

FISHERIES MANAGEMENT & US CULTURE

WHAT I LEARNT VISITING THE NEW ENGLAND FISHERIES COUNCIL



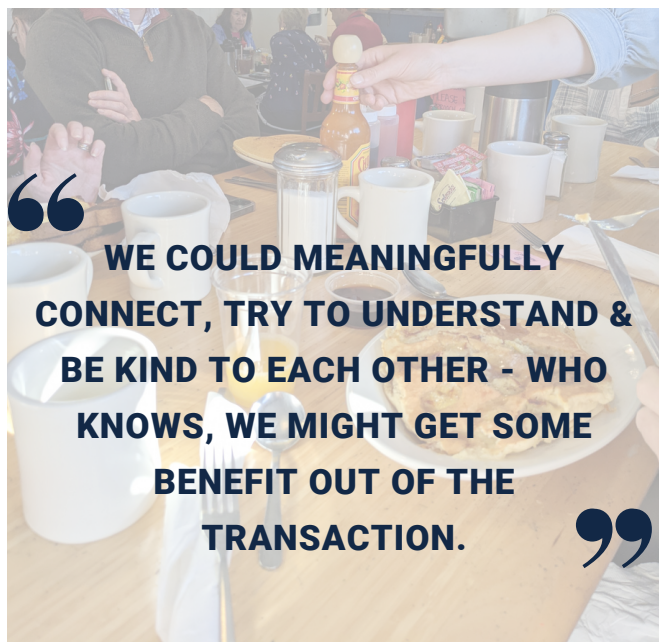
In September 2022, we visited the east coast of the USA to see the set up for fisheries management and industry led science. This experience was propelled by Alison Freeman at the Fishmongers Company Fisheries Charitable Trust, and the trip included people working in UK industry & fisheries management. We visited the New England Fisheries Council in Gloucester, Massachusetts, then travelled to Rhode Island to visit the Commercial Fisheries Research Institute and speak to people from the local fishing industry. Reflecting on the trip, these are some of the things that caught my attention about US culture – and I interpret these observations into valuable lessons to take home and share with others in UK fisheries.

THE SPORTS JACKET

We were told to “bring a sports jacket”. I had look up what this was, and I found that it means you need to dress smart, but not so formal you coordinate your trousers (or pants!) with your jacket. Most of the sports jackets I saw hung, unworn, off the back of chairs. What I interpret here is that you might not always need the jacket – but you should be prepared to put it on when necessary. The jacket sets the precedence for moments when a level of formality is required. Although the US fisheries council system is elaborated and appears burdensome, and requires commitment and considerable investment, it also meant that a person with authority (i.e. the one in the jacket) can speak a powerful message on behalf of others. Anyone can be the person in the “sports jackets” and sit on the council to represent other people, like fishing communities and processors. The people in the audience are not

obliged to wear a jacket – nevertheless, they observe and ensure their views voiced, and can momentarily step-up, however they are dressed, and say their 2-minute piece. A formalised management structure doesn’t necessarily mean wearing fancy clothes, but it means a system conducted with authority, integrity and accountability, setting the tone for discussions when making decisions. It also means that anyone with an interest in fisheries management can step-up and put on a jacket, or they need to ensure someone is there “wearing a sports jacket” to represent them when making decisions.





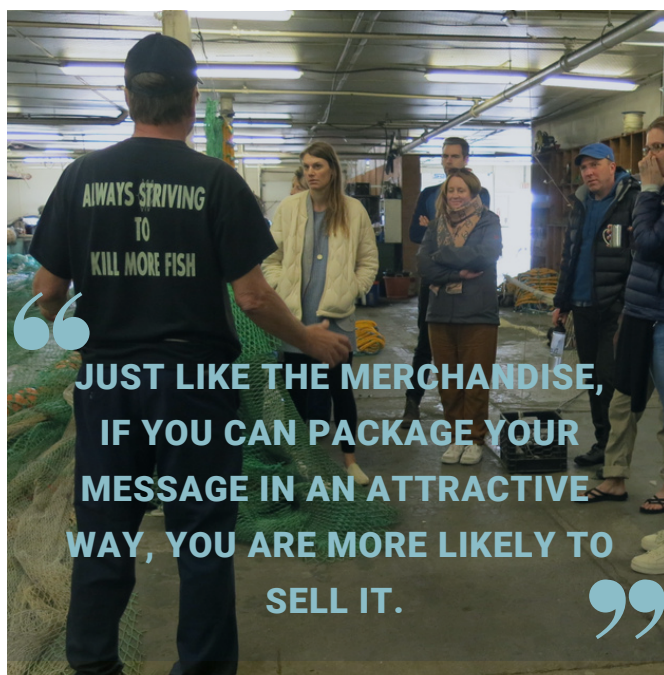
“ WE COULD MEANINGFULLY CONNECT, TRY TO UNDERSTAND & BE KIND TO EACH OTHER - WHO KNOWS, WE MIGHT GET SOME BENEFIT OUT OF THE TRANSACTION. ”

