

Dorset and East Devon Fisheries Local Action Group

Board meeting Minutes

Date: 5th December 2017
Venue: Safewise, Weymouth
Time: 18:00 – 20:30

In attendance:

Lyme Regis Fishermen's Association	Weymouth and Portland Licensed Boatmen's and Fishermen's Association	Purbeck District Council
Axmouth Fishermen's Association	CEFAS	SEAFISH
Swanage Fishermen's Association	Dorset Wildlife Trust	West Bay Fishermen's Association
Weymouth and Portland Borough Council	Dorset Coast Forum	Marine Management Organisation
Weymouth Harbour Authority	Dorset County Council	Southern IFCA

Apologies:

Resort Marketing Ltd
 Natural England
 Native Marine Centre Ltd
 Devon and Severn IFCA

1. Welcome and Brief Introductions

The chair welcomed the FLAG members and guests to the meeting

2. Last Meeting's Minutes

The minutes from the last meeting were agreed by the board.

There were two actions from the last meeting:

- I. *Rhiannon was to consult with Seafarers UK and a local Credit Union about the possibility of setting up a 'bridging loan' to help applicants find funds prior to grant funding being paid out.* Rhiannon has been speaking with both Seafarers UK and a local credit union and has meetings week commencing December 11th to progress the project. A brief outline was given to the board. The proposed set up would involve Seafarers granting some funds to an accountable body. The accountable



body would have an agreement with the Credit Union for the grant to underwrite loans for applicants applying to the FLAG or EMFF. At the end of the programme, the grant would be given back to Seafarers UK to go towards other charitable projects.

ACTION: Rhiannon to update board as this progresses

- II. *Martin was to ask at the next South Coast Fishing Council Meeting if they had any funding available for applicants to use as a bridging loan.* Martin was not able to attend the last meeting of the Council. However, the FLAG chair raised the point on Martin's behalf. The Council do not have any relevant funding available.

3. Finances

The FLAG finances were circulated to the board prior to the meeting, subject to MMO approval the following was confirmed to the Board:

- The FLAG has still not been able to make a claim for the management and administration of the programme but this should change soon.
- Although there is only one project to review at this meeting there is still plenty of interest in the FLAG with approximately £100,000 of projects at Expression of Interest stage.
- So far, subject to MMO approval, the FLAG has committed over £130,000 of the fund and although no claims have been made yet, three projects are ready to start making claims.
- The FLAG programme staff have assisted with over £105,000 worth of core projects and further core projects are being developed.

4. FLAG Update

- The FLAG Local Development Strategy (LDS) needs to be reviewed in March 2018. The FLAG programme staff will assess spends in each Priority at this point and the MMO will expect to be told if the FLAG can commit to spend as originally set out in the LDS.
- The time scale for the commitment and spending of the FLAG funds is likely to be squeezed again with more pressure to spend the remaining funds as soon as possible. We were originally expected to commit the majority of our funds within the first year however due to being a new FLAG it has taken a while to become established. We are expected to have spent a majority of our funding by December 2018.
- Although the FLAG is contracted until March 2020, there is a risk of de-commitment of project funds if the FLAG cannot show that projects are in the pipeline or at EOI stages for the priorities from the LDS review.
- The Board decided at a previous meeting that individual applications and vessel improvements would be directed to the core EMFF programme. This may need to be reconsidered at the next meeting if projects are not coming to the FLAG.
- A Board member asked if there is a deadline for considering projects for the FLAG fund.

Rhiannon confirmed that this is not the case as yet, although the board may need to consider meeting more frequently or voting via e-mail to help keep projects moving forward if the time scales do officially become condensed.

- A board member asked if there was a strategy in place to drive projects forward.
 - Rhiannon confirmed that the FLAG programme staff are planning workshops, especially around Priority 2 (Aquaculture) and that the FLAG programme staff are promoting the FLAG as much as they can through a variety of outlets.
 - Rhiannon asked the Board for their assistance in promoting the FLAG amongst their networks.

