

Fishing for a Future

UK Fishing Forum 2018

Fishmongers' Hall, London, 9th January 2018

Seafarers UK commissioned Cornwall Rural Community Charity (CRCC) to establish an overview of what is needed to address the socio-economic challenges in fishing communities. The research has involved a comprehensive profiling of a sample of ports, a literature review, surveys of fishermen and health service providers in fishing communities, as well as a series of port visits to hear directly from fishermen.

On 9 January 2018 70+ representatives from the fishing industry including fishermen, fish producers, policy makers and funders attended an event at Fishmongers' Hall organised by Seafarers UK and hosted by The Fishmongers' Company. The purpose of the event was to discuss the interim findings from the research compiled by CRCC and Rose Regeneration. Guests were invited to quiz the report's authors and other experts during a series of panel discussions. **This summary note picks out some of the key highlights and reflections from the day.**



'Fishing for a Future' - the interim report

The event began with a presentation from CRCC and Rose Regeneration setting out the research evidence collected. This highlighted the following facts:

- Fishing and fish processing employ 22,000 people within the UK total of 28.5 million jobs
- The overall impact of the UK fishing sector is worth £1.14 billion
- In 2015 around 12,000 people were directly employed in fishing (in 1987 the figure was approaching 25,000)
- Over 20% of all those working directly as fishermen are non-EU workers
- 12,000 fishing jobs support at least a further 4,000 jobs in the wider economy, as well as their own extended families
- £552 million value of landings contributes that amount again in wider added value; making the overall impact of the UK fishing sector (in terms of landings at UK ports) worth £1.14 billion.

The presentation was followed by questions & answers and a feedback session where the following points were made:

- The different economic multipliers used in fishing publications. A multiplier measures the total change in output, income or employment in the economy resulting from a direct change in the final demand in the fishing industry. Guests highlighted reports using multipliers ranging from 2 to 10 jobs onshore for every 1 fishing job – and how the figures used varied according to how/

whether the downstream, upstream and induced impacts of fishing were taken into account. It was suggested that a significant amount of employment data around fishing needs to be collated and better understood by those outside of the industry.

- Deprivation statistics reveal 60% of UK ports with significant landings are deprived. Guests discussed why this might be i.e., how some ports are located in urban areas and/or in neighbourhoods with high levels of deprivation. They also highlighted how ports in neighbourhoods with overall lower levels of deprivation will still have fishermen who are struggling.
- Health issues facing fishermen not picked up in the interim report (e.g. substance abuse) - and whether this is endemic in the fishing industry, linked to levels of deprivation and/or a reflection of the wider community? A survey of GP surgeries carried out by the research team suggests some fishermen are heavily reliant on prescription and over the counter drugs. Guests suggested more information was needed to understand this issue.
- A reduction in the number of vessels in some ports/areas - why this might be and how it is linked to other issues (e.g. investment in port infrastructure, attracting new entrants, tourism).
- The economic contribution of migrant workers to the fishing industry – this included discussions around the type of data collected by Government and industry bodies on the migrant workforce, how migrant workers are treated, how their support needs might be better understood and how a clearer picture needs to emerge to understand the implications of Brexit.



Fishermen and Fishing Communities

The morning session included two panel discussions. Representatives from Seafish, the New Economics Foundation, National Federation of Fishermen's Organisations and Fishermen's Mission commented on:

- The current issues facing the fishing industry.
- Whether the challenges and opportunities facing fishing communities need to be seen as important as, or ancillary to, those facing the fishing industry.
- How well understood the contribution fishing makes to places is understood.

During the morning sessions guests raised the following points:

