

NWIFCA Quarterly Meeting

11 December 2012: 11.00.a.m.

**AGENDA
ITEM NO.
11**

CHIEF OFFICER'S REPORT

Purpose:

To report staff and management changes and the main policy developments since the last meeting

Recommendations:

- 1. Receive the report**
- 2. Note the changes in staff and member and member appointments**
- 3. Note the development of the new Defra policy on marine protected areas**

Health and Safety

1. There have been no H&S incidents since the September 2012 meeting and no changes to the Health and Safety policy.

Staff and Committee member changes

2. Enforcement Director Mr. David Dobson retired at the NWIFCA quarterly meeting on 28 September 2012 with a citation from the Lord Lieutenant of Cumbria. Members and Officers extend congratulations and thanks to Dave for many years' service to the NWIFCA and previously the Cumbria SFC. We wish him a long happy and healthy retirement.
3. Mr. Dobson was appointed as member of the NWIFCA by the MMO in October 2012 so we welcome him back in a new capacity. This means the NWIFCA now has its full complement of 30 members.
4. A new Head of Enforcement has been appointed following a competitive recruitment. Mr. Andy Deary will start with the NWIFCA in January and be based in Carnforth from where he will work across the District.
5. Over recent months, Officers have found themselves increasingly stretched to meet the demands of expanding workloads and demands. The retirement of the Enforcement Director and resignation of a senior IFCO in Whitehaven has provided opportunity for slight restructuring. In order to meet the challenges of increasing shellfish enforcement and work on marine protected areas, two new IFCOs have been appointed following a competitive recruitment. They started with NWIFCA on 26 November and the staff complement is therefore increased by 1. Costs will be met from internal savings.
6. Matthew Burdekin will be based in Carnforth and provide assistance and support to the enforcement officers throughout the District and to the Science group as required. Joseph Moulton will be based in Whitehaven providing support with shore and patrol vessel enforcement, sample collection and survey work in the North of the District.

7. The absence of the Head of Enforcement post effectively from September to January 2013, together with the management requirements of the Ribble cockle fisheries and the IT change programme has placed additional demands on the CEO. The combination of these issues has resulted in some delays to urgent tasks such as to the first annual report which is still at the stage of an incomplete draft and forward planning. Other longer term lower priority work has also been delayed.

IT changes

8. At the time of writing, we are half way through the mechanics of transferring the NWIFCA computer system into a hosting contract with the Lake District National Park. The email system is now working through LDNP but the data transfer and storage remains to be completed. The internet broadband link to the Carnforth Office has now been improved through a change of supplier with a further upgrade in line speed promised for early 2013. The broadband link to the Whitehaven Office is being reviewed.
9. As reported previously, the aim of the change is to provide a much more secure and powerful IT system which will support more flexible and efficient working. LDNP have established a user policy and security commitment with all NWIFCA staff. They have undertaken a full audit of all software and licenses and made recommendations to improve our efficient use of computers. A number of new workstations have been procured and all software licences are being standardised.

Small industrial Unit to be leased at Barrow.

10. A small industrial unit in Barrow next to the Coastguard office has been leased. This is required as a base for officers working in South Cumbria. An inshore patrol vessel, quadbikes and other equipment will be stored there.

Defra MPA policy

11. The background to Defra's new approach to the management of all European Marine Sites (EMS) in the UK was presented in September. The CEO and science group have contributed to national level discussions on the implementation of this new approach. The current expectation is that Defra may require the NWIFCA to make up to 3 new byelaws in 2013 prohibiting towed gear fisheries in sensitive areas of 3 EMS. The sensitive areas identified are around intertidal honeycomb worm (*Sabellaria alveolata*) reefs in Morecambe Bay and the Solway Firth and around the current swept rough ground on the slopes of the Lune Deep.
12. None of these areas are actually subject to any known damaging fishing activity such as dredging or towed fishing gear so the new byelaws (if required) are not expected to be controversial or to have any impact on fishing activities within the NWIFCA District.
13. All the IFCA are in similar positions of being asked by Defra to deliver this work which is required to avoid the threat of legal action by Client Earth and the Marine Conservation Society. All IFCA are expected to be asked to make similar prohibition byelaws in 2013. In order to facilitate completion of the work, the MMO has agreed to try and draft template byelaws and template text to use in the drafting of the regulatory impact assessment for the new byelaws.
14. Considerable additional work in 2012-13 and beyond will be required to deliver assessment of the impacts of all types of fishing on all the remaining features of all the remaining EMS in the District. Defra have set a challenging timescale driven by the threat of legal action to complete

all such assessments and introduce comprehensive protective measures for these issues by 2016.

