

- 63 AT A MEETING OF THE TECHNICAL, SCIENCE AND BYELAW SUB-COMMITTEE held at Morecambe Town Hall on 12th June 2012

PRESENT – MEMBERS

J. A. Clark	MMO (Marine Science)
B. Crawford	MMO (Anglers and Recreation)
W. Darbyshire	Environment Agency (Officer)
R. Graham	MMO (Fishing)
T. Jones	MMO (Aquaculture)
C. Lumb	Natural England (Officer)
A. J. Markley	Cumbria County Council
M. R. Owen	MMO (Fishing – various)
C. J. Woods	MMO (Shellfish)

IN ATTENDANCE

C. Reed	MMO (Conservation)
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OFFICERS

S. M. Atkins	D. Dobson
H. Ake	C. Dobson
I. V. Andrews	M. Knott
S. Brown	

APOLOGIES

Mrs J. Butler	MMO appointee (Commercial)
Prof C. Frid	MMO appointee (Marine Science)

- 64 The Chief Executive opened the meeting by calling for nominations for Chairman. Mr R. Graham was nominated by Dr J. A. Clark and seconded by Mr T. Jones.

RESOLVED

Mr R. Graham be appointed Chairman of the Technical, Science and Byelaw Sub-Committee for the forthcoming year.

65 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

1. The Chairman announced apologies for absence and welcomed members.
2. The Chairman welcomed representatives from the fishing industry to the meeting.

66 DECLARATIONS OF PECUNIARY AND NON-PECUNIARY INTEREST IN AGENDA ITEMS

Agenda Item 8. Cockle Transplant Trial. Mrs M. R. Owen, Mr C. J. Woods.
Agenda Item 9. Sustainable Fisheries Review. Mrs M. R. Owen, Mr C. J. Woods.

67 APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIRMAN

The Chairman called for nominations for Vice-Chairman for the year.

RESOLVED: Mr C. Lumb be reappointed Vice-Chairman of the Technical, Science and Byelaw Sub-Committee for the forthcoming year.

68 TO RECEIVE MINUTES OF THE TECHNICAL, SCIENCE AND BYELAW SUB-COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 17FEBRUARY 2012

RESOLVED: The minutes of the Technical, Science and Byelaws Sub-Committee meeting held on 17th February 2012 be approved and signed as a correct record.

69 MATTERS ARISING

1. Preesall Gas Storage

Dr Clark reported that no fisheries interests, whether marine or freshwater who had registered an interest with the Infrastructure Planning Committee had received an invitation to the first meeting held although the IPC website stated invitations had been issued. She asked if a letter could be sent to the IPC making them aware of this and requesting an explanation. The Chief Executive agreed to make enquiries. The Science Officer said it was not a consultation but was the planning inspectorate and there would not be a public hearing unless there were specific issues. Written submissions had been required by 6th June. Ms Knott agreed to look into the situation and asked Dr Clark to provide her with details.

70 SCIENCE REPORT

The Scientific and Morecambe Bay Fishery Order Officer said the science report to the TSB Sub-Committee was a more detailed report to that prepared for the main NWIFCA meeting which only covered the period to the end of April.

The Scientific/IFCA Officer said the report included details of work carried out by the science team between April and the present time. Some survey work had been started and Officers had focused on the cockle fishery in the Ribble Estuary. Inspections of the mussel beds in Morecambe Bay and West Kirby had been carried out and the West Kirby bed still contained a lot of mussel. That bed was presently closed under the old Dee byelaws and would remain closed until the end of August. When Byelaw 3 came into force the minimum landing for mussels in the Dee Estuary would reduce to 45mm. Officers would be re-visiting the area prior to that time and it was felt with the introduction of the new byelaw it may be another fishery to consider in terms of enforcement and also the fact it was within an EMS area.

Mr Woods asked if the present byelaw in the Dee would remain when Byelaw 3 came into force whereby the mussels would have to be fished using a boat. Dr Atkins said the new byelaw would revoke the Dee conservancy byelaw that required the use of a boat. Mr Woods pointed out there had always been a cockle fishery around the mussel bed and the original reason for fishing by boat was to avoid ATVs and tractors churning up the cockle bed. Dr Atkins said specific regulations for a small area of the Dee could be introduced if necessary which could involve prohibiting the use of ATVs and could include a larger minimum size for mussels at certain times of the year.

There was discussion on the Dee and how the fisheries were managed. Mr Darbyshire said the Environment Agency had previously taken on responsibility in the Dee Estuary and with the split in the estuary between England and Wales the NWIFCA needed to make sure the fishery was seen as a single geographical entity and not have cross border variations.

Mr Jones reiterated a point he had made at the last meeting that fishermen on both the English and Welsh sides of the Dee had made a request that they should all be fully consulted on the stocks there may be on their particular side of the estuary.

The Chairman requested a report on the implications of discussions on the Dee Estuary to be submitted to a future TSB meeting to gain a better understanding of the situation.