TIPPING

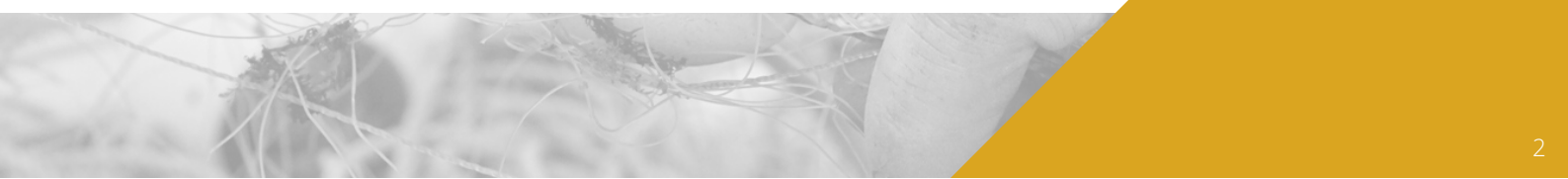
We had breakfast in a few diners, with unlimited coffee refills and over-friendly waiting staff. People are extra nice to you, and it honestly feels sweet, wholesome, if not a little exaggerated. Even though their overfriendliness is because they want a generous tip – I generally came away with a good feeling about the interaction, and I’m sure the waiting staff are decent people genuinely trying hard to do a good job. It reminds me how important interpersonal skills are, especially in fisheries, where relationships are often fractious and unfriendly. In fisheries, I believe we have a shared ambition for sustainably managed fisheries and prosperous coastal communities, but sometimes we don't get along. Maybe, we could try harder to engage in a more amiable way, and see each other as humans, all dealing with these complex issues, most of us trying our best to do a good job. I’m not saying we all need to be friends – but we could make more of an effort to meaningfully connect, understand, and be kind to each other - who knows, we might even get some benefit out of the transaction.

EVERYONE HAS "MERCH"

Everywhere we went – from fishing business to local diners, everyone had their own commercial line of branded merchandise. We visited a netmaker in Narraganset who had his own line of branded shirts with his tagline “Always Striving to Kill More Fish”. People loved them, and he was sold out of most sizes. So, This leads me to think - get your communications right & sell it hard. I likened this to the opportunities for public comment in the Fisheries Council meetings; everyone who had a question or idea to share, could speak publicly to the council, but there was one rule, you have a strict 3-minute timer to keep to! We saw politicians, fishermen & scientists etc. all stand up with a carefully curated messages on emotional issues but, spoken in a respectful, interesting, and succinct manner. You saw speakers preparing and perfecting their speeches beforehand in the lobby – crowds of fishermen huddled round, offering advice to their nominated spokesperson. So I ask myself, how we could we benefit by having more order in how we speak to one another and working a bit harder on our messaging? I guess just like the merchandise - if you can package your message in an attractive way, you are more likely to sell it.



