

Extract from Statutory Meeting Minutes held on 28th January 2009

ST09/19 DEPUTY CLERK'S REPORT ON THE TRIAL OF A VESSEL MONITORING SYSTEM

Members were aware that the Officers were looking into ways of remotely tracking vessels working within the confines of the Wash Fishery Order 1992. In line with this both AIS and VMS tracking systems had been considered. A trial had taken place with a VMS unit onboard Three Counties which had proved very successful. Prior to the trial the Officers had put in an application for European funding towards a tracking system basing the application on the cheaper AIS system. However, following concerns expressed by Committee Members about the AIS system being open for anyone to view and the lack of confidentiality the Officers had decided to go down the route of using a VMS system. Having successfully secured the European funding the Clerk had written stating that it was now the intention to use the alternative system and questioning whether the funding could be put towards the purchase of the VMS units. The response had not been favourable, stating that the Committee could not have additional funding and the system should have been in place by November 2008 therefore the Committee were in breach of the process. The Clerk had not asked for additional funding and was baffled at how the equipment could be in place by November 2008 when confirmation that the bid for funding had been successful was not received until December. Mr Sooben advised that the normal process for funding is that the grant must be confirmed prior to the purchase going ahead or the funding may be withheld which was quite the opposite to the response received by the Clerk.

The Clerk had also been advised that a reason for turning down his request was that it may not be value for money as Defra were considering installing VMS on all fishing vessels over 10 metres in overall length in the future. The Clerk felt that this would not take effect until 2012 at the earliest and also the Committee would not necessarily get the information they required. Mr Sooben confirmed that the system being operated currently in the Isle of Man did not provide real time data.

There was concern amongst the industry members about what the cost would be to individual fishermen. The Clerk advised there would be no cost to the fishermen as the Committee would provide the unit and pay for the maintenance and airtime package. The only cost to the fishermen would be replacement of a unit if it could be proven the unit had failed as a result of malicious damage. Whilst the Clerk acknowledged this was a considerable amount of money to find initially NE had advised that they would be prepared to provide up to 50% of the initial cost as they believed it was a benefit to the management of the fisheries.

Industry members questioned the use of the system, and where advised it would only be set up to provide data on vessels fishing for cockle and mussel within the boundaries of the Wash Fishery Order, once a vessel moved out of the defined area the unit was geo-fenced to stop reporting.

It was Resolved that:

The Clerk should advertise an invitation to tender for the provision of a Vessel Monitoring System to monitor up to 68 fishing vessels operating within the Wash Fishery Order 1992.

The Clerk, Deputy Clerk, Finance Officer, Chairman and Vice-Chairman should convene and review completed tender documents and make recommendations to a Wash Management Sub-Committee regarding their findings.

The Wash Management Sub-Committee be delegated the powers to make a determination regarding the award of any tender.

The Officers continue to pursue European funding towards installation of the system.

Proposed Councillor Williams

Seconded: Councillor Callaby

8 votes in favour

1 vote against

0 abstentions