

# Cross-Party Group on Fisheries and Coastal Communities

4 February 2025 – 18:00

Minute

Present

MSPs

Karen Adam MSP, Cross-Party Group on Fisheries and Coastal Communities (Convener)

Beatrice Wishart MSP, Cross-Party Group on Fisheries and Coastal Communities (Deputy Convener)

Audrey Nicoll MSP, Cross-Party Group on Fisheries and Coastal Communities (Member)

Tim Eagle MSP, Cross-Party Group on Fisheries and Coastal Communities (Member)

Invited guests

Thomas Bajada MEP, European Parliament

Vivian Bjånesø Horgen, Vestland fylkeskommune

Non-MSP Group Members

Elspeth Macdonald, Scottish Fishermen's Federation

Phil Taylor, Open Seas

Bally Philp, Scottish Creel Fishermen's Federation

Rosie Landon, Sustainable Inshore Fisheries Trust

Lee Robb, Secretariat of the Cross-Party Group on Fisheries and Coastal Communities

Elaine Whyte, Communities Inshore Fisheries Alliance

Mark Shotter, Loch Long Salmon

Prof. Mitchell Lennan, University of Aberdeen

Dr Paula Duffy, University of Aberdeen

Jessica Jones, Scottish Wildlife Trust

James Mackenzie, Sustainable Inshore Fisheries Trust

Charlotte Cochrane, Simply Blue Group

Jack Norquoy, Scottish Renewables

Simon Macdonald, Aquaculture, Fisheries and Processing Consultant

David Nairn, Clyde Port

## Apologies

Rachael Hamilton MSP

Ariane Burgess MSP

Cllr. Ann Bell, North East Scotland Fisheries Development Partnership

Tim Eagle MSP (arrived after start of meeting)

## Agenda item 1 - Vivian Bjånesø Horgen

Vivian Bjånesø Horgen, rector of Hordaland fylkeskommune/Austevoll vidaregåande skule, gave a presentation on the role of the school in Norway in developing the next generation of fisheries workers, as well as wider maritime skills and expertise.

VBH emphasised the will of the Norwegian government to make maritime education exciting.

Austevoll school was renovated in 2010 and focuses on marine and maritime education.

In response to questions from members, VHB said:

In terms of funding the facility, 'blue account money' from government goes towards state-of-the-art equipment. She also explained that the facility was in part funded by quotas from fisheries and explained that there is a wish for fewer pupils to take up fisheries courses and instead focus on maritime courses where there is a need to grow the workforce.

Norway is lucky as it is considered to be a high end job to be working on a fishing boat, which helps to avoid there being challenges in recruitment.

The school invites various companies from a range of sectors to come in and teach their students.

The school does not take students from overseas, though many international students come to visit the facility.

Norway has protected marine areas, with a smaller quota every year for larger fishing vessels. In general, fishermen want bigger quotas and researchers want smaller quotas.

## Agenda item 2 – Thomas Bajada MEP

Thomas Bajada MEP stated that we are at an important moment in history and that it is important fisheries reach a stable period once the UK-EU transition period comes to an end.

TB explained he is a Maltese MEP, which gave him a non-biased perspective to the negotiations between the EU and the UK.

As a member of the PECH Committee in the European Parliament, he confirmed MEP members are not informed by the negotiators of either party ahead of the renegotiated Trade Cooperation Agreement between the UK and the EU.

The role of the European Parliament is to approve the TCA once negotiated. Sometimes the European Commission will give an update to the Parliament on the state of play in terms of negotiations with the UK. However, the EU's top priority is the renegotiation of the TCA – though this remains in the discussion phase.

In response to questions from members, TB said:

Negotiations on taxation have become easier than previous years and that going forward there will likely be more stability and predictability.

On the difficulties regarding exports and red tape, there will always be a Single Market which is open to discuss import products. There is not a foreseen impact on Scottish products coming into the EU as a result of negotiations.

TB explained that there were more lenient rules between the UK and the EU than there were between the EU and other trading partners, which was met with some disagreement from CPG members.

He stressed the importance of taking care of environmental standards, and working together on this shared goal. There is a need to base decisions on science, not on internal rifts.

On a closer post-Brexit relationship, TB explained the EU and UK are cooperating as much as possible and the relationship is much better than it was at the beginning of this process. Access to UK waters for EU fishing vessels will be an important point of these negotiations.

## Agenda item 3 – update from Dr Mitchell Lennan

Dr Mitchell Lennan gave an outline of the planned work, in cooperation with the CPG, to produce a report on the legal lay of the land in marine areas. The research for the report would include inviting non-MSP members of the CPG to a workshop in Aberdeen to discuss issues in detail. The potential date for this would be some time in March, and members will be notified by the secretariat once this is confirmed.

Funds for the work would cover travel costs and even accommodation for members who needed to stay. There will be presentations from University of Aberdeen colleagues and discussions among non-MSP members.

Current timescales would see a completed report brought to the next CPG meeting in June.

Taking questions from members, ML confirmed:

- Environmental status will be a part of the discussions

- The timeframe of the report ties up with National Marine Plan 2 process
- The scope of the work will look at the whole regulatory environment

## Agenda item 4 – approval of new members

No representatives of organisations in attendance; to be invited to next meeting.

## Agenda item 5 – any other business

There is a need to discuss closed areas and how they're managed. For example, there is a compensation scheme in France – important to look at different models.

The CPG needs to be able to scrutinise Scottish Government proposals.

Beatrice Wishart MSP is leading a Members' Business Debate on Scotland's Fishing Sector on 18 February. Secretariat to circulate details on how members can watch the debate.

While it was good to see how the school in Norway operated, it was disappointing that we do not have this in Scotland.

It was suggested that the CPG invite SAMS, based in Oban, to give a presentation.

Audrey Nicoll MSP is interested to know if members have examples of AI being used in the processing sector of the industry.

It was stressed that we need a policy landscape that values our fishing sector and that the Norwegian school model is not possible in Scotland currently.

## Agenda item 6 – date and time of next meeting

Members to be updated on this. Likely to be the AGM in June.