“ JUST LIKE THE MERCHANDISE, IF YOU CAN PACKAGE YOUR MESSAGE IN AN ATTRACTIVE WAY, YOU ARE MORE LIKELY TO SELL IT. ”





THE FRICKLES

In the US they are miles ahead in inventive culinary adaptations. For example, they have taken a pickled cucumber, deep fried it, then decided to not just call it a “fried pickle” – but instead crowned it “the Frickle”. I was unaware of anything more elaborated than a cucumber, pickled in vinegar. Likewise, they are miles ahead in their development of fisheries management. I likened these delicious Frickles to Fisheries Management, and the process of inventing the Frickle to the work that goes into developing a Fisheries Management Plans (FMPs). Read the following sentences to see how Frickles and FMPs are entirely interchangeable:

1. It's not to everyone's taste – I guess some people still won't like the idea of [Frickles/FMPs], especially if they don't like [Pickled Cucumbers/Fisheries Management] in the first place.
2. How have the British not thought of [Frickles/FMPs] despite being a much older nation? Maybe it is something to do with the impacts of [Pickled Cucumbers/Fisheries Management] coming from the EU for so many years.
3. It won't happen overnight - good [Frickles/FMPs] probably took years of development. We need to allow ourselves time to carve our own path towards the right [Pickled Cucumbers/Fisheries Management] for us.

THE PORTION SIZES

We ate a variety of fish, shellfish and even seaweed, and we never left a place hungry. Everything seemed bigger and more luxurious (even the whelks!), and often it was too much. Similarly, meetings were held in lavish, five-star hotels, which created a nice environment, but maybe this approach is too “big” for us? But we could still learn something here for fisheries management – I'm not saying we need to over-invest valuable resources into the process, but

we need to strike a balance ensure that the resources we are providing to feed into fisheries management are sufficient. It is important to invest enough thought, time, and financial resource to ensure that everyone who wants to engage in the fisheries management process is able to and comes away satisfied with the mechanisms to participate.



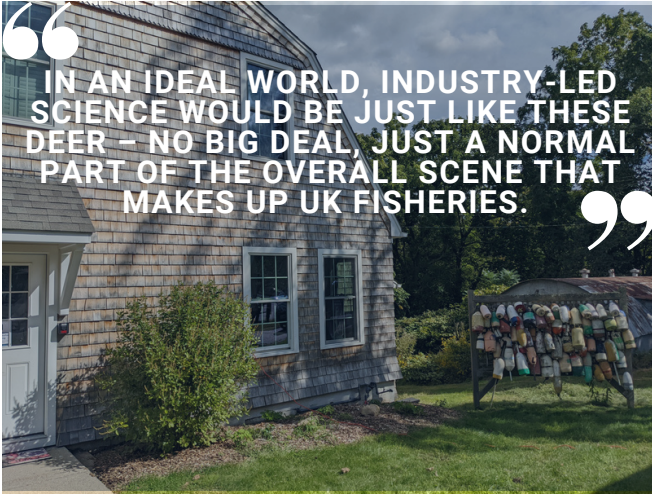
THE DEER

The Commercial Fisheries Research Institute is a foundation established by commercial fishermen to conduct collaborative research projects. We sat round a table, with a cardboard box that spouts out litres of coffee, and heard about the numerous projects where fishermen have identified knowledge gaps, then worked together with researchers to build datasets and develop innovative solutions to complex issues. Here, fishermen-led research is conducted within a leafy, university campus made up of old farmhouses,





nestled in the coastal forest, and surrounded by grazing deer. As we passed around a tablet with a fisherman designed app to collect data I could see cute little fawns hopping about - with fisheries research just blending into the overall scene - as natural as anything. I guess in an ideal world, industry-led science would be just like these deer – no big deal, just a normal part of the overall scene that makes up UK fisheries.



TAKE OUT MESSAGES

In the USA people don't say "take away", but they love "take out"! So, this is what I'm taking out:

- Anyone can be involved in fisheries management, we saw the same faces wearing a formal sports jacket one day and oilskins the next.
- Fisheries management requires trust - and in the US it's taken time & effort for everyone to build and earn trust.
- People feel secure when there is clarity & consensus around how people engage & who engages.
- The formalised system, with stakeholder buy-in, ensures that no person or opinion dominates the conversation.
- A well-respected & skilled chairperson makes all the difference!

Finally - it's vital that everyone has access to the knowledge, skills, confidence and connections to engage to the best of their ability. This is where Fishing into the Future commits to supporting the UK's journey to fisheries co-management.

