped with VMS.
- Voluntarily V-notch berried lobsters.
- Clearly mark all gear.

The fishermen were asked to consult with their respective associations with regards to the static gear code of conduct and report any feedback to the next working group meeting.

5) Plymouth University Marine Institute presentation on Monitoring Regime:

Prof Martin Attrill gave presentation on how to establish the stock carrying capacity of the Lyme bay cSAC, and to confirm the value of measures of the kind proposed in the code of conduct. He explained that this could be achieved either by collecting data 'as you go', which he felt was not ideal, or an experiment could be designed with the involvement of the Working Group which could also be controlled by the Working Group. Martin suggested a three year trial consisting of 16 seabed areas measuring 500 metres x 500 metres. Four of these areas would be potted with high density. Four of these areas would be potted with medium density. Four of these areas would be potted with low density and four of these areas would be left fallow, to act as control areas. The 16 areas would be spread throughout the cSAC in such a way that would enable the four local ports to participate equally in the trials.

The question was raised as to whether netting would adversely affect the experiment within the fallow areas. Martin stated that that depended on the level of intensity of netting but that ideally these areas should be avoided if possible. Jim Newton said that he thought that there just as well be no netting at all within the fallow areas and there was general agreement to this around the table.

Neville asked how the areas would be marked; by physical buoys or by GPS? Martin thought that only the fallow areas needed buoys.

There was concern that the lack of enforceable regulation may adversely affect the experiment due to nomadic fishermen potting within the trial areas in the interim period between a voluntary regime and a regulatory regime such as a bylaw or Ministerial Order. Martin thought that this could indeed be a problem and would need to be thought about carefully.

Asked when the experiment could start, Martin said that late summer or early autumn would be ideal.

Dave Sales asked who would pay for the Plymouth Study. The Chairman responded that, because it would be essential to demonstrate the validity of the management measures and subject to the continuation of the project being approved by co-funders, BLUE would facilitate funding of the research.

Martin wound-up the presentation by saying that he did not know of anywhere else in the world where fishermen were working with scientists on this sort of experiment.

The Chairman asked the Working Group if they were happy with the Plymouth University trial and the proposed methodology as Martin had explained it and the Group was unanimous in its support.

Andy Woolmer said that he would be working with Mike and other Cefas colleagues to develop a short study that will provide information to help the Working Group with lobster management.

6) Lobsters/CEFAS:

Mike Smith of CEFAS gave a fascinating talk on lobsters. Mike divided his talk into four headings:

- Analysis of Data Change.
- A look at lobster and juvenile lobster habitat.
- Likely constraints to the fishery.
- Analysis of potential management measures.

Mike was asked a range of interesting questions and his advice was particularly sought regarding V-notching. Sam Dell said he could cost V-notching equipment and Ian Carrier said he would find out about schemes in other areas.

Dave Sales said that he thought restocking with juvenile lobsters should be considered.

Neville pointed out that although V-notching guarantees egg release, it does not guarantee an increase in lobsters within that area of release because of their long larvae life; they drift away with the tide as part of the plankton layer. He considered lobster restocking to be more tangible and can be monitored and assessed.

7) Tourism:

The Chairman reminded the Group that we are trying to find a tourist hook to engage with the public. Charles said that we need to communicate what we are doing.

The idea of a film of the seabed within Lyme Bay was discussed and John Warswick suggested that the Charmouth Heritage Centre might be a venue where such a film could be shown. Jim Newton highlighted that the Fine Foundation Centre at Beer could also house a screen. Simon Pengelly said that he thought a film would increase awareness and that would help with compliance.

It was suggested that a lobster hatchery sited locally to serve the Lyme Bay project may be just the thing to act as a portal into the project.

8) Fishery Local Action Groups and funding opportunities (FLAGS)

Andy gave a limited talk on FLAGS as some information he was expecting to receive did not arrive. He highlighted the 'bottom up' approach to of these groups in developing local projects to benefit the local fishing communities. FLAG groups are allocated an amount of Axis 4 European Fisheries Fund (EFF) money which is then used to fund local projects proposed by the fishing community. Andy will provide the Group with a comprehensive information sheet at the next meeting in order to discuss more fully.

Nick reported that a new Coastal Communities Fund is just about to come on line. Andy Woolmer also informed the group about the new Coastal Community Fund that could be used at match funding for FLAG groups and could also provide additional funding for the current project. Matilda Bark said that the Dorset Coast Forum is considering a community-wide application for the fund.

9) Any Other Business.

Angus asked how long the Working Group would run the Lyme Bay cSAC. The Chairman replied that the Working Group would eventually become the Project Management Committee and be on-going.

Simon Pengelly thought that the Lyme Regis fishermen were under-represented and it was agreed to approach Lyme Regis Fisherman Nigel Hill to become a member of the Working Group.

Duration of meeting: 6pm – 10pm

10) Date of Next Meeting

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

Chairman's note: As the MOU is signed, but still lacks the MMO's signature, and the code of conduct is some stages from a final form, your discretion over the contents of these minutes would be appreciated

Agenda to follow.