

CAST YOUR VOICE THE FUTURE OF FISHERIES MANAGEMENT

OVERVIEW

- On the 1st April 2021 people from the fishing industry, policy-makers and scientists came together to join the fishermen-led charity, Fishing into the Future (FITF), in a conversation about the future of UK Fisheries Management.
- FITF re-launched with fresh ideas and approaches - supported by a new Programme Manager and a strategic partnership with the Fishmongers' Company.
- The online dialogue offered a balance of learning and constructive dialogue; bringing together a variety of voices to share knowledge and experience.
- Intimate discussions were held within fisher-led breakout groups on the meaning of co-management and how it can be achieved.

WHAT HAPPENED?

With over 60 participants joining on Zoom - and more people on Facebook live - the online event was launched by FITF Programme Manager, Emma Plotnek. Emma introduced FITF as a UK Charity run by fishermen and fisheries experts, with a mission to build knowledge, improve communication, and increase confidence. Their aim? To work towards meaningful and representative engagement of people within the UK fishing sector in fisheries management and data collection, and to improve knowledge around building profitable and resilient seafood businesses.

After an introduction from David Stevens, FITF Chairperson and Skipper of the Crystal Sea, a series of presentations and learning exchanges followed; from Alexa Dayton on the US approach to fisheries management, Gus Caslake on collaboration and data collection within the Cornish Sardine

Management Organisation, Alan Steer on the history of the Inshore Potting Agreement in south Devon, and Jim Evans on the collaboration between the Welsh Fishermen's Association and scientists. This was followed up with some insights from government with messages from Robbie Fisher from DEFRA and Jim Watson at Marine Scotland.

The event highlight was intimate group discussions with a mix of participants from fishing, policy and science, to create a dialogue around co-management. Discussions were led by FITF fishing industry Trustees; David Stevens, Adrian Bartlett, Peter Bruce and Jimmy Buchan.

**READ ON FOR A SUMMARY OF THE EVENT
OR WATCH THE EVENT IN FULL ON THE
[FITF FACEBOOK PAGE](#)**



Participants were split into groups led by FITF Trustees

Here are some of the ideas and thoughts direct from the fishermen...

SCIENCE

- We need to be involved in and have a broad understanding of the available science.
- Knowledge will empower us - we have the opportunity to know more about our fisheries than ever before.
- Science needs to be included in our daily work - we need to build strong relationships with scientists.
- Decision making needs to be based on credible science and provide a solid evidence base.
- We need honesty and transparency in the process.
- We need to get more scientists out on vessels to see and understand the realities of the industry.

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MANAGEMENT

- Fishermen need to be a direct partner in management processes - with clear objectives and an end goal.
- Co-management must start from step 0 – not a consultation once an idea is already mapped out.
- We can learn from international experience in co-management.
- It will not be easy to ensure the representation of all fisheries and fishing voices in this dialogue - but we must work towards this.
- The industry is diverse and we need to be flexible and innovative to ensure we are inclusive of different fleets, fisheries and scales of fishing.
- The industry should prepare for more responsibility and power, and guidance is needed on decision making – especially if decisions are unfavourable!
- An agreed approach to co-management needs to be incorporated into UK fisheries Policy.
- We need to rebuild trust and ensure that we all engage in an honest way - to ensure co-management frameworks are abided by.



CAST YOUR VOICE

FUNDING

- Co-management will call for greater responsibility from the industry - it will also need the investment of funds and time.
- Innovation will take time and money - we need to prepare to finance these processes.
- We need to invest in capacity building to better engage in these processes - increase knowledge and trust between people.
- Funding should be stable and consistent - trust cannot be established when these processes are underfunded.
- A commitment to long term funding will show there is trust in the communities - and faith to commit long-term to these processes.

COLLABORATION

- We should not have less of a voice than other stakeholders – resources and articulation should not hold us back when we want to be heard.
- We should differentiate between stakeholders & levels of involvement in fisheries.
- There is a need to build a relationship of trust between everyone involved – we want to feel involved, trusted and reassured.
- It's important to understand that in these processes, everyone doesn't get exactly what they want – but the value is in participating and finding compromises.
- Collectively we need to visualise the long term commitment and the "bigger picture", but this may be hard when we face conflicts of interest and our top priority is making a living.
- Everyone brings expertise to the table – we need to ensure a diverse and representative group of people engage in the co-management process.
- How we approach one another as equals with shared goals must form the basis of future policy.



ALEXA DAYTON – GMRI

Coming from a research perspective at the Gulf of Maine Research Institute (GMRI), Alexa shared the USA's approach to fisheries management, discussing the meaning of co-management and the key elements of the US system.

The US implements a “not perfect - but successful” system of co-management over a diverse variety of national fisheries, with a focus on maintaining sustainable fisheries and communities. Through a system of active participation in decision making, using local councils with nominated appointees, stakeholders work together adopting agreed standards for co-management. The process works from the bottom up, with appointees to councils being fed information from advisory panels and committees that ensure active participation and inclusivity of views and information. Furthermore these processes are open to the public with space for public comment.

