



North Western
Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority
Technical, Scientific and Byelaws Sub-Committee: 6 April 2011
Strathmore Hotel, Marine Road East, Morecambe: 10.30 a.m.

Agenda Item: 8

EXPECTED RIBBLE COCKLE FISHERY FROM SEPTEMBER 2011

Recommendation:

- 1. Members endorse action by Officers to develop multi-agency collaboration for management of this impending fishery.**
- 2. Members endorse proposals for permitting various types of dredge fishery on the Ribble alongside hand gathering.**

1. Members have been alerted to the possibility of a significant cockle fishery on the Ribble estuary in 2011 depending on the extent to which juvenile stock survived the winter. Early surveys on the Ribble indicate that stocks have survived well and a major fishery is now expected this year. The fishery may develop in extent over the next 1-2 years as beds in different parts of the estuary mature at different rates. Stocks of cockles are already much greater than were seen on the Wirral in late 2010.
2. The area is difficult and dangerous to harvest, particularly in summer months when the sediment can turn very soft. Many of the beds are remote from shore access points.
3. In the past a variety of harvesting methods have been used on the Ribble including hand gathering, dry and wet dredging and boat dredging. All these methods may be suitable for various beds at different times.
4. The management and enforcement issues arising around this fishery could pose a major strain on the resources of the Authority. A multi-agency collaborative effort will be needed as numbers of fishers could far exceed the numbers who accessed the Wirral fishery in late 2010. A first draft plan has been prepared by Fishery Officer Steve Brown who has long experience of working in the Ribble estuary. This plan has been discussed by a multi-agency meeting on 15 March to which many bodies having regulatory responsibilities in the Ribble attended.
5. The latest survey information collected by officers will be presented to the sub-committee with descriptions and illustrations of the different cockle harvesting options. Members will be invited to consider the best options for management of this fishery.
6. The draft plan in its latest version is attached at Annex A. The minutes of the meeting on 15 March are attached at Annex B.

Chief Executive
North Western Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority
22 March 2011