ACTION: Board members to actively promote projects surrounding priority 4: Adding Value to Catch. Examples of projects could include facilities to improve quality of catch including storage or projects that utilise by-products of the industry.

- The FLAG's aim is still to commit the full £600,000 to projects within the time scales provided by the MMO.
- Rhiannon stressed the need for any projects to come forward sooner rather than later as the application process can take some time and this may start to encroach on the overall time scales of the FLAG programme.
- A Board member asked if the FLAG could send a letter to the MMO to ask for further clarification on time scales. Rhiannon advised that this can be difficult as the MMO are not able to clarify the situation further at the moment due to the uncertainty surrounding Brexit negotiations. A board member advised that a letter from the FLAG may assist the MMO in gaining clarification on the official timescales we are still working to.

ACTION: Rhiannon to clarify if the official timescales in writing from the MMO.

- A board member asked if the FLAG fails to commit all funds before the end of the programme could this affect any future funding programme applications. Rhiannon advised that the UK Government are currently consulting on what type of programme could replace FLAG after Brexit and that a lack of full commitment of funds by the FLAG *may* affect any future decisions for this area but at this stage it's unknown especially as the risk currently is due to external factors such as Brexit.
- A board member asked for clarification on who assigned the funding to each of the FLAG priorities. Rhiannon advised that was decided in view of the outcomes of the stakeholder engagement workshops when possible costs of potential projects were discussed.
- A board member asked if funding can be moving across the priorities. This is possible but would need approval from the MMO and the FLAG would have to have evidence of need including pipeline projects. A board member commented that they are aware of other organisations that are having difficulty in doing this. A board member asked if the FLAG is doing everything it can to publicise the fund and could more be done? Rhiannon advised that press releases are issued when projects are successfully funded (one was issued December 4th) but there is always more that can be done. The FLAG staff have attended a number of events this year, such as Food Rocks in Lyme Regis and there is a 'Meet the Buyer' event planned for February 2018. The FLAG programme staff are always open to



suggestions from the Board in how to promote the FLAG. There is a small budget for marketing.

- A board member commented that unless the board changes its stance on individual applications being sent to the core EMFF, it may prove difficult to commit all of the FLAG funds. Rhiannon clarified that FLAG is intended to be for community based projects but that the board can review this if they decide to.
- A board member agreed that it was good that the board took the stance to develop community or group applications over individual one but maybe a review was needed.
- A board member reminded the board that funding was recommended for an EPRIB project at an earlier FLAG meeting and it was discussed that a wider project should be considered to include all commercial fishing vessels within the FLAG area. Has this happened? Rhiannon confirmed that there are currently two local fishermen's associations that have submitted an Expression of Interest for this type of project and Martin is working with them to develop the projects to full application. Similar applications from other fishermen's associations are encouraged.
- A board member commented that it can be difficult to get Fishermen's Association's motivated to commit to spend money upfront and this has led to delays in getting this type of project moving while other organisations have been able to move forward quickly with similar projects.
 - The board were reminded that new regulations on safety equipment needed on board are due to be implemented by the end of 2019 and this will impact on every commercial fishing vessel.
- A board member asked if a letter from the FLAG could kick start a project similar to that in Plymouth whereby every commercial fisherman is provided with an item of safety equipment?
- A board member commented that to supply all commercial fishing vessels within the FLAG area (approx. 120 vessels) with either an EPIRB or PLB wouldn't be a huge investment overall
 - The board were reminded that match funding and the total cost of the project will still need to be found prior to the grant being reimbursed
- A board member asked if IFCA would be willing to distribute a letter to all commercial fishers within the FLAG area to raise awareness of the availability of funding and what is and isn't eligible. The IFCA representative advised this may be possible if the letter came from the FLAG.
- A board member asked if it would appropriate for other board members to bring forward ideas of how to raise awareness of the FLAG? The FLAG programme staff do raise awareness at every opportunity, but new and different ideas are always welcome.
- A board member asked for clarification on who dictates the funding intervention rates. Rhiannon confirmed that these rates are set by the EMFF fund and the FLAG cannot alter these but safety equipment is quite high at 80%.
- A board member commented that match funding seems to be an issue and could the RLNI be an option to help fund projects and this could be good PR for both the FLAG and RLNI

ACTION: FLAG programme staff to investigate the possibility of funding a larger FLAG wide programme similar to that funded by Plymouth Council

- So far there have been a total of 31 Expressions of Interest submitted. Of these 13 projects have progressed to full application, 10 of which have been approved by the FLAG board.



