

NWIFCA Technical, Science and Byelaw Sub-Committee

16 August 2013: 10:00am

**REPORT
NUMBER**

3

Agenda Items Without Full Papers

Agenda Item 6: Razor clam update

Abigail Leadbeater

Summary: Members will be aware from previous reports that Cefas are currently working on a Fisheries Science Partnership funded project to investigate the use of an electro dredge for razor clam fishing. Both Officers and the Chairman of the Authority have contacted Cefas to explain the NWIFCA's involvement in the development of this fishery to date and to express concern that the NWIFCA was not informed or consulted at an earlier stage.

Officers and TSB sub-group members attended a video conference with Cefas staff involved in this project (including Dave Palmer, the project lead). This allowed the NWIFCA to have input into the early stages of planning and for both parties to outline their expectations.

A boat based in Holyhead has been granted the tender to carry out this work. Trevor Jones attended an initial meeting with Dave Palmer and the boat's crew. This meeting was to discuss technical and logistic aspects of the gear and the project.

A meeting in Carnforth with Dave Palmer, Officers, TSB sub-group members and industry is scheduled for Thursday 8th August. This will allow for more detailed discussion of the project plans. A verbal report on this will be given to the TSB sub-committee.

Agenda Item 8: Leasowe – Non-regulated Fishing of Intertidal Bivalves

Summary: IFCOs Brownrigg and Capper have been reporting large volumes of razor clams and other clam species being fished by hand-gatherers on the inter-tidal area at Leasowe. It is estimated that up to 100 gatherers have been removing a few hundred kilograms on each of the large spring tides that are required to access the area where the stock is found, resulting in around 2 or 3 tonnes per month being taken between May to October.

IFCOs are monitoring the activity and checking the catch for minimum landing size of razor clams, with no infringements being found to date. Efforts are being made to identify which other clam species are being fished to ensure that where MLS for these species exist they are being observed.

Officers have major concerns over the impact that this level of unregulated fishing is having on the stock. It is doubtful that this can be classed as sustainable. The area has various conservation designations and lies within the Liverpool Bay SPA and the clam species are likely to be prey for one of the conservation features, the Common Scoter duck.

Agenda Item 9: Foulney East Mussel Relaying Trials

Morecambe Bay Shellfish Farms (MBSF) have submitted a request to the NWIFCA for authorisation to carry out trials of relaying seed mussel at an area described as 'Foulney East' (Figure 1). Officers have yet to receive full details of what is being proposed but could reasonably presume the trial will be similar in nature to those authorised by the Authority at North Walney and Barrow I ie it will involve dredging seed mussel from the skear at South America under authorisation from the NWIFCA during the fishing season there, transporting it by boat to the relay area, relaying it and then dredging the mussel back up after a period of 12 – 18 months.

The NWIFCA authorised the previous trials under certain conditions, and if the Authority is mindful to grant permission the following would be expected of MBSF prior to authorisation being given:

- a) that full GIS mapping is provided to the NWIFCA (completed);
- b) that a full consultation with fisher and other local stakeholders (particularly Byelaw 3 permit holders) is carried out and a written report provided to the Authority;
- c) a full written monitoring plan is drawn up and agreed with Officers and Natural England, and implemented before, during and after the trial with a final written report submitted to the Authority.

As with previous trials, MBSF will need to conduct a HRA and gain agreement from Natural England as well obtain any other consents that may be required.

