

Minutes of Seafish Board Meeting

Held at 09:00am on 22 May 2024 at Buchan Braes Hotel, Peterhead

Present:

Michael Sheldon (MS)	Seafish Board Chair
Jeffrey Halliwell (JH)	Seafish Board Deputy Chair
David Brooks (DB)	Seafish Board Member
Graham Black (GB)	Seafish Board Member
Harry Wick (HW)	Seafish Board Member
Heather Jones (HJ)	Seafish Board Member
Nathan de Rozarieux (NR)	Seafish Board Member
Linda Rosborough (LR)	Seafish Board Member

In attendance:

Rachel Muckle (RM)	Defra (by video conference)
Jerry Percy (JP)	Sector Panel Chair – Domestic and Export
Nigel Edwards (NE)	Sector Panel Chair – Importers and Processors
Lucy Allinson (LA)	Board Apprentice
Marcus Coleman (MC)	CEO, Seafish
Aoife Martin (AM)	Director of Operations, Seafish
Kenneth McIntosh (KM)	Finance Director, Seafish
Linsey Neill (LN)	HR & IT Director
Jo Walsh (JW)	Secretariat (by video conference)

Welcome and Apologies

1. The Chair opened the meeting. Apologies were received from Lynn Gilmore.

Declarations of Interest

2. The following interests were noted and will be added to the register:
 - a. Jeffrey Halliwell's role at Copptech had now ended. He has been appointed as Chair of housing association called bpha.
 - b. Michael Sheldon has been appointed as a Board Member on the Gangmasters and Labour Abuse Authority.

Matters Arising

3. The Board agreed to appoint Nigel Edwards as Sector Panel Chair – Importers and Processors. At this point he joined the meeting.

Minutes of Previous Meeting(s)

4. The minutes of 19 March 2024 were approved as a true record.

Action Tracker

5. The actions were reviewed.

- a. It was noted that the Chair and Executive are reviewing the Framework Agreement, there are a few minor tweaks to wording required. Once reviewed it will be circulated to the Board for information. The Board agreed to delegate final approval to the Chair and Executive.
- b. MC advised that he will be reviewing the composition of Sector Panel membership with the Panel Chairs.

Management Report

6. MC briefed the Board on recent notable industry support activities and governance matters. He attended the Barcelona Expo and the Seafish stand was recognised as the best one so far. This was thanks to collaboration among the Seafish team, exhibitors, Defra, and DBT. HJ reported positive feedback from stakeholders.
7. MC attended a National Fishermen's Remembrance Day event in Grimsby, which provided an opportunity to advance the safety agenda.
ACTION: GB requested advance notice for future Remembrance Day events. MC confirmed it will be on 11 May 2025 and will circulate information about events being held.
8. Numerous stakeholder inquiries about the new Target Border Operating Model have been received. These were being handled by colleagues in the Regulation team.
9. Fisheries Management Plans (FMPs) for crab, lobster, and scallop in English waters were approved by Ministers late last year. Defra is now progressing work to implement these plans which will involve Seafish.
10. The audit of the Annual Report and Accounts will be taken to July ARC. An interim audit visit has been completed and the final audit is due in August. There have been no issues reported to date.
11. IT have been working on improvements to systems and the Cyber Essentials Certification has been reacquired. LN indicated there is interest in obtaining the 'Cyber Essentials Plus' certification and there is ambition to achieve this by the end of 2024/25.
12. A staff Mental Health Awareness Week was conducted in May with activities to promote health and wellbeing.
13. The implementation of a new finance system, Access Financials, is underway and will improve efficiency and integration at a reduced cost. The go-live date is early September. The Chair raised risk management questions; KM assured the Board that the project is low risk and there should be a seamless transition. DB requested a paper for the July ARC outlining implementation processes and plans.
ACTION: JW to add New Finance System to ARC agenda.

Levy Reforms Update

14. At an Extraordinary Board Meeting on 9 May 2024 the Board agreed that the formal consultation would be launched in May (it was launched on 15 May). The Chair thanked everyone involved in the process. As of 17 May there had been 23 partial responses and 16 full responses submitted to the online survey, and some supportive emails have been received.
15. A communications plan is in place to disseminate key messages. NE asked if the Fisheries Minister would have a view on whether responses from current levy payers would be more important than non-levy payers. RM responded that the Minister would want to see responses from all stakeholders not just levy payers. AM advised there will be extraordinary Sector Panel meetings and webinars during the summer to encourage stakeholder engagement.
16. MC/AM have also been engaging directly with the canned and bottled sector in the lead up to the launch of the consultation. The discussions have been productive; that while the inclusion of canned and bottled imports in the levy is unwelcome it is not unreasonable. However, there is strong support for the introduction of changes to be phased to allow these businesses to adapt to the changes.

