

**MINUTE OF NESFLAG MEETING
TUESDAY 17 SEPTEMBER 2024 AT 2.00 PM
MICROSOFT TEAMS CONFERENCE CALL**

Present

Duncan Abernethy	Scottish Maritime Academy (Public)
Keith Anderson	Aberdeenshire Voluntary Action (Private)
Ann Bell	NE Scotland Fisheries Development Partnership (Private)
David Jackson	Visit Scotland (Public)
David John McRobbie	Don Fishing Company (Private)
Robin Maddock	Banffshire Partnership (Private)
Doreen Mair	Aberdeenshire Council (Public)
Jennifer Mouat	North & East Coast Region Inshore Fisheries Group (Private)
Andrew Newton (Chair)	Stonehaven Tolbooth Association Partnership (Private)

Officers in Attendance

Martin Brebner	Team Manager – Economic Strategy & Policy
Jamie Wilkinson	Investments & Projects Executive
Anne MacLennan	Investments & Projects Officer

Apologies

Anne Birnie	North East Scotland Fishermen's Organisation (Private)
Millie Clarke	Visit Aberdeenshire (Private)

1. Welcome & Apologies

- 1.1 The Chair welcomed members to the meeting and introductions were made round the table. Apologies were noted as above.

2. Draft Minute of NESFLAG Meeting, 1 May 2024

- 2.1 The minutes of the NESFLAG meeting held on 1 May 2024 were approved as an accurate record. Proposed by Robin Maddock and seconded by Ann Bell.

3. Outstanding Action Points from Approved Minute of NESFLAG Meeting, 24 August 2023

- 3.1 The following action points were outstanding from the meeting held on 24 August 2023. These have been actioned as follows:

- **Annual Report which went to Committee to be circulated to NESFLAG members**
Issued by Anne MacLennan.
- **Directors of Buchan Development Partnership to be invited to join the FLAG**

Robin Maddock spoke to Maureen Stephen at BDP. Officers do not have the capacity to join the FLAG but Maureen undertook to ask the Directors if they would be interested in becoming a member. Robin will follow this up with Maureen.

- **Continuation of membership of the FLAG to be considered by Seafish**
Seafish has since withdrawn from membership of the FLAG.
- **Membership form to be issued to David-John McRobbie to allow him to represent the Don Fishing Company on the FLAG**
Form issued and David-John now represents the Don Fishing Company.
- **Community Council representation on the FLAG to be investigated**
Robin Maddock undertook to look into this but it was agreed that there are too many Community Councils for this to be a practical option.
- **Representatives of Aberdeenshire Harbours/Ports to be invited to join the FLAG**
Again, it was agreed that there are too many Harbours for this to be a practical option.
- **Representative from Aberdeenshire Voluntary Action to be invited to join the FLAG**
Robin Maddock contacted Keith Anderson and Keith kindly agreed to join the FLAG. Keith was welcomed to his first meeting.
- **Fraserburgh Development Trust to be removed from the FLAG membership list**
This has been done.
- **Three member organisations who do not have current representation on the FLAG to be contacted**
Aberdeen & Grampian Chamber of Commerce opted to withdraw from membership of the FLAG.
Aberdeenshire Council is now represented by Doreen Mair.
Federation of Small Businesses opted withdraw from membership of the FLAG.
- **Wording at point 4.2.2 of the constitution to accurately reflect that Aberdeenshire Council is not eligible to apply for CCCF funding**
Martin Brebner has amended accordingly.
- **Suggestions welcomed for a new, more appropriate name for NESFLAG**
Following discussion, it was agreed that the NESFLAG name will be retained due to the potential cost associated with any re-branding.
- **All reference to the LDS to be removed from the constitution document**
Martin Brebner has actioned this.
- **Copy of the Crown Estate Framework document to be circulated to members**
Issued by Anne MacLennan. This document is also attached as an appendix to Paper 2 for today's meeting.

4. NESFLAG Membership Review

- 4.1 Paper 1 is an update on the current status of NESFLAG membership. NESFLAG has a cross-sector membership representing different aspects of life in coastal Aberdeenshire across the community, public and private sectors. NESFLAG has evolved post European funding era to develop the Coastal Communities Challenge Fund. As a result of this, there is less of a focus on the fishing industry

and more of a focus on community led projects. Membership is currently fairly strong with a good spread of different sectors and different areas.

