

## Annual General Meeting | Minutes

Tuesday 27 February 2024 | 10:30am - 11:30am

### Attendees

*Sheryll Murray MP (Chair)*

*Peter Aldous MP*

*David Duguid MP*

*Steve Double MP*

*Anna Firth MP*

*Vicky Ford MP*

*Derek Thomas MP*

*Katrina Ryan (Secretariat)*

*Jacob Ashton (Secretariat)*

*Robert Davidson*

### Chair's welcome

Sheryll Murray MP welcomed all present and thanked them for their attendance. She extended thanks to The Fishmonger's Company for their continued support of the APPG.

### Election of Officers

Sheryll Murray MP introduced nominations for the four officer positions. David Duguid MP proposed that Sheryll Murray MP continue as Chair of the APPG and Peter Aldous MP seconded the proposal. Rosie Duffield MP was nominated as Vice Chair. David Duguid MP offered to take the role as Treasurer. Alistair Carmichael MP had expressed interest in a Vice Chair position prior to the meeting. Peter Aldous MP proposed these prior three appointments and Steve Double MP seconded them. All were accepted, leading to the following confirmations:

*Chair*                      *Sheryll Murray MP*

*Treasurer*                *David Duguid MP*

*Vice Chair*                *Rosie Duffield MP*

*Vice Chair*                *Alistair Carmichael MP*

### Apologies for absence

Apologies had been received from Martin Vickers MP, Angus Brendan Macneil MP, Alistair Carmichael MP, Dr Philippa Whitford MP, Lord Teverson, Liz Saville-Roberts MP, Lia Nici MP, Caroline Ansell MP, Rosie Duffield MP, Chris Loder MP, Lord McColl, Dr Matthew Offord MP, Andrew Rosindell MP, and Luke Pollard MP.

### Minutes of the last AGM and EGM

The minutes of the previous AGM, which took place 24 May 2023 and the EGM that took place 26 June 2023, had been circulated prior and were also distributed at the meeting. David Duguid MP asked that the EGM minutes be amended to include his apologies for absence.

Peter Aldous MP proposed that both sets of minutes gave a true and accurate record of the proceedings, and Sheryll Murray MP seconded his proposal. The minutes were accepted without further amend.

## **Letter from The Fishmongers' Company and finance update in light of rule changes**

Sheryll Murray MP noted with gratitude the critical support of The Fishmongers' Company in enabling the APPG to become an impactful and accessible platform for cross-sector discussions and knowledge exchange.

Katrina Ryan communicated apologies from Eleanor Adamson of The Fishmongers' Company, who was unable to attend the AGM, and directed attention towards a letter from The Fishmongers' Company that had been circulated around attendees, laying out the intended approach to financial management of the Group in light of new APPG rules. Ryan said that The Fishmongers' Company was funding the Secretariat for the current calendar year and intended to fund the next year too. Ryan explained the changing rules regarding APPG Secretariats holding funds, and how The Fishmongers' Company was working with the Secretariat to manage finances in a manner compliant with the new rules. Principally, the Secretariat would no longer be able to hold funds itself; instead, funds would reside with The Fishmongers' Company, and would be paid to Mindfully Wired Communications (who supply the Secretariat) quarterly in arrears, once work was completed and demonstrated to - and signed off by - APPG Officers.

Sheryll Murray MP agreed that this presented the most feasible solution, mentioning that another solution would be to have APPG officers as signatories on a relevant bank account, but that this could cause issues and is administratively burdensome. She recommended following the pathway laid out by Ryan.

Sheryll Murray MP proposed a motion:

*“It is agreed that, in accordance with the new rules, that no APPG funds be held by the Secretariat from the 31st March 2024 and that any funds that are held are to be returned to the relevant donor by this date.*

*That this meeting instructs the Secretariat to only have an expense where there is a known donation.*

*That this meeting approves that donations can be paid directly between donor and secretariat for any single piece of work and that all bills will be given to the APPG Chair for noting.”*

David Duguid seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously accepted.

Katrina Ryan noted that The Fishmongers’ Company had additional grant funding available for the APPG to use between April and December 2024, adding it was another opportunity to bolster the group and further its reach. She requested input and ideas from the MPs present for how any extra funds made available may be spent to the best advantage of the fisheries sector.

## **Approval of the Income and Expenditure Statement**

Katrina Ryan introduced the income and expenditure statement, which had been circulated to attendees the day prior, commenting that it was prepared to cover the period from April 2023 up to 24 February 2024 (the Friday prior to the AGM). The statement indicated a balance brought forward from the previous year of £9,160.53, and monetary donations of £44,300.00, bringing a total income of £53,460.53 for the aforementioned accounting period. Expenditure consisted entirely of a consultancy fee received in the form of a VAT-exempt grant for time taken to run the Secretariat, in line with Mindfully Wired Communications’ standard day rate. This led to a balance carried forward of £24,149.35.

Ryan said that an updated version of the statement will be prepared for 31 March 2024 to cover the complete financial year, explaining that the current version was due to the AGM needing to be held before the rule changes come into play on that date.