The active fishing population

- There are big variations in the fishing fleet (from huge 70 metre large vessels to the smallest of the under 10 metre vessels), harbours and profitability.
- How the number of active fishermen has 'flat-lined' and whether this is because fishing is often described as an industry 'in decline'. Similarly, there is not always a clear understanding of the difference between full-time fishermen and those fishing for a few weeks of the year.
- Fishermen switch species and gears less than expected - with a suggestion that this is because they are concerned it will provide them with a temporary boom and they will then be prevented from fishing how they did before.
- Fishermen are outnumbered by the number of agencies and the decisions they are making. This leads to decisions being taken according to administrative boundaries rather than fishing territories. This led some guests to describe a need to limit the "predictable inconveniences of legislation." Guests further suggested decisions being made and implemented across the fishing industry (e.g. ILO 188 to improve occupational health and safety) need to be better communicated to fishermen. There was a recognition that as a public resource fishing is (and will remain) a heavily regulated industry.
- Fishermen are reluctant to access the grants and funding streams available to them – with some guests suggesting there is a broader reluctance among fishermen to engage with policy and decision makers.
- Fishing is a dangerous occupation - with a significant number of people losing their lives over the last 10 years.
- The accessibility of health care (demand and supply sides) and cultural norms about asking for help. Research with fishers in Cornwall found 12% of fishermen had been diagnosed with anxiety or depression. While this figure is comparable to UK population, there is a feeling that levels are likely to be under-reported in the fishing industry. Guests identified a need to improve access to support to prevent fishermen reaching a crisis and to address the root causes of anxiety and depression.
- In some ports there is a stronger culture of fishing and sharing resources than in others where some fishermen feel pushed out by other marine/coastal users.



- A strong sense that in many communities fishermen are very resilient and have managed to overcome most of the challenges they face.

Older and retiring fishermen

Guests highlighted a significant legacy population struggling to make ends meet; describing how their needs will peak in 2025-2030. Research undertaken by the Maritime Charities Funding Group on the needs of the UK seafaring community was seen as providing a comprehensive picture of the needs and aspirations of this community.

Guest suggested that with the average fisherman 60 years of age, support to help them adapt and eventually leave the industry was important.

New entrants

Guests described difficulties in attracting people into the fishing industry, particularly in small scale fisheries where it was viewed as ‘difficult to make a living.’ Opportunities for increasing the number of active fishermen were discussed (e.g. using technology, breaking down barriers to help fishermen access support and building resilience to ameliorate the unintended consequences of policy).

The relationship between fishermen (industry) and fishing communities was highlighted. In a poll conducted on the day the majority of guests thought the contribution fishing makes to small rural settlements was not well understood by those outside of them.

Other points raised included:

- Economists often focus on the ‘production function’ of industries (e.g. land, labour, capital) but fishing does not fit this standard model of analysis.
- The importance of fishing in communities is not captured by any monetised values. For example, job equivalents do not acknowledge the depth and contribution fishing makes to a given community (e.g. culture, history, sense of self); economic multipliers are not the same as economic impact; and if fishermen can’t catch the money going into the local economy declines.
- Causality between fishing and fishing communities – in terms of how economic, social and environmental issues impact on both.
- The contribution of coastal communities to the fishing industry (e.g. tourism and leisure).
- There is a lack of understanding about the challenges facing fishing communities and the impact of decisions related to the industry on the local community as a whole.
- How can we maintain the local distinctiveness of fishing areas and the communities there (i.e. see fishing communities as places to live, work and play a part in?)

Key words
used during the day

Resilience
Animation
Diversify
Commissioning
Social Context
Uncertainty



Fishing voices

Throughout the day we heard first-hand from fishermen and industry representatives about the challenges they face:

“Fishing is characterised by the uncertainties involved (if you catch, what you catch, the income this will generate)”

“In fishing you never have a good day and you no longer have the opportunity to catch up again. The enjoyment and thrill in fishing has gone...you have to capitalise on a successful day as you're never sure when you're next good day is coming”

“We need to let fishermen know what help is available and we need to better communicate the great work that the organisations here today do”

“Fishermen need the ability to catch fish and land it and not throw it over the side; they need to be able to diversify, to access quota, to have proper infrastructure inports and quays”

“The public won't pay more for fish but we need to get people to eat more fish and shorten the supply chain and make sure fishermen become price makers not takers”

“Small scale fishermen are going out of business every day - survival is about the ability to make a living, add value, diversify and make the best of what you've got”

“We can put up with bad weather but the hardest thing is throwing good, marketable fish over the side”

“There are lots of people wanting to help but fishermen need one place where they can go to for support and a coherent message. That's how you enable change: by making fishermen aware of the support and services that are out there”

“Fishermen all have different opinions... all the issues we're discussing today show how things need to be made more straightforward for us (when we are ashore we are busy getting to the doctors, spending time with their family)”

“We need to think about how we measure success...when does fishing stop being fun with the experience of having to watch fish float away?”



