

NSC Maritime Resources & Fisheries Group Report – October 2006 - April 2007.

1. Background

- 1.1 The aim of this report is to update the North Sea Commission Executive Committee on the work of the NSC Fisheries Group between October 2006-April 2007

- 2. NSCFG Chair** – Cllr. Anders Fasth
Vice Chairs, Cllr. Harry Jensen & Cllr. Sandy Cluness
Co-ordinator – Ann Bell

3. Meetings

The Group met in Stavanger on 21 November during the joint NSC/BSC Conference on Maritime Policy. The theme of the meeting was “Fisheries and other users of the North Sea” the following are the main points that came out of the meeting.

- **Partnership approach to marine spatial planning in North Sea**
This was highlighted by the presentation by the Oil & Gas and Fisheries sector, which, have turned conflict into co-operation through working together. It was agreed that we should develop a concrete project, which will develop the above using the oil & gas and fisheries co-operation as an example of good practice. The NSC Maritime Resources & Fisheries Group will undertake to prepare a project proposal.
- **Aquaculture**
Need for local management and area planning & dynamics at regional level
Consultation with all other stakeholders
Need for added value to be carried out at local level wherever possible to ensure communities gain maximum benefit
“Need for Viking Laws”
- **North Sea Inshore Fisheries Network**
To bring together all stakeholders involved in inshore fisheries and communities to work together, to share best practice and to co-operate with all other users of the North Sea.

Other Issues

- Ship to Ship transfer should be carried out in port wherever possible to avoid accidents
- Closed and Protected areas (resolution by CPMR Fisheries Group which called for any planning of closed areas, should have clear aims and objectives, undertake thorough consultation, take account of local needs and cultures, be time bound and have ongoing evaluation)
- Need to restore the North Sea Partnership of Scientist and Fishermen. To ensure the continued dialogue between scientist and fishers.
- Eco system approach should include harvesting at all levels of the chain.

The best way to take care of the coastline is to let responsible people live there who understand and will take care of the coastline for future generations

- Illegal Unregulated Unreported fisheries was also briefly discussed, it was agreed that colleagues from Troms Region would prepare a paper for the next meeting of the Group, where it would be formally debated. It was agreed that this was very serious issue.

The next meeting of MRFG took place in Goteborg on 27/28 March.

At this meeting Chairman Anders Fasth was delighted to welcome a new Political member to the Group, Cllr. Tom Christer Nilsen.

The following were the main issues on the agenda.

- **North Sea Inshore Fisheries Network**

Ann Bell went through the new programme for the one day Seminar, which is to be held in the Glasgow Hilton Hotel on 23 May 2007. We discussed the programme and the aims of the Seminar.

Tom Christer Nilsen proposed that his region could provide someone to give a presentation on the Norwegian experience on inshore fisheries. This was welcomed and accepted.

Anders Carlberg also made a change to the person who would speak on behalf of the Swedish inshore fisheries.

One of the main aims of the Seminar is to form a North Sea Inshore Fisheries Network, which could then ask for a seat in the North Sea Regional Advisory Council. The NSC, Scottish Executive, Vastra Gotaland Region and Shetland Islands Council are supporting this International Seminar.

- **Illegal Unregulated Unreported fishing (IUU)**

The Troms Region presented this very serious problem in a paper. This very comprehensive paper was discussed thoroughly by the group. It was agreed that although the problem seemed to be mainly in the Barents Sea, the repercussion could be felt around the North Sea. Where for example some of the illegal fish can end up being processed, unknowingly by local companies and then end up in the retail sector and could cause real problems with consumers at local at National level.

It was agreed that the Troms paper be modified and made into a resolution, which would be presented to the NSC Executive Committee in Aalborg.

- **Removal of Mercury**

Tom Christer Nilsen informed the group about the very serious problem in Norway caused by a sunken World War 2 submarine (U 864) carrying a cargo of 65tonnes of Mercury. The submarine is now broken up and this very dangerous cargo, which is now leaking from the submarine. This will cause major problems if it gets into the ecosystem.

Tom explained the Norwegian Government had carried a study to see what would be the best solution. Two options were identified:

- 1) To remove the mercury from the seabed
- 2) To cover it with sand and rocks

The strong feeling in Tom's region is that the mercury should be removed from the seabed.

A similar problem occurred in Japan and caused major problems.

It was agreed by the Group that Tom would prepare a resolution, calling for the removal of the Mercury from the seabed, which would be considered by the Group and if agreed would be sent to NSC Executive in Aalborg.