WRITTEN BY EMMA PLOTNEK, FISHING INTO THE FUTURE FEATURING





WHAT'S NEXT?

Fishing into the Future is working to offer the chance for people working in UK fisheries to develop the key skills, knowledge, confidence and connections to participate in co-management.

Register your interest for our upcoming workshops by e-mailing emma@fitf.co.uk & keep informed by visiting the Fishing Porthole Website (www.fishingporthole.co.uk) & following us on social media.



ABOUT FITF

Fishing into the future is a UK Charity run by fishermen and fisheries experts. We are here to build knowledge, improve communication, increase confidence and work towards meaningful and representative engagement of people within the UK fishing sector in fisheries management and data collection. We want to contribute to a sustainable, profitable, and resilient seafood sector.

We are an independent charity; most of our trustees are actively fishing and working in the seafood supply chain, and all our trustees give their time voluntarily. Our current activities are funded through a partnership with Fishmongers' Company's Fisheries Charitable Trust and funding from Seafarers UK.

THANK-YOVS

We'd like to express thanks to the Fishmonger's Company Fisheries Charitable Trust for the initiative, drive and financial support to make this trip happen. We'd also like to thank our longstanding Trustee, Alexa Dayton, for her joyful and enthusiastic commitment and guidance throughout the trip.

We are overwhelmingly grateful to the people involved in the New England Fisheries Council & Commercial Fisheries Research Institute for such a warm welcome and sharing their experience and knowledge.



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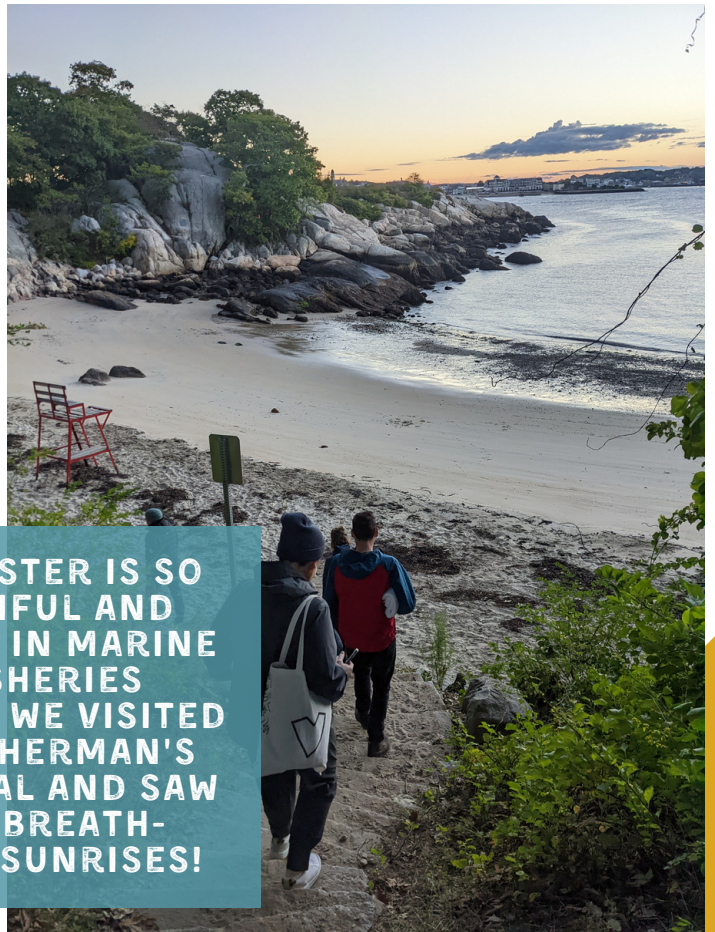
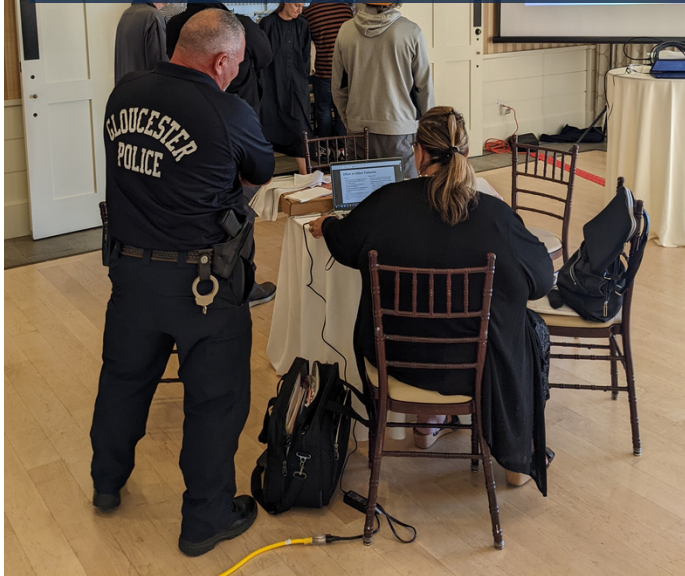
MORE PICTURES