- Four projects have now been approved by the MMO and we expect a further five to be approved by week commencing 11 December 2017.
- Three of the five projects expected to be approved by w/c 11 December are from the October FLAG board meeting. This shows that the overall process at the MMO is starting to become more efficient.
- The FLAG programme staff are working on two larger core EMFF applications.
- The MMO have indicated that the deadline for core applications will likely be March 2018 and that projects will need to be completed by March 2019. Larger projects are encouraged to apply ASAP with the deadline for applications being mid January 2018.
- There is a FLAG cooperation fund of £70,000 that can only be spent on collaborative projects. The English FLAG's have a common theme of attracting more young people to the industry and so this could well form the basis of a collaborative project if one is developed.
- The next FLAG meeting scheduled for 20 February 2018 will be slightly extended as the Local Development Strategy will be reviewed and a discussion about potentially reallocating funds between priorities will also take place.

5. Priority 2: Strengthen the Aquaculture Sector in Dorset: Aquaculture Development Officer

As there is no current commitment on Priority 2 although there are Expression of Interests. Rhiannon asked the board for ideas about how to drive aquaculture development forward. The inclusion of aquaculture development was a key reason that the FLAG was awarded by the MMO.

There has been an EOI for a part time aquaculture development officer submitted to the FLAG but the board's feedback was that there was concern over the applicant's skills and knowledge of aquaculture to be able to deliver that role and also the amount of work proposed for the project cost seemed unrealistic. Rhiannon proposed that perhaps the FLAG staff should actively a project based around an Aquaculture Development Officer to work closely with the FLAG programme staff and to help drive forward the sector in the FLAG area. Once developed, the project would still be subject to the same application process as all other projects. The position would be open for tender to ensure it is a fair and transparent process and also ensure that the necessary skills and expertise were recruited for the role. This would also ensure that some of the key projects mentioned within the Local Development Strategy could be delivered in an appropriate timescale with the correct expertise.

The proposal was discussed by the Board and is summarised below.

- A board member commented that certain types of aquaculture have been tried before in parts of FLAG area without much success and that large areas of Lyme Bay do not seem suitable for some reason so perhaps the post isn't actually needed as it won't work for the area. Rhiannon advised the board that the aquaculture priority was included in the LDS as this was a key issue that came out of stakeholder engagement before the FLAG was awarded to the area.
- A board member expressed concerns over the time scales involved in recruiting a suitable officer. This could take up to six months depending upon the recruitment process involved. Rhiannon acknowledged that employing a suitable candidate could take too long and so an open tendering process for the work would be quicker and perhaps achieve the same goal.
- Funding could be up to 100% of the project costs depending upon who the applicant is.



