

The Deputy Clerk's Report on Progress Towards Remote Tracking of Vessels Operating under Wash Fishery Order 1992 licences.

Officers have continued to progress the project which will ultimately require all vessels operating under a Wash Fishery Order 1992 (WFO) licence to have fitted and operational a tracking system when that vessel is fishing for prescribed species within the Regulated and Several fisheries as defined by the WFO.

On the 12th of January 2009 officers sought clarification from the European Commission (EC) through the Marine & Fisheries Agency (MFA) as to whether or not the EC funding (€45,735) which had initially been earmarked and approved for 68 Automatic Identification Systems (AIS) utilising VHF transmissions could instead be used to purchase and install up to 68 Vessel Monitoring System (VMS) units utilising satellite technology rather than VHF radio technology as this system was deemed more appropriate for the Joint Committee's requirements. At this point the MFA made it clear to both the EC and the Clerk & Chief Fishery Officer that they would not support the Joint Committee developing a VMS based system if it were not compatible with the existing Defra/MFA VMS system. The Clerk and Deputy Clerk attended a meeting in London with representatives from Defra and the MFA to discuss the matter on the 16th of February 2009. This meeting was very informative and productive. Officers gained assurances verbally - subsequently confirmed in writing shortly after the meeting - that the MFA would at no cost:

- 1) review the proposed tender documentation prepared by the Deputy Clerk to ensure that the equipment tendered for would be compatible with the existing UK VMS system
- 2) assist the Joint Committee if an equipment trial of the chosen VMS supplier was required to confirm compatibility with the existing UK VMS system
- 3) develop a Memorandum of Agreement (MoA) concerning data handling between the Joint Committee and the MFA
- 4) enter onto the existing UK VMS system the details of the vessels to be fitted with the VMS units by the Joint Committee
- 5) make representation to the EC that the funding earmarked for up to 68 AIS units be committed towards up to 68 VMS units meeting UK specifications. This subsequently occurred and was approved by the EC. A project completion date of the 31st of December 2009 was also established.

The Defra official at the meeting also confirmed that it was Defra's opinion that the EC would extend the requirement for commercial fishing vessels over 15m LOA to be fitted and have operational a VMS system of an approved design to all commercial fishing vessels over 10m LOA.

Prior to this meeting officers had also secured assurances that Natural England (NE) would fund the project. On the basis of this, officers published a Prior Information Notice in the Official Journal of the European Union on the 6th of February 2009. This notice requested companies interested in quoting for the work to register their interest with the Joint Committee. In total twenty three companies responded. In order to ensure that the project ran smoothly, officers entered into discussion with NE to develop a draft MoA to cover the responsibilities of both organisations throughout the delivery of the project.

In late February, officers were informed by NE that due to the value of the proposed project they were unable to fund the project out of their 2008-2009 budget. NE however informed the Clerk that they would monitor shortfalls in their 2009-2010 expenditure for other approved projects on a quarterly basis (with the first review in July) with the intention of implementing this VMS project if a sufficient shortfall were to be identified. On this basis officers are continuing to progress the project to a point

where tender documentation is drawn up and ready to be issued and MoAs are already agreed and in place between the Joint Committee, NE and the MFA.

The Joint Committee is asked to receive the report.

Duncan Vaughan
Deputy Clerk & Fishery Officer
22nd April 2009

LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

Background papers:

1. OJEU Prior Information Notice – Provision of a VMS system 6/02/2009
2. Correspondence between the Clerk & Chief Fishery Officer and the MFA 12/01/2009
3. Email to the MFA and Clerk & Chief Fishery Officer 17/02/2009
4. Correspondence between the MFA and the Clerk & Chief Fishery Officer and the 9/03/2009