

Action Points/Decisions from NIFF meeting with Minister Creed, T.D. 25th October 2016

1. Launch of the Inshore Fisheries Forum Website

Minister Creed launched the Inshore Fisheries Forum website www.inshoreforums.ie before the start of the NIFF meeting. The NIFF chair thanked the Minister for launching the website and noted its importance for keeping the dispersed inshore fishing sector informed. The Chair hopes the website will help the inshore sector to buy into the process and will help to raise the profile of the forums. The Minister thanked the NIFF Secretary and BIM for developing and maintaining the website. A website is an essential part of a toolkit where there is such geographical spread in a sector.

2. Social Protection

The Chair acknowledged the Minister efforts made for the inshore sector in the recent Budget and changes to FISH Assist. The Minister stated that the letter from the NIFF Chair acted as a stimulus to reduce the 100% of assessed income to 70% of assessed income and the inclusion of child dependents. A NIFF member stated that a tailor made application for FISH ASSIST would be welcomed. The NIFF reminded the Minister that they are available to meet with officials from the Department of Social Protection to discuss their particular issues assessing social welfare benefits.

Action Point: NIFF to await publication of the Welfare Bill and then communicate further with the Minister on social protection issues.

3. Budget 2017

Introduction of a tax credit specifically for fishermen of €1,270 in Budget 2017 brought it in line with the existing seafarers tax credit. The NIFF welcomed the initiative and noted that this measure would put some actual money into the pocket of the working man. The NIFF chair also noted how important the diesel rebate was for the industry.

4. Velvet Crab Proposal

This proposal from the West RIFF has gone back to the RIFFs after the last NIFF meeting to support and/or comment on. The NIFF tried to come to a unified position but in the absence of one, the following is the position:

- 1 RIFF proposed the measure
- 1 RIFF needing more time to consider the proposal
- 2 RIFFs support the proposal
- 2 RIFFs support the proposal with conditions
 - 65mm minimum size to 70mm minimum size
 - 10% tolerance level

Action Point: NIFF is happy for Minister to put the proposal out for public consultation. Minister proposes to do so and the DAFM have promised to progress proposal to public consultation as soon as possible. It is hoped that the public consultation would be completed by Christmas.

5. **Proposal for gear restrictions on vessels targeting *Nephrops* inside the six mile limit in the Irish Sea**

There is a broad level of provisional support for this proposal from the NE RIFF. As this is a new proposal only circulated just before the NIFF meeting the other RIFFs need to examine it. The wider issue of access for larger vessels in inshore waters, particularly inside the 6 mile limit, has been raised in various forms all around the coast of Ireland. However it would represent a complete policy change. Notwithstanding this the proposal is for a specific area and species.

Action Point: The NE RIFF and NIFF are going to further develop this proposal so it will be kept on the agenda for the next NIFF meeting. The NIFF has sought clarifications from the DAFM of where they see problems with this proposal as not everyone will be agreeable to it and it would ultimately need to go to public consultation. More research is needed and the NE RIFF will come back with a revised proposal.

6. **Proposal to amend the Lobster Maximum Size Regulation.**

This has been proposed by the SW RIFF and supported by another RIFF. The proposal is to amend the existing regulation which was very unpopular measure in certain areas when it was introduced at the end of 2014. A discussion took place on the merits of restricting to females only, the amount of v-notching that has taken place over the last 3 years, what the market for lobster was like at the present time and the benefits of v-notching etc.

Action Point: It was decided that this proposal needs to go back to all RIFF to prioritise and seek views as quickly as possible (by e-mail) as provision in the SI to V-notch oversize lobsters expires in January 2017. It would be preferable to have any amended regulation in place for March 2017 at the latest, before the lobster fishing season commences.

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