

**NWIFCA Quarterly Meeting
20 September 2013: 11.00 a.m.**

**ADDENDUM
TO AGENDA
ITEM 7**

MORECAMBE BAY SEAGRASS BEDS CLOSED AREA

Further data on the distribution of seagrass in the area of Roa Island was received from Natural England (NE) on 16 September.

Members have been concerned about the age and current accuracy of data for some of the seagrass beds in the North Morecambe Bay. The data was derived from a Natural History Museum survey in 1999. It was decided at the 16th August TSB meeting that seagrass from this outdated survey should not be included in the proposed Byelaw 6.

A site visit by Natural England on 21st August showed that seagrass is present within the Roa Island Bay in areas which overlap with the 1999 survey.

Natural England Officers then conducted a survey of the seagrass in this area on the 5th and 6th September. A NWIFCA Science Officer also attended for one of these days. Preliminary results and observations reveal that the seagrass bed to the north east of the Foulney spit (close to the area known as Slitch Bay), recorded in the 1999 Natural History Museum surveys, is still present and is in good health. The area concerned is shown in fig 1 below.

This new data means that this seagrass bed could be included in the areas closed to towed gear, hand gathering and bait collection. NE has requested that this area of seagrass is included in the proposed Byelaw 6 and thereby protected from damaging activities.

However, this data came too late to include into the proposed Byelaw 6 before the meeting on 20 September. The area would have to be added after the byelaw is formally made on 20 September. It is arguable that this change is more than a minor amendment so could render the byelaw open to legal challenge.

Officers recommend that the new area is not included in the byelaw at this stage because there has been no consultation with external stakeholders on any implication of the areas for users. However, if the Authority or Defra wish the areas to be included, then this can be achieved, probably by the December meeting of the NWIFCA.

However, the Defra deadline for completion of the protection for so called red sites of the end of 2013 will not be met.

**Science Team and CEO
19 September 2013**

Figure 1. Additional proposed seagrass closed area, Morecambe Bay EMS

