

Select Committee Review

Wednesday 22 August 2018

PRESENT:

Councillor Morris, in the Chair.
Councillor Fletcher, Vice Chair.
Councillors Mrs Aspinall, Buchan, Churchill and Corvid.

Apology for absence: Councillor Carson.

Also in attendance: Jane Hunt (Senior Economic Development Officer), Helen Prendergast (Democratic Advisor) and Amanda Ratsey (Head of Economy, Enterprise and Employment).

The meeting started at 2.00 pm and finished at 5.45 pm.

Note: At a future meeting, the Panel will consider the accuracy of these draft minutes, so they may be subject to change. Please check the minutes of that meeting to confirm whether these minutes have been amended.

The Select Committee Review took place following a site visit to the Fishing Market at Sutton.

6. **Appointment of Chair and Vice Chair**

The Committee agreed that Councillor Morris is appointed as Chair and Councillor Fletcher is appointed Vice Chair for this particular meeting.

7. **Declarations of Interest**

In accordance with the code of conduct the following declarations of interest were made by Councillors as follows –

Name	Minute Number and Item	Reason	Interest
Councillor Churchill	Minute 9	He knew Mr Peter Macconnell (witness)	Personal
Councillor Buchan	Minute 9	Member of the Devon and Severn IFCA and the Tamar Estuaries Consultative Forum	Personal

Councillor Mrs Aspinall	Minute 9	Member of the South West Ports Welfare Committee	Personal
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8. **Chair's Urgent Business**

There were no items of Chair's urgent business.

9. **Fishing and Fisheries**

The Head of Economy, Enterprise and Employment (Amanda Ratsey) presented the Fishing and Fisheries report which highlighted the following key points –

- (a) when Britain joined the European Union in 1973, it became bound by the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP); under the CFP member states' share of the Total Allowable Catch (TAC) was laid down using a formula known as 'relative stability' which was based on historic catch records, most of which pre-dated the CFP and were drawn up at the time that a significant proportion of UK fishing was undertaken in Iceland;

- (b) following Brexit, the UK would become an independent coastal state whose relationship with the EU and its member states would be bound by the UN Convention on the Law off the Sea (UNCLOS) and 1995 United Nations Fish Stocks Agreement; under UNCLOS the UK would have the right to determine the extent to which it exploited all fish stocks in its Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ);

when the UK left the EU, relative stability would no longer apply; an alternative approach was zonal attachment whereby a TAC was shared according to the spatial distribution of a stock for each species over time; this was the system used by Iceland and Norway and many other countries across the world;

- (c) the total net gain to the UK of zonal attachment had been estimated at £420m a year; over the five year period from 2011 to 2015, non UK EU fishing boats landed almost eight times more fish and shellfish (by weight) from the UK Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) than the UK did from other areas of the European Union's EEZ, or almost five times more value;

- (d) as a first step towards the UK reverting to independent control of its fisheries, the UK Government gave notice in July 2017 of its intention to withdraw from the London Fisheries Convention;

the Convention allowed vessels from five European countries to fish within six to 12 nautical miles of the UK coastline; their rights of access would cease in July 2019; an estimated 10,000 tonnes of fish including mackerel and herring had been caught by fishing vessels from France, Belgium, Germany, Ireland and the Netherlands in 2015;

- (e) on the south coast of the UK, Plymouth was the clear leader in capacity (GT, a measure of size and capacity of fishing fleet, including the average size of vessels which in turn were assumed to approximate to the pressure on marine fish resources and the environment);
- (f) in an average year, Plymouth Trawler Agents dealt with 350 vessels of which 80% were under 10m boats; gross sales through the Plymouth Trawler Agents electronic auction in 2016 was £17.2m;
- (g) Plymouth Trawler Agents (PTA) sold catches landed by boats in Plymouth, as well as collecting or arranging transport from a large number of ports that had limited fish selling facilities; the long list of such ports included Cowes, Dartmouth, Lowestoft, Portsmouth, Southampton, Weymouth and Whitehaven;
- (h) it was hoped that the agreement would be reached on a frictionless flow of trade between the UK and the EU but consideration was already being given to what might happen, if this was not the outcome; the risk would arise from a no deal Brexit which would result in a hard border;
- (i) there were concerns that when the UK left the EU there would be EU fleet retaliation; with the risk that the 'cod wars' and associated costs of policing and defending our waters;
- (j) leaving the Common Fisheries Policy afforded the UK a larger share of Europe's TAC; this would allow the UK the opportunity to sell additional stocks onto member states, or expand and develop the nation's fisheries to fill the gap;

- (k) the change in the fisheries policy, as a result of Brexit, would allow the country to put sustainability at the forefront of its strategies; with the ambition of a National Marine Park and ongoing commitment to abolish marine plastics and the devastating practice of discards and a world class cluster in marine science, Plymouth had the opportunity to shape the future direction of the fishing industry.