Strategic Outlook for the Board 2024/25

17. The Board noted the measures as defined in the Corporate Plan and discussed how to track Seafish's performance against these. HW emphasized the need to improve means of production to support food security in the UK. RM noted the complexities of import/export relationships and differing consumer demands for domestic catches. She advised that Defra is promoting seafood trade as part of their food resilience work. The Chair suggested further exploration of this angle.
18. LR prompted a discussion on how to report against the environmental impact measure. HJ highlighted the importance of articulating Seafish's contribution to the industry in this area. AM and LR commented that it would be difficult to measure Seafish's influence in this area.
19. AM noted that there are plans to improve the annual plan dashboard for 2024/25.
20. HW requested rewording measure 8 to clarify that the fishing industry isn't responsible for reproductive capacity.
ACTION: AM to amend the wording for the Corporate Plan Measure 8 to clarify that the fishing industry isn't responsible for reproductive capacity.
21. DB proposed a rolling programme of deep dives into each of the measures. MC emphasised the importance of celebrating successes and examining areas where impact is challenging.
ACTION: It was agreed to present an 18-month deep dive schedule at the September Board meeting. Deep dive topics for September will be agreed during agenda setting.

Financial Position: End of Year Report

22. KM advised that the numbers in the end of year finance report were provisional as Seafish operate every year end with a 2 month close so they are subject to some modest change. He has not seen any significant movement on levy income. There is still some discussion on the recognition of some of the non-levy income. The last dispatches were fairly positive in that there is likely to be the ability to recover grant funds as reported in the year end statement for 23/24. The development cost of the Carbon Tool may be classed as an expense subject to accounting rules. Cash submissions have been softer than last year. A new Head of Levy will be starting at the end of August. The Board noted the report.

Annual Pay Awards

23. MC, KM and AM left the meeting at this point. JH advised the Board that the Cabinet Office has delayed the announcement of Civil Service Pay Guidelines until later in summer. The guidelines are expected in July at the earliest. The Board discussed the proposal outlined in the paper that had been submitted to Board. The recommendation of 2% consolidated and 2% non-consolidated pay awards were agreed in principle, subject to an anticipated pay award of 4% in the guidelines. In the interests of swiftness once the guidelines are published, the Remuneration Committee were delegated the decision to approve a 4% spend if this is indeed what is included in the guidelines. However, should the guidelines be vastly different to what is anticipated, the Board will have to be engaged in the discussion and RemCom will bring this matter back to Board. The Board will be kept updated.
24. The Chair noted that Seafish must follow Civil Service Pay Guidelines and was deeply uncomfortable about there not being any guidelines to follow and how this delay may negatively impact staff. The sentiment was echoed by other Board members.

Chairs Report: Verbal

25. MC, KM and AM returned to the meeting.
26. The Chair provided an update on the appointments of two new Board members. The recruitment has been handled by Gabriella Barnard-Edmunds, Defra and the Chair asked RM to pass on thanks from the Board for the excellent handling of the process. The Chair advised there had been a good number of high-quality applications and a recommendation has been made by the recruitment panel to the Minister regarding appointments.

Forward Plan

27. It was agreed that:
- a. Deep dives on the corporate plan measures are added.
 - b. That the March 2025 meeting be moved to 17-18th March.
 - c. Options for meeting stakeholders in Heathrow in November are explored.
 - d. The May 2025 meeting will be held in Newlyn.
 - e. The May 2026 meeting will be held in Shetland.

AOB

28. The Carbon Profiling Tool was discussed. JH queried if there is an opportunity for a collaborative event with Scottish Universities. AM advised that this may be considered and is currently being done in Wales. The tool will be presented at the Global Seafood Alliance Conference in St Andrews in October. This will be a good opportunity to showcase the input that the Scientific Advisory Panel, membership of which has been drawn from across Scotland, has contributed to the development of the tool.

Dates of Future Meetings

29. Future meeting dates as outlined in the forward plan were noted.

Close

30. The Chair thanked everyone for their contributions and the meeting closed at 12:33.