

Minutes of the Scottish Seafish Advisory Committee Meeting

Held virtually on Thursday 30 March 2023

Attendees:

Members	Mike Park	Scottish White Fish Producers Association (Chair)
	Elaine Whyte	Clyde Fishermen's Association
	Michael Clark	Nor-Sea Foods / International Fish Cannery
	Jimmy Buchan	Scottish Seafood Association
	Iain Matheson	Skye fisherman
	Sheila Keith	Shetland Fishermen's Association
Observers	Vikki Halliday	Scottish Government
	Donna Fordyce	Seafood Scotland
Seafish	Aoife Martin	Director of Operations
	Jess Sparks	Regional Manager - Scotland
	Sally Chamberlain	Regional Manager - Northern Ireland (part)
	David Warwick	Fishing Gear Innovation Manager (part)
	Richard Watson	Market Insight Analyst (part)
Minutes	Phillip Quirie	Project Co-ordinator and Administrator
Apologies	Lynne Forman	Associated Seafoods
	Yvonne Rae	George Campbell & Sons
	John Anderson	Scottish Fishermen's Organisation

Welcome and apologies

1. The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and shared apologies on behalf of John and Lynne.
2. Members were informed that due to work pressure Yvonne Rae has reluctantly stepped down from the committee.

Minutes of the previous meeting and action arising

3. The minutes of 10 November 2022 were approved as an accurate record of the meeting with no amendments required.

ACTION 01: Phillip to upload the approved minutes to the Seafish website.

4. Jess reported that all actions from the previous meeting were complete (Attachment: *01 SSAC 300323 Seafish Update*, page 2).
5. It was confirmed that up to four SSAC membership vacancies had been advertised.

SSAC member update

6. The Chair invited committee members to provide an update from their sector, outlining any challenges or opportunities.
7. The ongoing labour crisis continues to challenge processors. Some businesses in the North East have seen business rates rise by up to 16% which presents a significant challenge for onshore businesses alongside the growing costs of power and energy.
8. Processors are concerned that Aberdeen City Council have almost doubled the price of Export Health Certificates. Initial costs had been kept low to support exporting businesses get through the initial impact period after Brexit. They are now increasing in line with true cost, and this is having noticeable cost increases for exporters. It was confirmed that this is also happening in other regions.
9. The catching sector on the west coast believes any introduction of a Highly Protected Marine Area (HMPA) in inshore waters would have a severe impact on both fishing and fishing communities. It was noted that engagement with politicians has been challenging, and some fishermen felt the consultation process is too complex to effectively navigate, which discourages participation. Scottish Government have arranged additional open online sessions to help fishermen navigate their way through the consultation and emphasized that they are listening to all input. The ideal would be for industry to work with government to identify and propose areas for protective closures. It was remarked that west coast fishermen would prefer face-to-face information sessions and meetings to discuss issues. It was agreed that Seafish would explore the possibility of visiting the west coast catching sector to gather thoughts from fishermen.

ACTION 02: Aoife to explore the possibility of a future in-person meeting between Seafish and Skye fishermen with Iain.

10. The Shetland Fishermen's Association have supported fishermen in responding to the HPMA consultation process because of its complexity. It is viewed that HPMA's have the potential to impact wider Shetland businesses and communities. It was felt that the policy for HPMA introduction is not evidence-based. The SFF have gathered sufficient evidence to counter policy decisions – demonstrating that the process feels back-to-front. Shetland already has 26 voluntary protected areas. If Marine Scotland's proposal for a further 12 protected marine feature (PMF) sites goes ahead, this will stretch the industry to a point where livelihoods will be impacted. The Shetland industry has the impression that their consultation responses are often ignored so contributing is becoming increasingly pointless and frustrating. Shetland industry worries about the lack of data collection being undertaken.
11. Marine spatial squeeze has become a very serious issue across all of Scotland, with renewable energy, HPMA's, Priority Marine Features, west coast fish farms, and the introduction of seaweed farms all contributing to create a high degree of frustration and tension across industry. Many of these issues will have displacement impacts on affected fishermen. It was cited, these types of issue have already impacted local fleets in Tarbert, where a fleet of 20 boats has diminished to 6, and Troon where a fleet of 75 has diminished to 7.
12. Other causes of concern included examples of offshore renewable energy farms being placed on known fish spawning grounds, apparently without assessing or acknowledging the wider impact this could have on ecosystem biodiversity.
13. Seafish were asked if the HDVC cable between Caithness and Shetland which has recently been laid could be included on the Kingfisher charts as soon as possible for the benefit of fishermen.

ACTION 03: Aoife will liaise with the Kingfisher team to make sure the HDVC cable is included in the Kingfisher charts.

14. It is feared that MCA requirements for fishermen's medical certification, incoming in November, will impact the inshore catching sector significantly. In some instances, 'grandfather rights' will no longer apply, and all fishermen will require an ML5 or ENG1 health certificate. Aoife confirmed Seafish will be running campaigns to raise awareness and provide advice and guidance to highlight these forthcoming changes.