The Committee heard representations from various witnesses –

- (l) Councillor Evans OBE (Leader of the Council) provided an overview of why the fishing industry was so important to Plymouth and highlighted the following key areas –
- Plymouth had a long history as a fishing city, in the early 13 century the local monks started the fish market, once the market had been established merchants and craftsmen came to live and trade in the city; Plymouth was viewed by many as the fisheries hub of the region and one of the most important in the UK;
 - Plymouth was the administrative port that supported the most full time equivalent jobs in England (1000 jobs);
 - Plymouth was placed amongst the top 10 UK ports by the volume of landings and consistently featured amongst the top three English ports for volume and value;
 - in 2016, Plymouth landed the highest tonnage of pelagic species (not shellfish or demersal species which live on or near the seabed) in England (69,000 tonnes) which equated to 5,700 London double decker buses of fish;
 - the highest value species landed was shellfish (28,000 tonnes) worth £6.4m;
 - Plymouth had the second highest number of vessels registered in the UK (506), closely behind Newlyn at 585 (who had the larger proportion of 10m and under vessels);

- Plymouth Fisheries was unique in the region by offering electronic auction systems, operated by Plymouth Trawler Agents which ensured fishermen working from smaller ports without an electronic system could still secure top prices for their catch; Plymouth Trawler Agents who ran the auction house, had grown the business from an annual turnover of £750,000 to over £18m;
- there was a real need to ensure that the city's port and road infrastructure was fit for purpose, as fishermen from across Wales and the South West landed their catch elsewhere but sent it to Plymouth in order to achieve the best price;
- Plymouth was a fishing port that could be regarded at the interface between the harvesting of fish stocks and their subsequent economic exploitation and consumption; if all aspect of the fishing industry were to take place in Plymouth including employing local people this would generate local economic benefits.

(m) Luke Pollard MP (Shadow Fishing Minister) highlighted the following key issues -

- fishing was hugely important to Plymouth, with one of the most important fish markets in the country; the City had an important role to play in the marine debate to ensure its future environmental and economic sustainability;
- ensuring that the UK's future fishing policies were right, in order to enable the fishing industry to develop, take full advantage of new opportunities and ensure sustainability of the industry's future;
- the need to have real investment in the City's fishing facilities, in order to further develop business opportunities and safeguard jobs;
- the importance of encouraging people to join the fishing sector through educating and developing skills to ensure the industry's future sustainability;

- the importance of educating people regarding the impact of food miles on the environment; approximately 70-80% of seafood consumed in the UK was imported; the UK exported approximately 75% of its seafood (caught in its waters);
 - commended Plymouth City Council's life jacket scheme which ensured the safety of those working in the industry.
- (n) Mr Andrew Pillar (Interfish) highlighted the key issues arising from the 'Sustainable Fisheries for Future Generations' White Paper -
- the need for a strong and meaningful economic link (between the UK catching sector and other fleets operating in UK waters); the eco-link would provide opportunities for UK businesses;
 - the introduction of Remote Electronic Monitoring (REM) for non UK vessels seeking access to UK waters should be considered mandatory following the UK's designation as a Coastal State (following the UK leaving the EU);
 - the UK, as a Coastal State, would need to ensure that it invested in fisheries science and fully utilised the scientific quota opportunities;
 - it was considered that Plymouth was well placed as a centre of existing expertise for REM and fisheries science data and would have significant opportunities to develop these areas;
- (o) Mr David Pessell, Mrs Alison Pessell and Mr Rodney Anderson (Plymouth Trawler Agents) highlighted the following key issues –
- the sustainability of fish stocks had also dramatically improved; in 2009, five EU stocks had been at maximum sustainable yield which had now increased to 57; although 40% of some stocks were still being fished which was unsustainable;
 - the importance of having a fishing 'framework' in order to effectively manage fish stocks;