Ms Knott reported that Morecambe Bay had seen an extensive mussel spatfall throughout the whole of the Bay. There was a dense settlement on the skears at the Knott End side of Fleetwood. Heysham Flat had been a hand gathering fishery in the past and the areas would be regularly monitored. Officers would consult with NE over the area that could be fished. Small samples of mussels had been taken from Foulney to test for pearling and it was thought that about 50% contained grit which could start the process. Officers would follow that up and report back to the sub-committee. South America had seen a very extensive spatfall which covered more or less the same area as last year but the stock would not be ready for harvesting until late July/early August. Consultation would take place with NE who had been involved in surveying Chinese Mitten Crab as a precautionary measure.

In response to a question from Mr Darbyshire on what level of fishing would be deemed to be acceptable and how the IFCA would manage the activity, Officers said they would monitor the fisheries so that they were not over exploited.

Mrs Owen asked whether about pea crabs were still seen in the Heysham Flat mussels. She said that up until 10 years ago the fishery at Heysham used to be a sized mussel fishery. It was only recently that it had been fished for seed mussels. Mrs Owen had raised this issue at previous meetings. Ms Knott asked her to provide her with details of when the bed was first fished as a seed bed.

RESOLVED

1. The report be received.
2. A report on difficulties in the Dee Estuary be submitted to a future meeting of the TSB Sub-Committee

71 COCKLE TRANSPLANT TRIAL

Ms Knott reported that the cockle transplant trial carried out at Lytham St. Annes in 2011 had been of limited success. There were problems in analysing the data due to staff changes but the results showed that the mortality rates in the undredged donor areas were higher than for the dredged areas. Mortality rates for transplanted cockles were lower than either of those areas. Although officers were unable to draw any further conclusions from the trial it was felt to have been worthwhile. Members were asked to approve further more in-depth studies earlier in the year when suitable stocks were available.

The operators had tested and fine-tuned the machinery which was now fit for purpose. The relay area was not the area originally agreed because of problems experienced with the weather which had changed the shape of the beach. NE had observed the relaying activity.

Members agreed to allow transplant of cockles within the District when suitable stocks were available.

RESOLVED

1. The report be received.
2. In future, when cockle settlement levels are substantial enough to allow further studies the NWIFCA should authorise transplantation earlier in the season to take advantage of the preferential weather.
3. When stocks are available, Officers consider transplanting cockles to other beds within the District having taken biosecurity measures into account.

72 The Chairman proposed a change in Agenda to take Item 11 next and this was agreed.

73 NWIFCA ENVIRONMENTAL FORUM

Ms Ake reported a proposal from RSPB that the NWIFCA should set up a NW Environmental Forum to facilitate discussion on conservation and environmental matters and assist development of IFCA policy.

Dr Clark raised concerns that the forum must be set up by, and be accountable to the full NWIFCA and it must not duplicate or undermine the role of the TSB.

The Chief Executive said that an established forum may not be needed but that the environmental work now required of NWIFCA was increasing significantly and views outside the Authority should be heard. This could be achieved by workshops called as required to address difficult environmental issue.

Dr Clark proposed that if a NWIFCA Environmental Forum was set up it should be as a sub-committee of the TSB. It should have terms of reference, purpose and defined membership and should be approved by the full IFCA as strategic working group.

The proposal was seconded by Mrs Owen and Mr Darbyshire and following a vote the motion was carried.

RESOLVED

1. The report be received.
2. The need for a NWIFCA Environmental strategic working group as a sub-committee of the TSB be considered at a future NWIFCA meeting.

74 The meeting then reverted back to the Agenda as printed.

75 ANNUAL ECOLOGICAL SURVEY OF THE CUMBRIAN COAST

The Enforcement Director reported that Dr Lancaster would be carrying out a survey of the Cumbrian coast again this year. Mr Dobson would report back to a future meeting of the sub-committee

Mr Lumb said NE was contracting those types of surveys in Morecambe Bay at present. Information from the surveys would be shared with the science team to provide good descriptive, base line information about Morecambe Bay.

RESOLVED

That the report be received.

76 BIOSECURITY PLANS

Ms Knott reported that Cefas were recommending that IFCA's should implement biosecurity plans in relation to disease and non-native invasive species. Members were asked to consider if Officers should produce a draft biosecurity plan and if so whether it should cover the Morecambe Bay Fishery Order area or the whole District. Eastern IFCA had produced a biosecurity plan for the Wash Fishery Order area which they were willing for other IFCA's to use as a template.

Some work has been done in Scotland in the river catchment area looking at similar plans there and there were efforts to try to get funding from Defra for a national project within river catchment areas, tying it into Marine Zones.

Mr Lumb felt it would be in the interests of the IFCA to be looking at biosecurity plans for the district which tied in with the freshwater elements.

RESOLVED

1. The report be received.
2. Officers be instructed to draw up a draft Biosecurity Plan for the District for approval by the TSB Sub-Committee.

There being no further business the Chairman thanked Members for attending and declared the meeting closed at 1625 hours.