- 4.2 We have some new member organisations approved fairly recently, including Aberdeenshire Voluntary Action, North East Scotland Fisheries Development Partnership and Stonehaven Tolbooth Association.

Kincardineshire Development Partnership has been approached to ask if they want to nominate a replacement for Andrew Newton who is now representing Stonehaven Tolbooth Association.

- 4.3 We have recently lost three of the organisations representing business and enterprise in the area, largely due to capacity issues.

- 4.4 NESFLAG currently has 11 active member organisations and 1 vacant position.

- 4.5 Discussions have taken place at previous NESFLAG meetings about encouraging new members. Maintaining the geographical and sector spread will be important. Inviting organisations such as Community Councils and harbour operators have been considered previously but following discussion, members agreed that there are a significant number of Community Councils within the active area. From a practical perspective, it was agreed that this was not something that the committee would like to pursue unless there was an overarching body to represent Community Councils but this does not currently exist.

- 4.6 Jamie confirmed that the current constitution currently requires 5 as a quorum and at least 50% of attendees must be from the private or community sector.

- 4.7 There has been an indication that the Crown Estate funding for the challenge fund will be maintained in the coming years so this may be the time to try to broaden membership for the future.

- 4.8 Robin Maddock will approach Buchan Development Partnership again to ask if they would be willing to nominate a representative to join NESFLAG.

- 4.9 The membership application form will be circulated to enable current members to issue this to any groups they feel may be appropriate to join NESFLAG.

- 4.10 If, in the future, there was to be an open drive for new membership, it may be possible to open this up to previous NESFLAG grant beneficiaries.

- 4.11 With regard to the rebranding of the group name, several suggestions were put forward. However, following discussion it was agreed that the potential cost of rebranding and designing new logos etc was considered to be prohibitive. It was therefore agreed that the NESFLAG name will be retained.

Actions

- Robin Maddock to contact BDP about joining NESFLAG.
- Membership form to be circulated to current members.

5. Update on Projects

- 5.2 Jamie gave an informal presentation to highlight the success of a selection of completed projects from previous rounds.
- 5.3 Following a slight delay with issuing contracts to projects approved in the current round, all are now up and running and some are starting to make claims.
- 5.4 The FLAG agreed that NESFLAG has achieved a wide range of benefits for the Aberdeenshire coastal area over the years. The team was congratulated on this success.

6. Results of Applicant Survey

- 6.1 As part of the 3-year review of the Crown Estate Framework, a survey was issued to all previous applicants in order to get a feel for what has been achieved. The aim of the survey was to get feedback about how the process works as well as gathering final results of targets which were set at application stage.
- 6.2 Claire McIntosh recently joined the team and was tasked with creating and issuing the questionnaire to grant recipients in rounds 1-5, covering the period of 2020 to 2023. Responses have been received from 41 out of 48 questionnaires issued.
- Claire presented the initial interim findings from the survey including outcomes, impact of the grant, the grant process and whether the overall experience could be improved.
- 6.3 The FLAG thanked Claire for her presentation on the survey and considered it to be very worthwhile piece of work. Claire's presentation will be circulated to FLAG members.

Action

- Applicant survey presentation to be circulated to the FLAG.

7. Crown Estate Framework – 3 Year Review

- 7.1 Jamie summarised the current Crown Estate framework which was adopted by the Council's Infrastructure Services Committee in 2021 and provided an update about an upcoming review which will take place at Council Committee level. The framework is subject to review every 3 years.

The framework splits Aberdeenshire's annual funding allocation into 2 parts: half is allocated equally between four coastal Area Committees and half is allocated to the Coastal Communities Challenge Fund and is delegated to the NESFLAG committee.

- 7.2 The FLAG now has an opportunity to make any amendments to the current framework before the paper goes to Committee, hopefully by the end of the year.

Martin Brebner reminded the flag that some minor changes were made to the framework in 2023, for example minimum and maximum grant levels were changed to £10,000 and £50,000 respectively and an additional indicator was added to capture visitor numbers. Input is being sought from all stakeholders and

Martin would welcome any suggestions from the FLAG on how this could be further improved or refined.

- 7.3 This review covers all Crown Estate Funding, the Area Committee allocation and the NESFLAG allocation.

