

Action Points/Decisions from NIFF meeting with Minister Creed, T.D. 22nd February 2018

1) Update on Inshore Strategy Development

NIFF Chair stressed the importance of the Inshore Strategy and noted that significant progress has been made with a good team of consultants. He informed the Minister that the Working Group had met a number of times, 11 key issues had been identified, a swot analysis of the issues had taken place and an online consultation with the RIFF members was completed before Christmas. He noted that there had been a good level of response which verified the work done to date. The consultants examined the feedback received from the online consultation and a workshop was held with the RIFF members on the 7th- 8th February, 2018 in Galway. This workshop validated the work done to date and tried to identify ways to bring the issues forward. The workshop sessions refined the issues into key themes and actions. Some were easy actions with identifiable results while others were much more complex. The Working group due to meet again in the next few weeks. The NIFF chair noted a feeling of hope and positivity at the networking event. The next step is to bring the draft strategy to full public consultation. **Action Point:** The Minister accepted NIFF request to launch a public consultation on the draft Inshore Strategy. The NIFF also decided to park the renewal of the RIFFs until after the Strategy is completed around the end of April to keep the continuity of the members intact during this very important process.

2) Public Consultation on Brown Crab

DAFM gave a presentation on the preliminary feedback from the public consultation to increase to the MnCRS to 140mm for brown crab. The presentation outlined the background to the public consultation, overview of submissions received, options on how the increase should be applied and other suggestions and an overall evaluation of the submissions. Following the presentation a discussion on how the MnCRS should be applied took place. The NIFF recommended that it should apply to all Irish sea-fishing boats inside 12nm at a minimum but ideally to all Irish sea-fishing boats to be effective and to avoid enforcement difficulties which could under-mind the effectiveness of the measure. **Action Point:** DAFM to bring to IMG and SFLG for and further feedback and to explore if applying to all Irish sea-fishing boats in Area VI and VII would be feasible before bringing to the Minister for decision.

3) Public Consultation on Razor Clams

DAFM gave a presentation on the preliminary feedback from the consultation to increase the MnCRS to 125mm for razor clams. The presentation outlined the background to the proposal, overview of submission received, views expressed, other suggestions and considerations that need to be taken into account. The NIFF chair called on the NE RIFF to keep forwarding proposals in regard to razor clams for example for wider effort controls in the context of growing numbers of boats fishing for razor clams. The DAFM noted that the fishery could be exploited by a wider group holding polyvalent licences and specific licences and have invited the NE RIFF to bring forward proposals. The DAFM said that they would be happy to meet with the NE RIFF. The NIFF chair noted that any proposals received would go out to the RIFFs for initial feedback. The Minister noted that although the response rate to this consultation was low that it is still a

conservation measure brought in from industry and it is a positive start. The question was asked will the MnCRS improve the economics of the fishery?

It was also noted that there was a low level of feedback to both public consultations and that inshore fishermen aren't great at inputting into consultations. It was noted that all the RIFFs need to be encouraged to make submissions on issues which are relevant to them. The NIFF also noted that the letter of acknowledgement that was sent to anyone who did make a submission to either public consultation was much appreciated. **Action point:** As the public consultation has just closed the feedback from the consultation to go back to the IMG for advice and then back to the Minister for decision.

4) Restrictions on trawling inside 6 nm

The Minister introduced the issue and spoke about his intention to go to public consultation on restrictions on trawling inside 6nm. It is expected that this public consultation will excite a lot of interest particularly from those who do not want change. The NIFF chair invited delegates from each RIFF to give their perspective on the potential issues arising from restrictions on large vessels trawling inside 6 nm. The various issues included:

- pots towed away by large trawlers or small vessels displaced by having to move their gear;
- ring netters in punts in Donegal Bays limited by their size and were they can fish whereas large trawlers can move into a small bay and clean it out and move on;
- juvenile fish removed from the food web by larger trawlers;
- the amount of fish taken by a large trawler in a few days could sustain a number of small vessels over a much longer period of time and contribute much more to their local economies;
- trawling by large vessels close to shore has a negative perception on marine tourism and damages the local overall economy;
- frozen at sea vessels capable of doing two week sea trips who have no need to fish in inshore areas outcompeting boats who only go to sea for 12 hours at a time and
- on the west coast large vessels can go to the back of the islands to fish whereas the smaller vessels need to shelter inside the islands.

The huge potential for pot-caught prawns was mentioned and the NIFF chair noted that Scottish "creel caught" premium priced prawns as an example of opportunities that could be capitalised on. The NIFF chair stated that this would be the single most positive policy for the inshore sector since the foundation of the state. It would give the sector hope and will offer a future. It would offer confidence that gear can be at sea and won't be towed away. It would also give the opportunity to turn around the current dependence on a few key shellfish stocks (salmon, bass, spurdog all lost in recent years) and this would remove a range of obstacles to diversification. Profitability impact on the sector is high. The value to the inshore sector is far greater than any potential loss to large vessels. **Action Point:** NIFF members to disseminate information regarding expected public consultation.

5) Multi-rigging in the Irish Sea

The NIFF noted that inside the 6nm limit of the proposed consultation that Item no. 4 above supersedes this proposal. In addition the IMG noted that part of the proposal is outside the 6nm

limit and consultation would need to be conducted with the UK and other EU states. **Action Point:** The NIFF decided to shelve this proposal for the present time.

6) Brexit follow up

The Minister updated the NIFF members on Brexit and noted the December agreement made between the EU and the UK on an approach to Brexit. The current development is to put this agreement on a legal footing. The EU27 collectively gathered its views on a transition period to finish in December 2020. The subject of transitional arrangements is currently under discussion between the EU and the UK. During the transitional period the “status quo” will apply. The EU negotiation team under Michel Barnier is gathering views from the EU 27 on the future trading relationship with the UK. The Minister noted the recent positions voiced by the UK are at odds with the views expressed in 2013 in CFP reform re: relative stability. He noted important dates: March 2019 the UK will “leave the room”; December 2019 will be the First December council without the UK. The Minister noted the shifting sands of the UK position, for instance on the divorce bill and the lack of cohesion apparent in the UK cabinet. In regard to fisheries the Irish government is working with like- minded countries who have similar exposure to stock displacement. 40% of our fish are caught in UK waters and therefore we are very exposed and the stakes are very high. The Irish opinion is that the UK leaves with its share but that they do not take back every fish in their waters. The UK have a very different view. Fisheries remains part of the overall trade agreement and the Minister noted that this remains Ireland’s preferred approach. DAFM noted that UK’s current position is that it should be seen as a Coastal State from March 2019 whereas the EU position is that the UK remains party to current arrangements.

The NIFF chair highlighted the importance of access to UK waters in the future and that any changes need to be brought in slowly over time. He also noted the importance of maintaining the customs union in terms of trade and routes to market for inshore products. **Action Point:** Minister to keep the NIFF updated on any progress made in the Brexit negotiations.

-END-