Robert Davidson clarified that there would need to be zero funds held by the Secretariat by 31 March 2024. Ryan confirmed that remaining funds would be returned to The

Fishmongers' Company before that date, to be held by them until the Secretariat had earned that funding through its work.

Peter Aldous MP asked if a detailed breakdown of expenditure could be shared. Katrina Ryan said that it could, and that monthly figures had been calculated and were able to be shared with MPs or the APPG Registrar as required. She also confirmed that all funds will be held by The Fishmongers' Company by 31 March 2024.

The income and expenditure statement available at the meeting was approved by all.

Katrina Ryan asked members if they were happy for the upcoming updated income and expenditure statement, to cover April 2023 to March 2024, to be circulated and approved via email correspondence. Sheryll Murray MP said she would be happy with this approach and said to circulate the statement to all APPG members. This approach was approved.

## **Update on further APPG rule changes**

Jacob Ashton informed attendees of some of the incoming rule changes for APPGs to be instated from 31 March. He said that APPGs will need at least 20 members to exist, adding that the APPG on Fisheries currently has 21 members, following the recruitment of five new members in the run-up to the AGM.

He also noted that APPGs will need to have exactly four Officers, meaning that most members who held a Vice Chair position will now be simply members. He also stated that future AGMs will require an independent chair nominated by the Speaker and a quorum of eight members. The APPG will publish an annual report, and has made some small changes to the website and social media feeds in line with guidelines around transparency.

## **Update from the Secretariat, including forthcoming work**

Jacob Ashton reported that the APPG on Fisheries had seen another productive and successful year, with generous funding from The Fishmongers' Company for regular activities. Free, open-to-all hybrid events had continued to deliver, each attracting audiences of 100-200 people from a diverse range of backgrounds.

Back in May 2023, the APPG covered the new Fisheries Management Plans. Mark Spencer MP gave an opening speech, followed by presentations on each FMP regarding key

updates, upcoming milestones and opportunities for collaboration with the industry. 150 stakeholders joined the meeting online, generating good engagement during the meeting, and on social media.

Ashton continued, saying that in October, through the generous support of The Seafarers Charity, the APPG held an event on safety at sea, and explored initiatives dedicated to enhancing safety in the industry and shifting the dialogue and culture around fishing safety.

The APPG also held the first event in a series focused on 'blue food', and how seafood can help solve many of the challenges facing food production. The event received positive feedback, including strong agreement that the speakers were relevant and well-balanced. Ashton noted that the second blue foods event will take place on 20 March 2024, and will explore some of the challenges and opportunities for the industry associated with reducing carbon emissions and plastic usage. He urged members to attend if they were able to.

Ashton continued by saying that all events have been followed by policy briefs, which are available on the APPG website. This growing collection continues to be a go-to resource for Parliamentarians and industry members alike. The Secretariat also publishes a wide array of other resources, including explanatory blog posts covering topics like the Fisheries Management Plans, as well as fortnightly newsletters to over 1,000 subscribers and social media outputs every weekday.

Ashton said that since its inception in 2022, the APPG's Expert Panel has proven highly useful in terms of helping understand the current concerns and needs of the fisheries industry. The Secretariat meets with the panel online 3-4 times a year, and they offer their invaluable insights to assist with planning events, themes, and other outputs. Their contributions ensure that the APPG remains aligned with the evolving priorities of the fishing industry. The Expert Panel's terms of reference stipulate a two-year turnover, which means that the Secretariat will be recruiting new experts later this year.

Sheryll Murray MP noted the important work of the APPG on Fisheries and its increasing recognition by government bodies and academia.

Jacob Ashton went on to detail planned upcoming events. The second blue foods event will focus on reducing carbon emissions and plastic in the fishing industry. Following that the Secretariat hopes to hold an event on how best to build trust between the fishing industry, fisheries managers, and legislators and regulators. They envisage a more open,

dialogue-driven session than the APPG's standard events, and Ashton welcomed thoughts on the theme and structure of this event.

Sheryll Murray MP said she had spoken to Katrina Ryan and Steve Double MP immediately prior to the meeting, regarding pollack fishermen in Cornwall facing challenges. Ryan had suggested that this was included as a case study within the event on trust in fisheries management. Murray suggested that Steve Double MP would be welcome to chair this event; she also mentioned to new member Anna Firth MP that Firth would be welcome to chair a future event as well.

David Duguid MP suggested that the event could consider focusing on trust with regulators such as the Maritime and Coastguard Agency and Border Force, or to focus on government policy. In line with the former, he suggested a session focusing on access to labour, given new incoming regulations regarding immigration. Murray suggested that this could comprise a separate event and that Duguid would be welcome to chair such an event. Duguid added the APPG could invite Professor Brian Bell, Chair of the Migration Advisory Committee. Murray noted that though access to labour was especially an issue for the Scottish fleet, that Cornwall's seafood sector was also concerned, such as regarding employment at the Falfish processing plant. She noted that Derek Thomas MP's constituency included beam trawlers who face crew shortages. Katrina Ryan suggested looking into the work of the Fishermen's Welfare Alliance in Scotland. Duguid added that Seafish had published a good report on this issue too and that access to labour was also a particular issue in Northern Ireland.