The Area Committees all run what is essentially a mini challenge fund and each area has different maximum grant levels. The FLAG acknowledged that having two different Crown Estate funding streams can cause confusion for applicants with regard to which fund they should apply to. The overlap between the NESFLAG Challenge Fund and the Area Committee funds almost leads to running two rival funds.

It was suggested that it would be logical and preferential for applicants if all Area Committees were to work to the same criteria but Martin confirmed that the fund is delegated to the Area Committees for them to disburse as they see fit by targeting the priorities that their members want for their communities.

The FLAG would welcome improved communication between NESFLAG and the Area offices to make sure that both funds can be more co-ordinated in future.

- 7.4 It was highlighted that the current maximum grant threshold of £50,000 has potential to cause issues with subsidy control so it was suggested that if the maximum grant level was dropped to £49,999 it may make things easier for administration. It was agreed that this change will ensure that applications approved for £49,999 of funding would not require further approval by Infrastructure Services Committee. This could speed up the approval process considerably. This rule is cumulative so, for example, if a project has had two grants awarded of £30,000, then Committee approval for funding of over £50,000 cannot be avoided.

- 7.5 It was acknowledged that the timescale from project approval to contract issue has taken too long, particularly this year. This can cause problems for applicants when it comes to securing quotes. Prices are likely to change if the approval process takes too long.

- 7.6 With regard to publicity, there was an issue with how the information on successful projects presented in the press release this year and it was suggested that more rigorous proof reading will be important in future before any press release is issued.

- 7.7 The framework document will be circulated to give members additional time to consider the Framework document

Actions

- Maximum grant threshold to be set at £49,999
- Framework document to be circulated to members to allow for further consideration and submission of any proposed amendments.

8. Next Application Round

- 8.1 Any new allocation of Crown Estate funding has yet to be confirmed. On the basis

of last year's timescale, the funding was allocated at the end of November with the application round launched in December and application deadline set for the end of January.

8.2 The FLAG proposed that the fund is launched as soon as possible and it was suggested that it would make sense to extend the application deadline to mid-February in order to allow applicants more time taking account of the Christmas break. The FLAG was reminded that nothing can progress until confirmation of the new funding allocation is received.

9. AOCB

9.1 The PAC currently has 3 members, Andrew Newton, Robin Maddock and Anne Birnie. It would be beneficial to have more representation on the PAC and FLAG members were invited to consider joining the PAC either on a regular basis or on a one off basis.

9.2 The PAC process was considered to be very important. The PAC makes a recommendation to the FLAG and in order to give the FLAG a good understanding of each application, current PAC members spend a considerable amount of time on background work and checking of each application. This ensures that all relevant points are covered and any issues raised can be highlighted to the FLAG to enable members to make an informed decision.

9.3 David John McRobbie has helped out on the PAC in the past and would be willing to join but it would be dependent on workload at the time. David John would welcome an early indication of dates to ensure he can commit to the meetings.

David Jackson also indicated that he would be willing to join the PAC.

9.4 It was suggested that although online meetings work well for the FLAG, it would be beneficial for PAC meetings to be held in person. With the level of workload involved, a face-to-face discussion would allow members to go through the relevant points together.

Action

- E-mail to be circulated with proposed meeting dates as soon as any new allocation has been confirmed.
- In person meeting to be arranged for the PAC

10. Date of Next NESFLAG Meeting

10.1 The date of the next meeting is yet to be confirmed.

10.2 The Chair thanked the team and the members of the FLAG for their attendance and continued hard work on behalf of NESFLAG.

Summary of Action Points

Robin Maddock to contact BDP about joining NESFLAG.	Robin Maddock
Membership form to be circulated to current	Anne MacLennan

members.	
Applicant survey presentation to be circulated to the FLAG.	Anne MacLennan
Maximum grant threshold to be set at £49,999	Martin Brebner
Framework document to be circulated to members to allow for further consideration and submission of any proposed amendments.	Anne MacLennan
E-mail to be circulated with proposed meeting dates as soon as any new allocation has been confirmed.	Anne MacLennan
In person meeting to be arranged for the PAC	Anne MacLennan

Minute Taker
Anne MacLennan, Investments & Projects Officer

FLAG Chairman

Date:

Approved