

NWIFCA Quarterly Meeting: 22 March 2013: 10.30 a.m.

**AGENDA
ITEM NO.
11**

SCIENCE REPORT

24TH NOVEMBER 2012 – 7TH MARCH 2013

GENERAL

This quarter has again been a busy and eventful time for the NWIFCA Science Team. During the summer / autumn of 2012 all IFCAs had become aware of Defra's change in approach to fisheries management in European Marine Sites, and a great deal of time and energy has been devoted into incorporating fisheries impacts and conservation features within the District's 13 EMS (5 SACs and 8 SPAs) into the various iterations of the risk matrices.

With the recruitment of the two new IFCOs based at the Carnforth office there was a certain amount of work required to help equip them and in procuring a vehicle for them, as well as instruction in some survey methodologies. As Members know we then said goodbye to our valued team member Helen Ake who moved over to Natural England. This has left us with a team member down during an extremely busy period and we look forward to welcoming a replacement for her soon.

SURVEY AND FISHERIES WORK

Foulnaze Cockle Survey and Fishery Planning

The industry is keen for Officers to access the cockle bed at Foulnaze in the Ribble Estuary as soon as possible. Over the winter it has not been possible to take advantage of suitable tides due to the lack of daylight hours. However with the first opportunity arising on 11th and 15th March, surveys have been scheduled in and a verbal report will be given to the Authority at the meeting.

Morecambe Bay Cockle and Mussel Beds

A low level of fishing for size mussel has been on-going throughout the Bay with no cause for change or increase in management measures. The cockle beds within the Bay have been closed due to low stock densities. Surveys of 2013 cockle and mussel spat settlement will begin as soon as the IFCOs patrolling each area report any substantial recruitment.

Foulney Mussels

Following the decision taken at the December NWIFCA meeting to restrict the harvesting by hand of mussel at Foulney to size only an issue arose in January whereby Officers were hearing reports that a large number of hand-gatherers were going to attempt to harvest undersize from the bed. Warranted Science Officers attended on a yellow jersey day and had the opportunity to discuss issues with local fishermen, and to access the bed and see where and what was being fished. Around 10 fishers turned up and the Enforcement and Science Officers advised them of the areas in which size mussel could be fished. This low effort fishery has continued throughout January and February.

More recently the issue around the Boughton Estate claim to fishery rights covered in the Chief Officer's report occurred. Science Officers intend to survey this bed as soon as practically possible to assess current levels of stock.

Shellfish Hygiene Classifications District Wide

There appear to be some possible changes to the protocols and procedures for conducting shellfish sampling (for hygiene classification purposes) on the horizon. Currently IFCOs collect certain samples for Local Authorities. Cefas may require IFCOs to attend training in future. Local Authorities are also looking at potentially reducing or changing sample points throughout the District. It would appear that sanitary surveys are going to come in for all beds even existing ones to be done by 2015.

Science Officers regularly attend the Shellfish Liaison Group meetings, the next of which is to be held on 13th March. If there is any further news a verbal update will be given.

SEA ANGLING 2012

The Sea Angling 2012 project concluded its surveys with a series of surveys in December and a final one in January. The final tally for the project was 46 trips and 118 sites visited. 151 interviews were conducted, with 221 Anglers providing data. The project can be seen as a success overall, with a very high level of engagement (less than 2% refusal rate) with a stakeholder group with which the NWIFCA has previously had little direct contact with.

The reports and database files have been submitted to Cefas, who are compiling data from all IFCAs for a final report. The NWIFCA will continue to assist Cefas with the production of the report until its publication, which has been scheduled for April.

PROJECT WORK

EUROPEAN MARINE SITES – REVIEW OF FISHERIES MANAGEMENT

Officers have spent a large amount of time this quarter carrying out work associated with the Defra revised approach to fisheries management in European Marine Sites. Ms Leadbeater attended a two day workshop at the Defra offices in London and has been involved in several working group conference calls. Ms Knott attended a further workshop in London and is part of the Analysis of Likely Significant Effect / Appropriate Assessment template working group. Officers have been working to assess features of EMS in the NWIFCA District against the Matrix and complete action plans for each site. Officers met with Natural England at the Carnforth office to discuss this classification and to identify data required for mapping of features at high risk ("reds"). A full report has been tabled as a separate agenda item.