Many guests considered fishing to be a ‘fragmented industry’ and ‘extremely diverse’ which meant fishermen (particularly small scale fishermen) did not have one body to turn to for information, help and support.

Identifying priorities – what do we need to do and how do we do it?

The interim report contains a list of key themes: **business support, recruitment, education and training, health and incomes.** The afternoon sessions explored these issues and/or whether there are other themes which should be addressed. The relationship between fishermen, fishing families and communities alongside these themes was also explored.

Guests also identified the following issues (in no particular order):

- 🐟 **Safety:** the direct links between safety, the economic performance of fishing vessels and incidences of injuries and fatalities.
- 🐟 **Access to funding:** a view that the application process to access funding can be onerous and that the fishermen bidding for grants don't always get them which affects their confidence.
- 🐟 **Access to credit unions:** instances of fishermen asking charities for living expenses because they are not able to access credit or benefits to invest in their family and business were cited.
- 🐟 **The enhancement of the industry:** finding ways to reverse the dramatic decline in domestic recruitment into the fishing industry; demonstrating how there are good career prospects in fishing for school leavers; and considering the movement of seafarers between different industries and the wider maritime sector to encourage people into the fishing industry.
- 🐟 **Improving relationships between fishermen and policy makers:** fishermen are time poor and have less time to engage with representative bodies and the political system; and there is limited support for small-scale fishermen in terms of providing them with a voice at the table.
- 🐟 **The social/community side of fishing needs to be taken account of** e.g. wellbeing, isolation, identity, how to enter the industry when you're not from a fishing background.
- 🐟 **Improving engagement between fishermen and academics:** researchers have been known to “helicopter in” and take research data out – how can academics work with fishermen so both can use research findings?

Guests suggested the following actions to address some of the key themes (identified in the interim report and on the day), in no particular order these were:

- 🐟 The importance of recognising these themes not just individually or sectorally but in the context of place.
- 🐟 The need for fisheries community animators to work with fishermen in an iterative, interactive process where fishermen get an outcome rather than signposting or facilitating.
- 🐟 Fishermen need one place they can go to for support.
- 🐟 If you want to deliver activities on-the-ground this is best done locally - and you need to be ambitious and do something that lasts 5, 10 years or more.
- 🐟 The importance of working across the UK to support fishermen which can lead to efficiencies and better results - but how administrative boundaries can get in the way of collaboration (e.g. funding streams, governance).
- 🐟 Securing funding and structural support for the fishing industry after Brexit.
- 🐟 Develop an Action Plan for small scale fishing which picks up these themes.
- 🐟 How fishermen, industry bodies, charities and other stakeholders should continue to work together to address these themes.

What Happens Next?

The interim ‘Fishing for a Future’ report is available to download at: <http://bit.ly/2DbfdYj>. The final report, due to be published in late spring 2018, will be informed by both the Forum’s discussions and any additional feedback on the interim findings from the full spectrum of the fishing community received after the event.

Feedback and input on the interim research is invited, by email to fishingforum@seafarers.uk, phone 020 7932 5975, or write to Fishing Forum, Seafarers UK, 8 Hatherley Street, London SW1P 2QT by **28TH February 2018.**

Seafarers UK aims to be a proactive and collaborative grant funder committed to making a real and sustainable difference to the UK fishing community.

Please contact Seafarers UK

- 🐟 If you have feedback and input that will help to inform this research.
- 🐟 If you would you like to hear more about this research and receive a copy of the final research report.
- 🐟 If you would like to discuss any opportunities or initiatives that would benefit the UK fishing community.
- 🐟 If you would like to work in partnership with Seafarers UK to support the UK fishing community.
- 🐟 If you are a funder interested in partnering with Seafarers UK to co-fund or match fund specific projects within UK fishing communities.
- 🐟 If you are an eligible organisation who needs funding for a project that would improve the lives or business of working fishermen of any age.

Please get in touch

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Seafarers UK has been helping people in the maritime community since 1917, by providing vital support to seafarers in need and their families.

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