- the development of the port to provide a fit for purpose facility; Sutton Harbour Holdings owned the land and was currently drafting plans to look at the future feasibility of the site;
 - the potential opportunities for the UK when it became a Coastal State (it would be responsible for its own waters);
- (p) Mr Mat Mander (Devon and Severn IFCA) highlighted the following key issues -
- the Devon and Severn IFCA would be submitting their own responses to the Government's 'Sustainable Fisheries for Future Generations' White Paper;
 - the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009 ((MaCAA) introduced a new framework for managing the marine environment and providing greater access to it; this Act of Parliament replaced Sea Fisheries Committees with Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authorities (IFCAs) and was fundamental to the work of Devon and Severn IFCA;
 - the Authority was the largest of 10 separate IFCA districts and had two separate coastlines; the district area was 4522km² and included the areas of Devon, Torbay, Somerset, Gloucestershire County Councils, Bristol City and Plymouth City Councils, North Somerset and South Gloucestershire Councils (and all adjacent waters out to six nautical miles offshore or the median line with Wales;
 - the Authority undertook a range of survey, research and analysis activities (particularly research of Marine Protected Areas, fishing activity levels and fisheries stocks);
- (q) Mr Peter Macconnell (Angling Trust and the Bass Anglers' Sport Fishing Society) highlighted the key issues arising from the Fisheries White Paper –

- the recreational sea anglers wanted the specific proposals within the White Paper regarding how recreational sea angling (RSA) could be developed post Brexit, in order to ensure future sustainability, a clear acknowledgement of the economic and social benefits and how this would be acted upon;
- Plymouth City Council in its submission to the Government's Fisheries White Paper could put forward proposals for the development of RSA, emphasise its socio-economic value to the City and understand the important contribution that Plymouth had made and continued to make;
- RSA in the South West employed up to 3000 jobs (tackle shops, bait and charter boats) and attracted 750,000 visitor days from outside of the region;
- Plymouth was one of the premier sea angling centres in the country (only Poole and Weymouth were larger) and significantly benefited the City; (there was a large RSA population with many clubs, all the associated equipment could be purchased in the City and sea angling was a health activity for all the family).

Key areas of questioning from Members related to -

- (r) how would the enforcement of the UK's water be undertaken;
- (s) what measures were being undertaken to encourage people into the fishing industry and whether apprenticeships would help to address the decline in the industry;
- (t) the accessibility of training courses for those wishing to enter into the fishing industry;
- (u) how beneficial had the Council's Life Jacket Scheme been (which ensured that those who worked on the water were entitled to a life jacket with a personal locator beacon);
- (v) whether privately owned vessels had monitoring equipment installed and if so, whether this could assist in scientific data collection;

- (w) what was the process for enforcing quotas;
- (x) how would the practice of trading quotas be impacted by Brexit;
- (y) what responses should Plymouth City Council include in its submission to the 'Sustainable Fisheries for Future Generations' White Paper;
- (z) concerns regarding the potential impact on the export of fish from Plymouth should there be a no deal Brexit;
- (aa) whether additional berths could be provided at the harbour, to ensure there was sufficient mooring space for the fishing vessels and pleasure boats;
- (bb) what measures could be undertaken to develop the facilities at the fish market;
- (cc) whether the discard ban would have an adverse impact on Plymouth's fishing fleet;
- (dd) whether the Council could provide support and or financial assistance, in order to replace the ice plant at the fish market;
- (ee) whether alternative fishing nets were being trialled, as part of the discard ban, to prevent the practice of throwing, dead fish overboard;
- (ff) what were the issues that prevented the provision of better accessibility to the water for sea anglers, and how could these be addressed;
- (gg) what measures were being undertaken by recreational anglers to reduce the amount of discarded plastic and lines;
- (hh) whether there were any regulations preventing recreational anglers from fishing endangered species.

10. **Recommendations**

The Committee agreed that the following recommendations are submitted to Cabinet for consideration –

- (1) to produce a plan for sustainable fishing to secure the industry's future in the City by September 2019;
- (2) to agree the consultation responses to the Fisheries White Paper: Sustainable Fisheries for Future Generations (as attached as appendix 1);
- (3) to increase resources and expertise supporting the sector by employing a Fishing Development Officer which will enable the Council to deliver recommendation 1 above;
- (4) Plymouth works with the Local Government Association in order to create a network of key port cities;
- (5) recreational angling should be considered as part of the whole approach to sustainable fisheries.