COCKLE TRANSPLANT STUDY

Following discussion with the operators over the surveying and monitoring required to provide meaningful data from this study, a site visit and spat survey were carried out on the North Penfold cockle bed (donor area). These informed the Habitats Regulations Assessment drawn up in agreement with Natural England for the different stages of the transplant study (relaying in the Ribble; relaying in north Morecambe Bay). Officers also met with operators and provided written support for their bid for funding from the Fisheries Challenge Fund administered by the MMO. We are awaiting a decision from the funding board but working on the assumption that the study will go ahead. It has received a great deal of interest from other IFCAs. Due to the fact that the relaying areas all fall within SSSIs it is necessary for the operators to obtain landowners' permissions, and for Natural England to issue consents under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. Work to obtain these is underway.

SUSTAINABLE FISHERIES REVIEW

Sustainability Studentship

Following Sophia Kochalski's presentation to the NWIFCA at the December meeting she has since developed a two phase stakeholder questionnaire on sustainability issues of fisheries within the District. She conducted trial runs of her phase two face-to-face "expert" interview on two Science Officers individually and then forwarded her phase one questionnaire for comment which Officers circulated to hand-picked stakeholders and co-ordinated the responses to further improve on the questionnaire. Sophia has been attending Stakeholder Engagement Meetings where she has the opportunity to explain and discuss the project with stakeholders directly.

Project Inshore

The Stage One report has been published and is available on the Seafish website (<http://www.seafish.org/fishermen/fishing/project-inshore/project-reports>) and has also been posted on the NWIFCA Knowledge Hub site for Members to view. For all English inshore fisheries the report includes a collation and presentation of available data, giving an overview of English Inshore landings, species profiles, fisheries and gears short-listed for Stage 2 and information available to assessors for Stage 2.

There were concerns about reliability of estimates of inshore landings for several reasons (no 6nm reporting requirement, no log books, bypassing of RBS, shellfish returns not entered, some fisheries not required to report). Following strong representation from IFCA's particular challenges were identified in the report for non-quota shellfish landings (especially bivalve fisheries such as cockle and mussel):

- Landings from Regulating Orders are reported to DEFRA;
- CEFAS determine if 'aquaculture' or 'fishery'. Aquaculture element reported back to DEFRA.
- Fisheries element reported to MMO but does not appear in MMO statistics;
- Landings from other cockle beds:
 - hand gathering (no requirement to report),
 - smaller vessels with no log books (data maybe captured if sold via RBS),
 - or larger vessels (data should be captured in logbooks).

The Stage Two report is due for publication at the end of March 2013 and it is proposed that Project Inshore hold a workshop with IFCA representatives prior to finalisation of the report. Stage Two will cover pre-assessment of English fisheries based on an aggregated/matrix approach for assessing each selected fishery (species / gear combination) in relation to the Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) standard. The key output of Stage 2 will provide a preliminary determination of how closely each performance indicator of each fishery meets the MSC standard.

MORECAMBE BAY HYBRID FISHERY ORDER

Members requested that a letter be written from the Authority to Defra asking them to expedite the progress of the MBFO as a matter of urgency. This was sent before Christmas, since when there has still been no formal response to the Authority despite Officers continual emailing and phone calls to Defra. It is understood that although submitted as a final application in April 2012 it has been held up in Defra legal due to a change of lawyers. We have since enrolled the support of David Morris MP for Morecambe and Lunesdale, and officers within Natural England's national team to increase the message to Defra that this amount of time is not acceptable and the MBFO needs to be promulgated.

WILDLIFE TRUST MARINE GRADUATES SCHEME

Science Officers have been co-supervising the work of the three Marine Graduates. In particular support has been given in further *Sabellaria alveolata* mapping throughout the District and the write up of *Sabellaria* report. Officers have also supported a desk-top study / literature review into pearling in mussels, an issue pertinent to mussels in the Walney Channel. The partnership between NWIFCA Science and Cumbria Wildlife Trust has been mutually beneficial and is being strengthened through a further bid for funding (application from CWT). It might be noted that two out of five Marine Graduates have been recruited into IFCAs since taking part in the scheme.

MEDIN

Officers continued to create metadata sets for archive data; with Cumbrian shellfish stock surveys as the next batch to upload to the MEDIN portal.