Returning to discussion on the issue of trust in fisheries management, Katrina Ryan said that case studies could provide an array of lenses through which to view the subject matter: looking at different management issues or instances, and understanding local concerns.

Anna Firth MP spoke on what had drawn her to become a member of the APPG on Fisheries, namely issues regarding clams in her constituency. Cockle beds are beginning to also reportedly contain significant quantities of manila and razor clams, but there are currently no allowances for harvesting them. She wanted to support research into the occurrence of clams and feasibility of harvest programmes, such as changes to minimum landing sizes. She noted interest from fishermen in her constituency in a knowledge gathering trip to Holland, especially regarding harvesting and depuration. Sheryll Murray MP noted the challenges following the UK's exit from the EU regarding water class making UK bivalves unable to enter the EU market. She suggested that Firth engage with her local Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority (IFCA) to address the clam issue. Firth said

that the IFCA was focusing on a new cockle order to be completed by July. Katrina Ryan suggested approaching the Marine Stewardship Council (MSC), to which Anna Firth agreed, and said that Paul Gilson of the NFFO was leading efforts on this front.

Anna Firth MP introduced another issue within her constituency, regarding bass and approved fishing methods. She said that John Whittingdale MP has organised a meeting with Fisheries Minister Mark Spencer MP, regarding fishermen's desire to use driftnets rather than lines to catch bass. Sheryll Murray MP said that fish caught by nets were typically more damaged than those caught by lines and could also contribute to bycatch and discards.

David Duguid MP noted opportunities for coastal MPs to write articles in Fishing News and suggested members consider doing so. Derek Thomas MP asked to be sent contact details, expressing an interest in writing a column concerning the inshore fleet.

Jacob Ashton continued with the update of future activities. He said that the third blue foods event will focus on ecosystem-based management and ways to incorporate this into policy, in order to increase food-security and sustainable practices.

Ashton expressed gratitude for The Fishmongers' Company's continued financial support of the APPG, and the provision of extra funds for spending between this coming April and December. He introduced potential ideas of how to use this funding:

- A research project into a specific sector-relevant topic.
- Establishment of a LinkedIn presence, to share more in-depth policy-relevant information.
- Activities to increase engagement within Parliament in-person

He noted that the APPG will also continue to seek sponsorship opportunities to hold specific events. Ashton concluded by thanking members for their ongoing engagement.

## Confirmation of members

Sheryll Murray MP read the list of APPG members to be confirmed:

*Sheryll Murray MP*

*Peter Aldous MP*

*Alistair Carmichael MP*

*Liz Saville-Roberts MP*

*Martin Vickers MP*

*Lord McColl*

*Dr Matthew Offord MP*

*David Duguid MP*

*Derek Thomas MP*

*Lord Teverson*

*Angus Brendan Macneil MP*

*Lia Nici MP*

*Dr Philippa Whitford MP*

*Caroline Ansell MP*

*Rosie Duffield MP*

*Chris Loder MP*

*Dr Therese Coffey MP (new)*

*Steve Double MP (new)*

*Anna Firth MP (new)*

*Andrew Rosindell MP (new)*

*Luke Pollard MP (new)*

The list was approved by all.

## **Further discussion**

David Duguid MP suggested that the APPG establish a LinkedIn presence, saying that it would help reach expanded audiences and tends to be considered more serious and professional than Twitter/X.

Katrina Ryan raised the upcoming first-ever National Fishing Remembrance Day on 12 May, noting that it will be mentioned on APPG channels. Sheryll Murray MP voiced enthusiasm and offered to lay a Parliamentary wreath, and raised the question of which type of flower to use. Katrina Ryan said she would contact Tina Barnes of The Seafarers' Charity to confirm. All other members noted the day and agreed that action should be taken to mark the day.

On the raised idea of research opportunities, Derek Thomas MP said that he and Sheryll Murray MP have been encouraging the Minister to anticipate changes in 2026 with regards to changing rules over EU access to UK waters within the 12-mile limit. He suggested a research task into the real implications for the government and fishing fleet of this upcoming change. Sheryll Murray MP agreed, saying that the APPG could potentially play an important role in preparing for this 2026 change. David Duguid MP agreed too, noting that the Scottish Fishermen's Federation is concerned that the UK will not regain full control of its waters under the current wording in the agreement. Concerns were raised about 'trade-offs' of fishing access rights in return for trade opportunities which the EU will campaign for but on which the UK must stand firm.

On the subject of the minimum number of members for the APPG, David Duguid MP noted that two APPG members, Dr Philippa Whitford MP and Dr Matthew Offord MP, would both be standing down at the next election. He noted that it is possible that other members will also lose their seats, and queried what the APPG planned to do around this time. Katrina Ryan clarified that the APPG dissolves and ceases activity during the election period, reforming



under the new government, and that any recruitment process necessary will happen at this point.

## **11. AOB**

Sheryll Murray MP thanked the Secretariat for their work. She offered to sign an official letter of thanks for The Fishmongers' Company, which the Secretariat agreed to draft.

With no further business, Sheryll Murray MP closed the meeting.

**MEETING ENDS**