



Estelle Groark - U10M Quota Manager
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Dear Estelle

Thank you for taking the time to visit Orford last evening to talk to the local fishermen about the new MMO and your task of allocating quota for their boats.

As I said to you last night, our initial reaction to the new organisation is positive as Joanne Simpson and Ray Hedley appear to have sorted out a problem that had been dragging on at the London office of the MFA for sometime and you are the first person who has taken the trouble to get out of the office and meet the people here whose livelihoods you control. I hope the meeting demonstrated that the under10 boats in this area are not crewed by modern day pirates who seek to plunder the seas but by motivated and caring men who are concerned about marine conservation and the way the implementation of the quota system is threatening the marine environment as well as their livelihoods. We are heavily involved in the NetGain MCZ Project as we accept that control must be applied but that it should take into account the accumulated knowledge of the people who understand the changing conditions of the sea.

I read the literature that you left last night and would make a number of comments:

On pages 4 and 19 of the Corporate Plan there are photographs of what appear to be under10s which, ironically because of the poorly managed application of the quota system, may be out of commission long before the first MMO delivery date of April 2013.

On page 6 there are references to adhering to the High Level Marine Objectives which will be difficult to achieve equitably for all marine users, again because of the way the quota system was applied and continues to be administered in the UK. I have attached an edited version of the NUTFA Response to the CFP Consultation which details the problems with the UK implementation of the quota system but in summary the objectives cannot be met in the case of the under10s because:

Achieving a sustainable marine economy is not possible while the small boats and the large number of fishermen who crew them are not allowed to catch sufficient fish to cover their costs and provide a reasonable income because of the mismanagement of the quota system by the UK administrators and the flawed decision not to revisit and rewrite the original allocations when the under10s were introduced into the system.

Ensuring a strong, healthy and just society cannot be possible as long as the original cause of the restrictions on small boats is in place. The quota system was implemented unfairly and no one has the courage to stand up and propose that this should be rectified. To attempt to address the lack of quota for the under10s by reducing the number of under10s is patently unjust as the problem is with the original decision to exclude the under10s from the quota system and then to include them once the quota pot had been allocated. There aren't too many boats, just an unfair allocation system

To try and retrospectively solve the problem by leaving the lion's share of quota (97%) with the bigger boats and divide the remaining 3% between the under10s who employ well over 60% of the total fishing workforce cannot be right. The problem should have been revisited and the allocation rules rewritten when the under10s were brought into the system and the whole pot redistributed fairly amongst all boats.

The potential loss of the fishing industry to the east coast of Suffolk and Norfolk will not only impact those who fish but will also affect the lucrative tourist industry that brings vital revenue into the area.

Living within environmental limits was discussed last night when the local fishermen expressed their concern that fish stocks are put at risk by the indiscriminate application of allowable quota fishing of spawning species. The example discussed was the catching of sole before they had time to shoot their roe which impacts the future of the species. The boats that fish out of Orford and Aldeburgh are crewed by responsible men who understand the need for conservation and therefore fish in a sustainable way as they have for generations. Their fishing methods are selectable and restrict their catch to their targeted species. Their methods also allow them to return most over quota fish to the sea live.

Promoting good governance will be difficult as long as quota allocation is non regionalised and there is no restriction on large offshore boats from other parts of the UK and Europe being allowed to fish indiscriminately in the local waters.

Using sound science responsibly Page 16 of the Corporate Plan suggests that the MMO will continue to use scientific rather than a wider experience based knowledge source in its efforts to manage the marine environment. Fishermen's evidence has been freely offered in the past to provide a balance for the scientific modelling approach but has been ignored or totally discarded. The abandoned project last year where local fishermen willingly took scientists with them to obtain a better understanding of the state of the East Coast fisheries demonstrated that fish stocks are not as depleted as science would have us believe.

I would also point you to the article in Fishing News reporting on comments by Menakhem Ben-Yami.

I wish you luck with sorting out the quota system but fear that you will need the Wisdom of Solomon if you are to satisfy even 10% of the fishermen.

Once again, thank you for visiting us and I would just ask that you carry our concerns back to your organisation so that you can present those concerns to anyone who has the courage to question and challenge the unfairness of the system that you have to administer.

It will be interesting to see if your "one stop shop" can deliver!

Yours sincerely



Roger Hipwell
Chairman

cc Christopher Parry CBE, Rodney Anderson, Professor Richard Birmingham, Robert James, Dr Derek Langslow, Jeremy Loyd, Nigel Reader, Jane Ryder, Jayne Scott.