

BENEFICIARY: BORD IASCAIGH MHARA
PROJECT REFERENCE NUMBER: 19/SFS/ESS001
NAME OF PROJECT: National Fishermen's Development Group
IMPLEMENTATION PERIOD: 1st JANUARY - 31st DECEMBER 2019

Project scope

The NFDG is an Industry initiative that was set-up as to provide an independent forum for discussion between practicing fishermen on practical and operational issues that relate to fishermen. The NFDG does not discuss management or structural issues such as quota management, fleet policy, licensing etc. It is designed to provide an information conduit between the representative organisations and the catching sector. Along with other initiatives such as the FIPs, it provides a forum to promote changed behaviour within the catching sector by providing a better understanding of the rules and to allow knowledge transfer.

The NFDG has met fifteen times since its inception in May 2017 and discussed a wide range of issues including technical measures and the Landing Obligation; crew issues and training; safety at sea; financial management, pensions and insurance; and increased data collection.

The NFDG has worked on several initiatives as follows since 2017 as follows:

- Development of a user-friendly guide on reporting under the Working Time Directive as well as a "Fishermen's Handbook" providing information on Basic Seamanship, Rules of the Road, Navigation Lights and Buoys etc. It aims to raise the awareness of safety at sea and promote training.
- Met three times with the SPPA to discuss technical measures regulations and the Landing Obligation; with BIM on three occasions to discuss selective gear trials and the production of user-friendly guides to aid fishermen comply with complex technical regulations; and on two occasions with the Marine Institute to discuss data collection.
- Participated in a Marine Institute project to explore how real-time information sharing can assist fishermen in avoiding unwanted catches in an Irish context through the initial development of innovative and state-of-the-art data sharing tools.
- Engaged on three occasions with BIM to discuss training programmes and initiatives. Members of the Group participate on BIM's training strategy steering group.
- Explored the possible creation of a Register of Fishermen that would help gather data to build a better picture of the catching sector and raise its outward facing profile to the wider public as a professional and well-regulated industry. An outline of the Register has been developed and discussed with the POs and the NIFF/NIFA.
- Hosted sessions with financial, insurance and pension specialists to discuss ways of improving the working conditions for fishermen and aid retention of crew on board fishing vessels, as well as considering taxation issues for share and PAYE employed fishermen.

Objectives

The main objective of the NFDG is to provide a mechanism to allow dialogue between practising fishermen on a range of “grassroots” issues relating to fishing operations. Specifically, the NFDG aims to provide a platform to:

- Facilitate discussion between fishermen on technical, practical and business issues that impact on the day-to-day running of fishing vessels
- Facilitate the provision of expert advice on relevant issues including on new and existing rules and regulations
- Allow fishermen to share information and experiences with new technology and innovations that can improve fishing
- Promote a positive image of the Irish fishing industry.

Budget

The projected budget for this project was €45,000. Approximately 83% of the budget was spent. The underspend was due to one fewer meetings being held in 2019.

Achievements / Spend

During 2019, the NFDG was involved in a range of activities. These including the recruitment, retention and training of crew, which is seen as one of the most significant issues impacting on economic viability facing the industry currently. The NFDG discussed measures to improve working and employment conditions for crew (e.g. pay and taxation, provision of health insurance) as well as participating in BIM’s training strategy steering group to provide input on the training needs for the catching sector. The Group also met with the Marine Survey Office (MSO) to provide a better understanding of the requirements for reporting of Working Time on board fishing vessels. Other topics included discussions with the SFFA on technical measures legislation on the use of fishing gears, whilst members of the Group also participated in trialing the FMCO app developed by BIM.

SUMMARY OF SPEND:

Total Approved	
Total Eligible Expenditure	€45,000
Total Drawdown	€37,204
EU – 50%	€18,602
Exchequer – 50%	€18,602

Report: Dominic Rihan

Date: January 2020