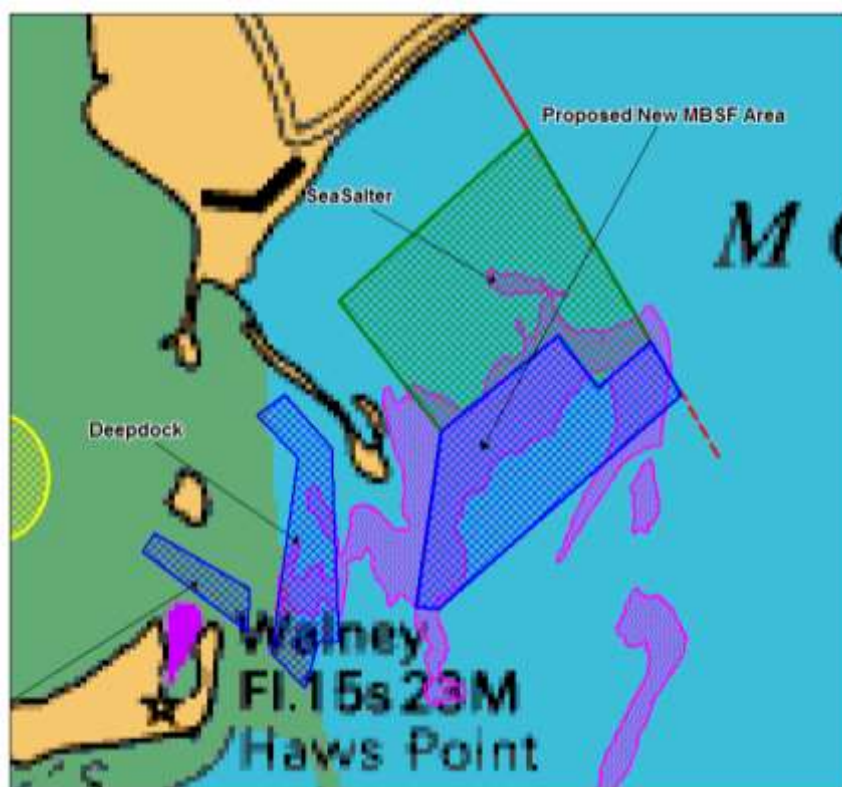


Figure 1. Proposed relaying trial area at Foulney East – green area shows position of oyster trestles.

Agenda Item 10: Science and Research Plan

Mandy Knott

There has been discussion at previous meetings over the drafting and implementation of the NWIFCA's Science Plan including research priorities, a strategy for collaborative working with academic institutions and partner agencies, as well as investigating the potential for funding opportunities to increase available resources. Despite best efforts it has proven problematic to make much progress with this. Officers would welcome the opportunity to discuss a strategy for developing the Plan, perhaps by forming a sub-group to meet and identify a way forward.

Agenda Item 12: Morecambe Bay Several and Regulating Order

Mandy Knott

Summary: Since the last update work has continued to move the application for the Order forward, albeit in small laboured steps. The most recent draft of the Statutory Instrument appears to now include all the elements that the NWIFCA requires, although there is still on-going discussion over the wording. The Senior Scientist held a productive meeting with the agent for Boughton Estate and Natural England to agree a way forward in relation to the long-standing dispute over fishery rights on the Estate land, particularly in the Walney Channel. She is awaiting a note from that meeting to come from the agent in order to ensure full agreement from the Chief Executive and the Authority before any further action is taken.

Agenda Item 13: Communications update

Alasdair Lindop

Summary: The main communication development this quarter has been the implementation of the Text Alert system. It has been particularly useful in the management of the Foulhaze fishery, and several messages have been sent over the last month, such as informing permit holders of the status of their boat-endorsement, giving details of the tide openings and reminding fishermen about renewals. The system has been very well received by fishermen on the ground and seems to be proving itself as a very effective method of communication.

Stakeholder meetings took place in Silloth and Walney in connection with the EMS management review, which are covered under that agenda item.

There will be a change in operation from a communications perspective from the end of August, when Alasdair Lindop leaves his post as Science and Communications Officer. The communications aspect of his role, including stakeholder engagement, newsletter, TSB facilitation, press and website management will be undertaken on a part-time basis by IFCO Joe Moulton, as agreed by CEO, Finance Director, Head of Enforcement and Senior Scientist.

Mandy Knott

Senior Scientist and Morecambe Bay Fishery Order Officer

August 2013