Seafish Corporate Plan 23-28 and levy review

15. Aoife confirmed that the 2023-2028 Corporate Plan (CP) has been approved by UK Ministers and will be launched in May following the pre-election period. The CP will focus on seven priority areas which were identified during the Strategic Review:
1. Safety and training
 2. International trade
 3. Climate change
 4. Fisheries management
 5. Supply chain resilience
 6. Insight, data, and science
 7. Reputation
16. The Chair invited feedback on the [Corporate Plan](#) and also sought views from the Committee on the Seafish [levy consultation](#).
17. Michael voiced serious concern regarding the proposed changes in levy for the pelagic sector, as it could see increased levy costs of over £100k per year for individual companies. A letter of response will be written to Seafish outlining these views. Aoife noted that industry discussion is welcomed on the proposals. Processors are the majority levy payers, and they are the sector that will be most affected by the proposed levy changes.
18. Aoife outlined the rationale for the levy review and detailed the proposed changes. Key factors are that Seafish needs a sustainable financial model, that the levy hasn't been amended for 25 years, and that there is growing demand for Seafish to provide support across a range of areas, as set out in the new Corporate Plan. The proposed amendments are focused on (1) the scope of the levy and the proposal to include imported canned and bottled product and amending existing levy rates to create a single base rate of 1p/kg.
19. The consultation process has included industry workshops, an online survey, and one-to-one discussions to make sure every opportunity is given for views to be expressed.
20. The continued exclusion of salmon was raised as was the concern that the salmon sector benefits from Seafish services, for example promoting salmon on Seafish-affiliated stands and pavilions during trade shows. Aoife explained that the proposed levy changes to canned and bottled products can be changed through regulatory amendment with Ministerial approval. However, to include salmon, pangasius and other farmed species would require changes to primary legislation; this process is far more complex and would require political will to do so. In relation to trade shows, Seafish is partnering with Defra and the Department for Business and Trade (DBT) to deliver UK pavilions at seafood expos, and salmon falls within their remit. Scottish Government also explained that salmon producers already pay fees to the Crown Estate, meaning a Seafish levy on salmon would complicate this and could create an additional levy burden on those businesses.

21. Consultation responses will be shared with the Seafish Board and the UK administrations; however Ministers are the final decision makers on any changes. Given the legislative timetable, and subject to ministerial decision making, it is anticipated that the earliest any change in levy would come into effect would be during 2024/25.

SSAC work programme update

22. Aoife and Jess shared an update on current Seafish activities that are of particular relevance to the seafood industry in Scotland (Attachment: *01 SSAC 300323 Seafish Update*). This included an outline of our work on labour issues, UK/EU packaging requirements and ongoing negotiations on Free Trade Agreements. Aoife also highlighted our work on insight, innovation and supply chain resilience. Jess provided an update on recent activity in Scotland in careers and training, industry reputation, and climate change adaptation and mitigation.
23. Phillip shared a brief update on recent Seafish activities promoting international trade, including an exploratory mission to Gulfood in Dubai, and partnering with Defra/DBT to deliver UK pavilions at Seafood Expo North America, Boston and Seafood Expo Global, Barcelona.
24. Due to time constraints, it was agreed Lewis will be invited back to attend the next SSAC meeting to provide an update on Seafish fisheries management work.

ACTION 04: Jess to include an update on fisheries management work on the next meeting agenda.

Seafish Market Insight update

25. Richard introduced himself and the role of the Market Insight team at Seafish and how these services can benefit businesses (Attachment: *02 SSAC 300323 – Seafish Market Insight Update*). The team aims to provide key information and actionable insight to help seafood businesses make sound commercial decisions.
26. Richard concluded with three key challenges for the seafood industry:
1. Falling seafood consumption, affected by the pandemic, inflation, and geopolitics. Ambient seafood is the only market segment currently experiencing growth.
 2. Falling demand for traditional species.
 3. Perceptions of the UK seafood shopper.
27. Richard can be contacted directly with specific insight enquiries: richard.watson@seafish.co.uk

Vessels of the Future and the UK Gear Forum

28. David introduced himself as the Fishing Gear Innovation Manager at Seafish before providing a brief overview of the UK Gear Forum and the Gear Trials group that Seafish facilitate (Attachment: *03 SSAC 300323 – UK Gear Forum*). David explained the focus and role of the groups, membership, agreed working principles, and some of the early identified issues and possible work areas.
29. Sally introduced herself as the Seafish Regional Manager in Northern Ireland and gave an overview of the Vessels of the Future Forum that she helps facilitate (Attachment: *04 SSAC 300323 – Vessels of the Future*). The group has been established to assist industry in achieving decarbonization targets set out by government. It is closely interlinked with the UK Gear Forum. Sally outlined the aims of the group and highlighted the broad membership of the forum, as well as outlining the forum's work program and recent activity.

30. A brief discussion followed, where it was remarked that vessel technology is evolving slowly. It underlined the importance of legislation aligning with technological development rather than legislation being established before the necessary technology exists.

Any other business

31. No additional items were raised.

Date and format of next meeting and close

32. The Chair asked Seafish to explore the possibility of hosting the next meeting in-person. Aoife confirmed that once new committee members are appointed, Seafish would explore availability for an in-person meeting in June.

ACTION 05: Seafish to recruit new committee members and arrange the next meeting in June.

33. The Chair thanked everyone for their participation and closed the meeting.

Action List

	Action	Timeline	Owner
1.	Phillip to upload the approved minutes of the November meeting to the Seafish website.	May	Phillip
2.	Aoife to explore the possibility of a future in-person meeting between Seafish and Skye fishermen with Iain.	Next meeting	Aoife
3.	Aoife to liaise with the Kingfisher team to make sure the HDVC cable is included in the Kingfisher charts.	April	Aoife
4.	Jess to include an update on our fisheries management work on the next meeting agenda.	Next meeting	Jess
5.	Seafish to recruit new committee members and arrange the next meeting in June.	June	Jess