- Other English FLAG's have developed similar projects to accomplish LDS goals in their area but there could not be a collaborative approach to this type of project here as none of the other English FLAG's have aquaculture in their LDS.
- A Board member asked what the potential cost of the project might be. It is difficult to give a total cost at this stage as the project is not developed. However, it could cost in the region of £50,000 which would still leave over £150,000 available to spend in this priority.
- A board member commented that this type of project could be seconded to an overseas aquaculture company as they often have the expertise required to develop the sector.
- A board member commented that the role would have to be filled by someone who understood the sector but also had a sound business sense and understood how to attract businesses to an area.
- A board member commented that links to research facilities similar to the Scottish Association for Marine Science (SAMS) in Oban enhances the sector at early stages
- A board member stressed the need to engage with the local commercial fishing industry at an early stage is key to ensure there are no conflicts of interest for development.
- A board member commented that the FLAG area does have potential as an area for aquaculture to be developed and this is shown by the success that has been had with mussels and other offshore activity
- A board member agreed that certain areas do work within the south west. Poole Harbour is a good example. The main problem lies with the support and infrastructure in the area and legislation barriers.
- A board member commented that on shore re-circulating aquaculture systems (RAS) also have huge potential and could work well in the FLAG area.
- A board member commented that the SEASCOPE project that was completed previously mapped areas that are suitable for aquaculture, although it needs to be updated.
- A board member suggested in previous studies when local fishermen have been consulted and areas given up to aquaculture trials the outcomes have been positive. The key to ensuring success is that everyone shares information at an early stage.
- A board member commented that several feasibility studies have been completed and others are currently being developed for application to the FLAG. There is a need for a project to help break down the barriers that prevent aquaculture development at the moment. Legislation can be a particularly difficult problem to overcome when developing an aquaculture business plan and somewhere this could be collated and made more accessible may be useful.
- A board member advised that caution would be needed to ensure any role that was developed did not just duplicate existing work.
- Rhiannon advised the board that any project that was developed would be done so on the back of further stakeholder engagement to ensure that an aquaculture development officer delivered what was required in the FLAG area.
- A board member asked if Portland Port had been approached. Rhiannon advised that initial conversations with Portland Port had been positive but traditionally aquaculture development has not been a priority of their work programme.
- A board member advised the board that similar aquaculture developments have taken place around the UK and that there must be a catalyst to this investment. There is funding available and so that should be a boost to any potential investment in the FLAG area.

- A board member suggested that perhaps the decision to undertake this project should wait until the mapping exercise has been undertaken to look at the potential. Another board member responded that they think there is potential and the mapping exercise will be adding detail to it so could work alongside the position. It was advised that perhaps the FLAG staff could look at SEAFISH's work on aquaculture development.
- A board member asked if the upcoming FLAG aquaculture workshop could be advertised to bring new players to the table. The workshop will be the key to developing the project and Rhiannon advised that the board will be given an update at the February meeting.
- A board member asked if FLAG funding could be used for a third officer considering the programme officers were already in post. Rhiannon advised that the FLAG staff currently do have the capacity to work on this priority specifically and that it would be a project submitted to the FLAG board for consideration but is an eligible project.
- A board member commented that if there is a need for this type of project then it is needed sooner rather than later as the time scale of the EMFF programme seems to be becoming shorter and a decision to pursue this project is needed at this board meeting.
- A board member agreed that something needs to happen quickly if it is to happen and the appointment of either a consultant or officer would allow them to liaise with all of the key stakeholders that sit on the FLAG board.
- If the board agrees, three tenders would be required to move the project forward - the same as any other project coming forward to the FLAG. These could come from the public or private sector.
- Rhiannon confirmed to the board that the FLAG programme staff would consult with all relevant stakeholders and organisations if the project was taken forward.

VOTE: Should the FLAG programme staff pursue the development of an Aquaculture Development Officer project?

In Favour: 11

Against: 0

Abstained: 2

ACTION: The FLAG programme staff will pursue the development of a suitable project to create an Aquaculture Development Officer role and report back to the Board as the project progresses.

6. Project Appraisal Run Through

Each project presented to the Board at meetings is independently appraised prior to the meeting. The independent appraiser was invited to this meeting to give the board an increased understanding of the process that is undertaken for each project appraisal.

- A board member asked should the questions on the application form mirror those on the appraisal form as it would make the appraisal more consistent with the FLAG LDS. Rhiannon advised that the criteria for appraisal was produced before the application form was available and that the application form is an EMFF one so cannot be edited. It was suggested that perhaps a separate form could be drawn up which mirrors the criteria to make it easier for the appraiser. Rhiannon suggested that this might give the applicant additional work but that most of these questions are addressed in the EOI.



- Rhiannon advised the board that the Expression of Interest form does mirror the appraisal form and suggested that this could be sent to the appraiser at the same time as the application. The Board generally agreed with this.

ACTION: FLAG Programme staff will ensure that the Expression of Interest for each project is forwarded to the independent appraiser along with the application form.