- **Safety at Sea**

We discussed the Safety at Sea issues, which was highlighted by the joint Scottish Fishermen's Federation Services/UKOOA presentation at the Maritime Policy Seminar held in Stavanger last November. This presentation explained the "FishSafe" equipment, which on board many UK Fishing Vessels. This equipment had saved many lives. Data for FishSafe was provided by all Oil operators in North Sea EU Waters, but no Data was available in Norwegian Waters.

Ann Bell is to prepare a draft Interreg Proposal, which she will circulate to all members. Tom will prepare a letter for Norwegian County Mayors to sign, requesting that the Norwegian Government make this important data available for FishSafe, to ensure the safety of all fishermen, including Norwegian.

- **Closed Areas**

We discussed the resolution prepared by the Group on closed areas. This resolution was given full support by the NSC, CPMR General Assembly and a joint paper by the CPMR Fisheries and the CPMR Political Bureau at their last meeting in Florence also approved Energy Group. The next step is to take the resolution to present the Resolution to the EU Parliament Fisheries Committee.

We then had a discussion on what was considered to be a closed area or marine protected area.

- **Eco-labelling/tracability**

Anders Carlberg gave a very interesting presentation on a pilot project they are carrying out in VG Region. (Presentation attached)

It was agreed that we would circulate examples of good practice from our Countries. We then discuss during the Fisheries Study Tour at the General Assembly.

- **Executive Committee Agenda**

We had a discussion on the different items on the agenda. The Group felt the name Maritime Resources and Fisheries Group, would be better as Marine Resources and Fisheries Group.

- **Maritime Green Paper**

The Group discussed the Green Paper and also the NSC response. After some discussion it was agreed that Anders Carlberg would prepare the NSCMRFG input into the NSC paper. Tom Christer Nilsen will send Norwegian response to Anders.

- **Sellafield**

The Group agreed in principle to support the Sustainable Development Group with regard to Sellafeld. Ann to request for more information regarding all the excellent work already done on the issue of Sellafeld this will then be circulated to the group.

- **Terms of reference and Annual Plan**

We went through the Terms of Reference and agreed the changes to the way our Group should operate. We also discussed the Annual Plan:

- It was agreed that we should still take an active interest in the North Sea Women's Network.
- Lena Soderholm to take the lead in preparing a paper on climate change with respect to aquaculture, which could then form the basis for a workshop on Climate Change.
- Small Fishing Ports Strategy – Workshop. Anders C and I will carry out consultation on this issue during the NS inshore Fisheries Seminar in Glasgow. We will then report our findings to the Group

NSC General Assembly

We discussed the Programme for the Joint Conference and all were very concerned that there seemed to be “**too little politics and too much Interreg**”

It was felt that by having the Study Tours on Wednesday morning, split the NSC part of the Joint Conference up. It meant that those who wished to attend the Study Tours and the GA and Executive would have to arrive on Tuesday and stay until Friday with a gap in the middle (for those who did not wish to take in Interreg). There was wish for a two day event perhaps Wednesday/Thursday to enable our Swedish colleagues to return home in time for Midsummer. Perhaps a joint NSC/BSC Annual Conference, with an Energy theme, could be considered for next year.

- **Baltic Sea/North Sea joint meeting.**

All agreed that co-operation with the Baltic Sea was very important and should be strengthened. The NSCMRFG had planned to have a joint meeting with the Baltic Sea Fisheries Group, however due to illness our colleague in the Baltic had been unable to arrange this. It is hoped that he might be able to attend the meeting Copenhagen.

- **Joint NSC/BSC Meeting in Copenhagen**

The following are the issues, which the NSCMRFG would like to jointly consider with the Baltic Sea Fisheries Group:

- Illegal Unregulated Unreported Fisheries and how we could jointly address this serious issue. Also our industries image and consumer concerns
- Science/Industry Partnership, building on the successful North Sea Commission Fisheries Partnership
- RACs how both Commissions could play an important role within both the North Sea and Baltic Sea RACs?

CPMR Fisheries Intercommission Group (CPMRFIG)

We also went on to discuss our on going work with the CPMRFIG, it was agreed that the Group would continue to play an active role within this Group and that both Lena Soderholm and Anders Carlberg would attend the meetings along with Ann, where possible.

The value of our joint meeting with the CPMRFIG was highlighted and thought to be very valuable and should be repeated.

Next Meeting

It was agreed that the next meeting should be a joint meeting the CPMR Fisheries Intercommission Group. This would be held during the CPMR General Assembly in 17/19 October 2007.

Prior to this meeting an NSCMRFG Political meeting would take place. Where the future political priorities of Group would be agreed.

Report author:

Ann Bell

On behalf of Chairman Cllr. Anders Fasth.