NEW ENGLAND FISHERIES COUNCIL, GLOUCESTER MA



THE FISHERIES COUNCIL SETUP. MEMBERS SIT IN A U-SHAPE IN FRONT OF AN AUDIENCE. SPEAKERS SIT TO FACE THE COUNCIL.

NOTE THE LOCAL FISHERMEN IN THE AUDIENCE AND SPILLING OUT THE DOOR. ALSO SEE THE "COP" BELOW KEEPING AN EYE WHEN THE COUNCIL DISCUSSED MORE CONTENTIOUS TOPICS!



GLOUCESTER IS SO BEAUTIFUL AND STEEPED IN MARINE & FISHERIES HISTORY. WE VISITED THE FISHERMAN'S MEMORIAL AND SAW SOME BREATHTAKING SUNRISES!

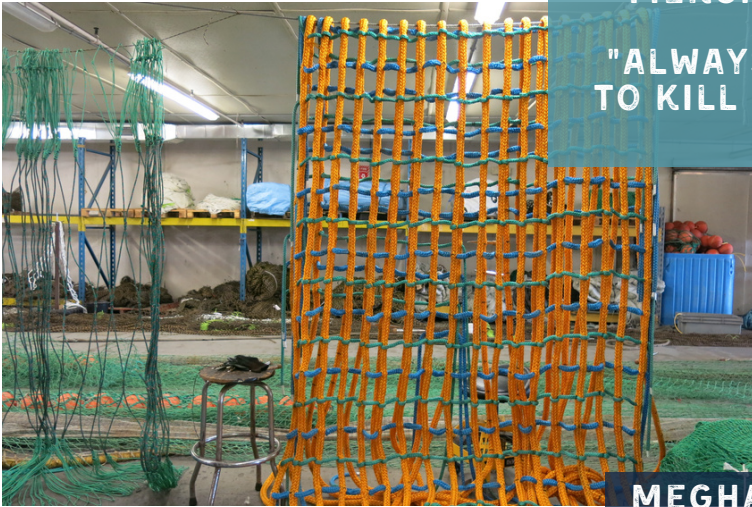


MORE PICTURES

VISITING INDUSTRY IN RHODE ISLAND



**JON KNIGHT FROM SUPERIOR TRAWL SHOWING OFF THEIR WORKSHOP & MERCHANDISE...
"ALWAYS STRIVING TO KILL MORE FISH"**



MEGHAN LAPP IS AN INDUSTRY REP WORKING AT SEAFREEZE LTD - AFTER SEEING HER IN A STARCHED WHITE SHIRT AT THE COUNCIL - WE SAW HER THE NEXT DAY IN RUBBER BOOTS SHOWING US THEIR PROCESSING FACILITIES



CHECKING OUT THE LOCAL SEAFOOD AND ENJOYING A BOWL OF STEAMED CLAMS



MORE PICTURES

VISITING INDUSTRY IN RHODE ISLAND

VISITING THE COMMERCIAL FISHERIES RESEARCH INSTITUTE, BASED IN AN OLD FARMHOUSE AT THE UNIVERSITY OF RHODE ISLAND



THE FLEET RANGES FROM LARGER TRAWLERS TO SMALLER SHELLFISH BOATS - MOORED NEXT TO FERRIES AND PLEASURE BOATS