“ **CO-MANAGEMENT ENABLES THE VOICES OF THE INDUSTRY IN THE DECISION PROCESS** ”
ALEXA DAYTON - GMRI

She also highlighted the importance of ensuring co-management is:

- On the right scale – as the whole system works as a “sum of many pieces”.
- Based on credible data from different sources.
- Overseen by a system of effective compliance.
- Has the right human capacity, understanding and communication between all stakeholders.

Alexa and her colleagues founded the Marine Resource Education Programme – a government funded programme to enable knowledgeable and constructive collaboration between people working in fisheries, which leads to improved and more efficient processes of decision making.

GUS CASLAKE - CSMA

As the independent Chair of the Cornish Sardine Management Association (CSMA), Gus talked through the work of the CSMA to collect data, build better datasets for the fishery, and engage decision makers and external fleets to ensure fishery management meets international sustainability standards.

“ **COMMUNICATION IS THE KEY - FROM THE BOTTOM UPWARDS** ”
GUS CASLAKE - CSMA

ALAN STEER

As the Vice-Chair of the South Devon & Channel Shellfishermen, Alan presented the history of the Inshore Potting Agreement and bottom-up management initiatives in his local fishery. Alan is also a FITF trustee.

JIM EVANS

Speaking as Chair of the Welsh Fishermen's Association (WFA), Jim gave an insight into some of the work being coordinated by the WFA to collaborate with scientists and obtain the data needed for better management decisions.





ROBBIE FISHER, DEFRA

Standing in for Anne Freeman and representing DEFRA, Robbie Fisher highlighted the opportunity for the UK as an independent coastal state to move towards a shared approach to management. He noted that this is an important leap forward, however it will require earnest discussions on what co-management will look like. There is a need to define how the sector will work together and share more responsibility - and we must all take steps to improve interpersonal working relationships.

He spoke with optimism that there are already many good examples of better ways to work, that we can learn from and build upon - giving an insight into how DEFRA envisions future management through exploring how fisheries management plans could help to underpin collaborative approaches while building skills and trust.

JIM WATSON, MARINE SCOTLAND

As the Head of Domestic Fisheries Management at Marine Scotland, Jim drew on his 25 years working in Scottish fisheries management to provide ideas on how to share the responsibility of management to pave the best way forward - which may not necessarily follow a standard model, but instead be achieved through different and evolving management approaches that adapt over time.

He reminded us that co-management is an integral part of the entire management process and needs to be built into each stage of the process. This requires participants to have clear roles and regular follow-up to ensure continuity.

Jim also reinforced the need for discussions driven by impartial evidence - not opinion - for informed

A CLEAR COMMITMENT TO CO-MANAGEMENT IS FEATURED IN THE SCOTTISH FISHERIES MANAGEMENT STRATEGY - 2020-2030

management measures. In Scotland, these processes often function through management groups acting as a forum to reach consensus, for example, the Shetland Shellfish Management Organisation, which is run by active fishers and granted the legal right to manage local fisheries.

“CO-MANAGEMENT NEEDS TO EXIST RIGHT FROM EARLIEST STAGES OF DEVELOPMENT TO DELIVERY”

JIM WATSON - MARINE SCOTLAND

Looking ahead there is a need to prepare for challenges – such as engaging with those working in the wider marine space and incorporating issues such as MPA's and offshore energy. Although it is probable this will put a strain on co-management - it is also vital to maintain co-management throughout these processes.

WHAT'S NEXT FROM FITF?

We want to turn the tide on decision making so it is centred on the insights and knowledge from a fully representative body of people within fishing communities.

We will continue to play our role in creating learning opportunities and building confidence and collaboration between everyone working in UK fisheries – putting the people who are fishing and working in the supply chain at the centre of our work.





TAKE-HOME MESSAGES

People in the industry: can find common ground, trial ways of speaking collectively, and develop shared goals - to improve collaboration and cohesion.

Decision-makers: can commit to co-management through policy – using language that promotes collaboration and ensures long-lasting funding to support these processes.

Scientists and researchers: can involve fishermen in the initial stages of research and put a greater emphasis on industry knowledge. They can also be more aware of language and jargon - using accessible approaches to ensure that industry partners are informed until the final stages of a project.




ABOUT FITF


Fishing into the Future is a UK Charity run by fishermen and fisheries experts. We are here to build knowledge, improve communication, increase confidence and work towards meaningful and representative engagement of people within the UK fishing sector in fisheries management and data collection. We want to contribute to a sustainable, profitable, and resilient seafood sector.


We are an independent charity; most of our trustees are actively fishing and working in the seafood supply chain, and all our trustees give their time voluntarily. Our current activities are funded through a partnership with Fishmongers' Company's Fisheries Charitable Trust and funding from Seafarers UK.

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