TAG (TECHNICAL ADVISORY GROUP) MEETING

Ms Knott is the NWIFCA representative on the national TAG and attended a one day meeting in London which mainly concentrated on discussion around the work generated by Defra's Revised Approach to Fisheries Management in EMS. Also discussed were the MCZ consultation, Young Fish Survey feasibility study update, Project Inshore, Sea Angling 2012, Environment Agency 2013-2014 Research Priorities, the use of the Knowledge Hub for information sharing, feedback to TAG from CoG (Chief Officers Group), and Cefas Inshore Fisheries Mapping. TAG is proving a vital tool in providing opportunity for discussion and potential for joint working between the IFCAs. If any Members would like more detail about these meetings please contact Ms Knott.

BIOSECURITY PLAN

Officers met with the Solway Firth Partnership to discuss their Solway-wide Biosecurity Plan. It was agreed that the NWIFCA would assist in the implementation of this plan. This plan, along with other similar documents from the Firth of Clyde and Cumbrian Waterways will be used by NWIFCA officers as a template to create a District-wide plan for inshore fisheries. The NWIFCA plan will also incorporate measures for controlling disease, as well as non-native invasive species, particularly in shellfish.

RAZOR CLAM FISHERY DEVELOPMENT

Officers worked to incorporate comments into draft methodology and continued working on a literature review. The next stage in the planning process requires industry decision making to finalise sites, and make applications for funding and derogations.

AUTHORISATIONS AND CONSULTATIONS

National Grid North West Coast Connections Consultation

Barrow in Furness Walney - Deep Water Berth Pontoon

Mersey Trot Moorings - Construction of Moorings at Gwynt y Môr Base Harbour Port Facility

Cammel Laird Wet Basin - harbour sub-soil reinforcement work

St Bees Railway - Bridge Replacement

Heysham Power Station - Maintenance Dredging

Middleton Sea Outfall - Dye Tracing

Walney Offshore Windfarm - Cable Remedial Works

West of Duddon Sands Windfarm – Cable Landfall

MEETINGS, WORKSHOPS AND COURSES ATTENDED

Solway Firth Partnership Working Group – attendance and liaison regarding Biosecurity Plans

Barrow Wildlife and Heritage Advisory Committee

Morecambe Bay EMS Management Group – attendance and contribution to re-writing of 5 year Action Plan

Dee Estuary – Investigations into the Failure of the Shotton Common Tern Colony – attendance and contribution of expertise into possible causes of breeding failure and advice on future surveys.

Walney Windfarm Extension Fishermens Consultation Meetings – attended both Lancaster and Whitehaven

NWIFCA Community Information Meetings – presence of one science officer and the communications officer at all meetings.

Personal Survival Techniques – three science team members along with IFCO Burdekin attended the one day course at Fleetwood Nautical College

MapInfo Training – three science team members received a two day training course on the use of GIS

ATV training – Ms Leadbeater attended one day course.

VHF Course – two science team members attended one day course.

ADDITIONAL

Assisting with induction of two new IFCOs (Moulton and Burdekin) and equipment and vehicle procurement.

Creation of MMO Current/on-going consultations with the district.

Creation of protocol and application form for request for dispensations

Management and editing of computer files in preparation for IT change over.

General data and information requests from industry and other sources.

General vehicle and equipment maintenance and renewal

COMMUNICATIONS

At the time of writing, three of four planned meetings have taken place – in Liverpool, Cleveleys and Whitehaven. The number of stakeholders attending has been variable, but all the meetings have had useful discussions with stakeholders regarding their issues and questions. Key issues for attendees have been the designation and potential management measures of MCZs, management of the

Foulnaze fishery- in particular the behaviour of fishermen and landing of cockles at Preston, and a desire for better engagement from the IFCA. The meetings have also been attended by representatives of Natural England and Defra, who have made useful contributions to the discussions. The final meeting of the series will take place on 13th March in Morecambe and any outcomes will be included in the verbal report.

Although numbers attending the meetings haven't been particularly high, they have been very useful for those attending, and the IFCA has been able to use them as a valuable learning exercise for improving future engagement. It is hoped to run a similar series of events in the early Autumn.

A second newsletter has been produced and is available to download from the NWIFCA website.

Science Officers
March 2013