15. This programme of work while delivering few, if any, conservation benefits for the NW England marine environment will have an impact on the NWIFCA capacity to carry out other research and survey programmes and collect other survey data to inform wider management of the marine environment of the District.

Cockle fisheries in the Ribble estuary.

16. Following comprehensive stock survey after the August fishery and redrafting of the Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA), the Foulnaze Bank Fishery was re-opened in October as agreed at the September meeting. The total allowable catch was set at 800 tons. Although initially delayed by weather on 1-3 October, there followed 7 days fishing 4-6 and 17-20 October. Enforcement of the permit scheme and the regulations were comprehensive and effective.
17. The catch per day and per fisherman was much reduced compared with the August figures. Approximately 250 tons were harvested in the 7 days of October. This was attributed to the stocks being more widely dispersed than in August and the sediment becoming harder and more difficult to work so extraction of cockles was slower.
18. At the end of October, despite the remaining TAC of 550 tons on the Foulnaze Bank, the boat based fishery from Lytham was closed to address concerns from the Coastguard about the use of small uncoded boats in waters classified as 'at sea' in winter conditions. In response to industry requests, consideration was given to allowing the smaller stock of commercial sized cockles to be taken from the beds in the south of the Ribble estuary accessible over land from the Southport side.
19. Again, with Natural England advice, the HRA was redrafted showing that the Foulnaze Bank cockle stock provided mitigation for removing cockles from the south side of the estuary. Thus a further fishery of up to 500 tons could be permitted in November, worked with access via the Marshside track in Southport. Detailed regulations were again prepared and meetings with other agencies held to ensure all concerns were met and interests addressed. The Southport Fishery opened on 5 November and continues Monday to Thursday only until Thursday 13 December after which the market will decline before Christmas
20. It should not be policy to open the Ribble cockle fisheries in the first quarter of 2013 when quality and the market are both poor. Survival of cockle stocks through the winter is unpredictable so in spring further stock surveys will be carried out to inform fishing policy for next year.

Implementation of Byelaw 3

21. .At the end of November, there are now approximately 260 permit holders under the new Byelaw 3. Many of these permit holders have participated in good fishing opportunities for cockles at Foulnaze Bank and Southport in the Ribble estuary and for seed mussel in Morecambe Bay. There are continued mussel fishing opportunities at sites in the District.
22. Strong enforcement in the Ribble area greatly reduced the opportunities for fishing without permits. The new byelaw coupled with effective collaboration and joint enforcement with other agencies (GLA, EHS, Coastguard, Police and Local Authorities) appears to have selected for

the majority of permit holders being well trained, safe and professional in their approach to the industry.

23. A special TSB meeting will be held on 30 November to consider possible amendments to Byelaw 3 as proposed at the last quarterly. Outcomes will be returned to the TSB in due course.

CEO Meetings: October – November 2012

3 October:	NW Enforcement Committee (IFCA, EA, MMO)
8 October:	Natural England: science and Habitats Advice
10-11 October:	National Enforcement workshop MMO.
12 October:	Multi-Agency meeting re Southport Fishery
25 October:	Chief Officers Group Shellfish stock assessments meeting Defra/Cefas.
9 November:	Defra EMS Implementation groups meeting
15 November	AI FCA Board meeting (with Chairman)
20 November:	Seafish group training: improving the foreshore gatherers safety course
22 November	November CEO attended Morecambe Bay Fisherman's meeting
27-28 November	Defra/MMO workshop on EMS management.
30 November	Byelaw 3 review meeting for NWIFCA members.

Chief Executive Officer
29th November 2012