The projects generally seem to be accomplishing what the FLAG was set up to do and the independent appraiser commented they are really encouraged and pleased with the projects that are coming forward to the board.

7. Project discussions and scorings

There was one project presented for review by the Board at this meeting. The project was independently appraised prior to the meeting and this was circulated to the Board for review. The scoring and Board discussion for each project is documented in the individual FLAG Application Appraisal form. Project details will be made public once they are approved for funding by the MMO.

- I. **ENG 2394** Lyme Regis Fishermen's Association declared an interest
 - **A vote was taken to recommend this project for FLAG funding. A condition was attached to the vote.**

8. Any other business

Next Meeting:

- Rhiannon advised the next board meeting would probably need to be longer due to the need to review the LDS. Rhiannon asked the board if an earlier start would be suitable to accommodate the longer meeting. There was a general feeling that the usual start time of 1800hrs would be suitable and the meeting would finish later.

Quota Allocations:

- A board member commented that some of the current MMO policies regarding quota management seem to be counterproductive to what the FLAG is trying to achieve in respect of community development of fisheries, is there something FLAG can do to change this? The MMO advised that polices come from DEFRA and as such the FLAG might not have much authority in trying to influence policy.
- A board member commented that policies should be made with a bottom up approach rather than top down and that the proposed Bass entitlement reduction is a good example of this. If the proposed changes are passed at the December EU Agriculture and Fisheries Council it could well put many boats in Weymouth out of business. One board member reminded the rest of the board that the proposed changes to Bass legislation have come from the European Commission and that the science behind the current



state of the Bass stocks is fairly robust and it is difficult for the MMO to influence these higher decisions. Bass stocks are acknowledged to be in a poor state.

- A board member asked if the support of the FLAG would help to influence policy.
- It was pointed out by a board member that while raising awareness of the issue at Weymouth is important, the general state of the Bass stock is well known and there is a concern that the stock will collapse regardless of the type and volume of fishing allowed. This is the main reason for the very low entitlement being proposed.
- A board member asked if there was a way for FLAG to be used as a voice for people at the 'bottom of the ladder' regarding Bass quotas.
- A board member commented that the issue has been raised at the South Coast Fishermen's council previously and to put a proposal forward with stakeholder consultation for a white paper. This issue remains that the interests of local stakeholders is not necessarily taken into account.
- A board member asked if the FLAG could send a letter to DEFRA in support of the local fishermen specific to Bass quota issues in Weymouth.

UPDATE with MMO Clarification: *The role of FLAG is an impartial community group representing a wide range of fisheries stakeholders within a given region. The FLAG does not have a legal status and therefore should not become involved in political or partisan activity. All other activity outside of project recommendations such as promotions should reflect the membership as a whole and should not favour one sector over another in the interests of fairness and neutrality. FLAG board members can, in their everyday duties, continue to carry out activity as required of them without prejudice to their position on the FLAG.*

- A board member commented that the issues regarding Bass are well documented but the associated potential socio-economic issues in Weymouth are perhaps not enough of an issue to influence European wide policy.
- A board member commented that because of the different representation and interests of the organisations on the FLAG Board, a letter from the FLAG board as a group may not be a suitable course of action. Perhaps a letter from all of the local fishermen associations may be more suitable and the FLAG programme staff could help draft these letters. Perhaps the local IFCA's may also be able to show their support in this way.
- A board member commented that there is an immediate need to address the current Bass quota issues and that as letter should be sent to the local MP. Rod and line fishing for Bass is the most sustainable way to fish for this species and this needs to be highlighted as most local boats catch bass in this way.
- A board member commented that the Fishermen's Associations would have the largest mandate with this issue and that they should write directly to the European commissioner for greatest impact.

UPDATED ACTION: Rhiannon to contact the Fishermen's Associations to help write a joint letter to DEFRA outlining current issues they have regarding quota management.



Marine
Management
Organisation



9. **Date of Next meeting**

The next meeting will be on Tuesday 20th February at 1800 at SafeWise in Weymouth