

Minutes of Economic Regeneration Topic Group Meeting 22/05/2002,
Argyll and Bute Council Offices, Kilmory.

Chair of Meeting: David Cleghorn (**DC**), Seafish Industry Authority

In Attendance:

Mr Angus Clarke (**AC**): Argyll and Bute Planning Department

Mr Bill Sutherland (**BS**): Odyssey Trust & Clyde Heritage Trust

Mr Mike Hurst (**MH**): Chairman Carradale Harbour Group

Mrs Lorna MacMillan (**LM**): Clyde and Southwest Static Gear Association

Mr Douglas Robertson (**DR**): Tarbert and Skipness Community Council

Mr Iain MacIntyre (**IM**): Tarbert Harbour Master

Mrs Debbie MacKay (**DM**): Argyll and Bute Economic Development Unit

Mr Iain Smith (**IS**): Tarbert and Argyll Fishermen

Mr Gary Ferguson (**GF**): Tarbert and Argyll Fishermen

Mr Stuart MacQuarrie (**SM**): Firth of Clyde Forum Project Officer

DC opened the meeting by asking SM to introduce the current position of the Forum and the input that this meeting was having on the wider development of the Forum. SM gave some initial background to the meeting giving details of the process that the Forum was undertaking in order to encourage better integrated management on the Clyde.

1) Fishfarming and Aquaculture

DC then opened the discussion on the issues relating to Fishing and Aquaculture. He noted that they were the significant means of labour and income within the area and that the key players should be involved. DC wanted to know whether Loch Fyne sea farms had been included in the membership and also the Lighthouse of Scotland and Marine Harvest. SM gave details of the Forum membership. SM followed this by asking what the important issues were for the Forum.

IM responded by suggesting that pollution on the seabed needs to be looked at.

DC invited LM from the Static Gear Association (SGA) to comment on the conflicts that may arise with trawling gear and static gear. LM noted that at present there was no real conflicts but if they were to expand there may be a problem.

AC noted that there were problems relating to carrying capacity and how much the existing seas could cope with further farming. This is written within the Argyll and Bute structure plan. It has been suggested that management plans and coastal framework plans may offer the mechanism to identify carrying capacity. Discussion is ongoing as regards preparing local plans to involve public consultation. AC also informed the attendees that the Scottish Executive was currently producing revised guidance on the location of fishfarms. It was noted that the Forum may have a role for this sort of guidance. As such A & B have included the Firth of Clyde Forum within the wording of their local plan.

DR noted that all four themes were big tasks to address. Size is far and beyond the resources that the Forum may have.

AC responded by presenting the opinion that the Forum had a very important role in information gathering and presentation. There was a wide lack of knowledge of what surrounding local authorities were doing and the general issues relating to effective coastal management and the benefits that may arise from that.

IM said that there was a need to encourage aquaculture and fishing, a need to find new markets and also to add value to existing markets. Promotion of a 'Clyde' brand was needed to boost the profile and sales of local produce at the super market.

DR questioned whether the Forum had the resources to do this but agreed that it is something that should be looked at.

AC noted that the Forum may be able to prepare coastal framework plans to provide management systems aimed at alleviating tensions between users. The Forum could prioritise areas and also input into the coastal management plans identifying the issues and groups that need to be engaged. AC noted that as far as fish farming was concerned, it was his understanding that the sea loch systems within Argyll and Bute were at capacity. There was a need to identify what the next steps should be in order to diversify or improve productivity.

GF stated that the strength of the Clyde market was the quality of produce that it provided the market. The *nephros* that were taken from the Clyde were of far higher quality than the larger species that were being fished elsewhere. DC suggested that an A5 leaflet on Quality Clyde catch may be appropriate and a chance to bring together marketing agencies for the benefit of the Clyde. DC also gave an insight into the seafood market and the logistic involved in promoting a produce.

DM asked about a Clyde Charter and wondered whether it may be a possibility to bring together all user groups under such a designation so that the produce that was gathered from the Clyde area may all have the same recognisable stamp and quality association.

LM raised that issue of knowing where the produce came from. It may not always be possible to say that such and such a prawn was lifted from such and such a place. The logistics of such an exercise were quite complicated unless a supplier was to focus solely on Clyde prawns (or any other produce).

2) Transport

AC gave the background to the Forums activities over the last 18 months and a little bit more information about the objectives as laid down within the Management Strategy. The links with WESTRANS and the Local Timber Group were mentioned and also the plans to develop rapid transit links with other parts of the Clyde.

BS explained a little further about the Clyde Rapid Transport System and Alastair MacLeods plans for links with Braehead, Dunoon and Rothesay.

DR added that any additional transport link must be of sufficient quality and be efficient at the same time. It was noted though that the roads were of primary importance to residence of the Kintyre Peninsula and that any investment

towards transport infrastructure should be channelled in that direction. Any additional service was welcomed but efficiency was stressed. MH supported the thesis of roads before marine transport. AC summarised by stating that a co-ordinated, integrated approach was required in order to address the viability of a rapid transport system. He stated that the Clyde Forum had been involved with this in the past.

3) Tourism and Recreation

MH questioned the need for money to be channelled into the core network path. DR and IM disagreed and both valued the extra cash that backpackers had brought into the area through the network. Tourism and recreation came back to issues of transport such as state of the roads and the price of fuel. BS wanted to see an event on the Clyde that got people together and provided an income for the outlying areas. He highlighted the New Year celebrations and festival events in Edinburgh as being internationally renowned.

DR state that there were local events that were occurring and in Tarbert alone there were four things this summer: sea food fair, music festival, the Tarbert fare and a Scottish sailing event.

BS continued by stating that the Forum had a function in that it had the backing to go and get 'something' in order to bring an event to the Clyde.

DR wanted to see existing activities promoted.

LM asked whether they may be a place for a 'what's on in the Clyde' brochure.

DM backed this idea saying that it was important to market the Clyde. This was an important concept and worthy of forwarding. MH seconded this by stating that the philosophy behind a Clyde wide activity brochure or guide needed to be studied carefully.

BS stated that activities on the water could be encouraged through a brochure as well. 'Activity on the water is what is needed'.

IM wanted to clarify in his own mind what role Crown estates had in seabed planning.

A discussion followed with attendees about the situation as regards planning consents and who pays who for leasing the sea bed for fish farming. AC stated that at present there was an interim situation in place where requests for planning consent were passed to the Crownstate. They were then passed on to the relevant local authority with recommendations.

The meeting closed with DC wishing everyone a safe journey home.