

**North Western Inshore Fisheries and
Conservation Authority**

Annual Meeting: 12 June 2012

Morecambe Town Hall: 11.00 a.m.

**AGENDA
ITEM NO.
11**

FOULNAZE COCKLES, RIBBLE ESTUARY

Purpose:

To review the proposal to open the Ribble cockle fishery during the closed season in June 2012.

Recommendation:

Members are asked to consider if and when the fishery should be opened and what steps should be taken to ensure the fishery can be conducted safely.

1. The draft plan for the opening of the Ribble cockle fishery in June is attached at Annex. This was circulated to members in May. In the absence of adverse comments from members Officers embarked on a discussion of the practicality of opening the fishery with key partner stakeholder bodies.
2. The plan was sent to relevant regulatory bodies and published on the NWIFCA website. A meeting was called to discuss the proposal for a summer opening of the Foulnaze cockle bed in the Ribble Estuary on May 31. Fylde Borough Council officers and Councillors were in attendance as well as representatives from Lancashire Police, Crosby Coastguard, GLA, local lifeboat station, Mersey Port Health Authority, MCA and officers of the NWIFCA.
3. The Enforcement Officer opened the meeting with an overview of the proposals and requested that those present comment upon it. There was great concern from all parties over the ability for NWIFCA to enforce the proposal effectively and over the duration of the opening. Several agencies wished to see further health and safety conditions such as closure of the bed during bad weather and a ban on transportation of cockles other than on large registered and suitable vessels.
4. Parties were appreciative of the work and new health and safety aspects which were being asked of the gatherers, but it was felt that the management planning was rushed. Due to the 'uniqueness' of the bed in the North West and the use of small vessels, attendees felt that they could not support the proposal until further measures were guaranteed and could be successfully enforced.

Officers recommend the following

- Due to the concerns that have been raised and without the full support of the partner agencies further work needs to be completed before the bed can be opened.
- Officers will work towards the possibility of opening after the close season in September.

- NW IFCA will continue to seek Natural England's advice on the effect of the opening and issues around leaving sufficient bird food and Habitats Directive Requirements
- The Technical, Science and Byelaw Sub-Committee is authorised to approve a management plan and the issues
- Further work with partner agencies and other local authorities is needed.

CEO
1st June 2012