



**North Western
Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority
Meeting 4: 30th September 2011
Morecambe Town Hall, 10.30 a.m.**

Agenda Item 7: Annex 4

REVIEW OF COCKLE FISHERY NORTH WIRRAL, LEASOWE

Purpose of Report

To inform members of the status of the cockle stocks at Leasowe and request the committee to accept either of the following recommendations

Recommendations

1. That the report be received.
2. The committee either agrees to one of the following
 - i. To close the bed under Byelaw 13a as the cockle density may have reached the threshold of 20 per m².
 - ii. To allow the officers to complete a full survey, comparative to August and to provide delegated powers to the Officers to close the bed when necessary under Byelaw 13a when density levels reach 20 per m².

Background

1. Last year the cockle bed known as Leasowe was classified and opened due to the small but highly dense bed. There were two year classes present, with 2010 stock generally being undersize at this time. The bed was open from the 1st September once the seasonal closure had ended.
2. Through survey work and reports from local fishermen the Leasowe bed Shellfish Hygiene classification has been extended due to the presence of cockles in additional areas and from the 1st September 2011.

Survey Results

3. 56 sample points were surveyed over several days prior to the 31st August. Due to operational problems several survey points could not be surveyed during the last survey. Average density was 29 per m² across the surveyed area
4. Another survey was conducted on 19th September covering the area that was accessible due to tidal restrictions. The survey results found an average of 37 per m² across the surveyed points. From the comparative area of the August survey results density was 48 per m².

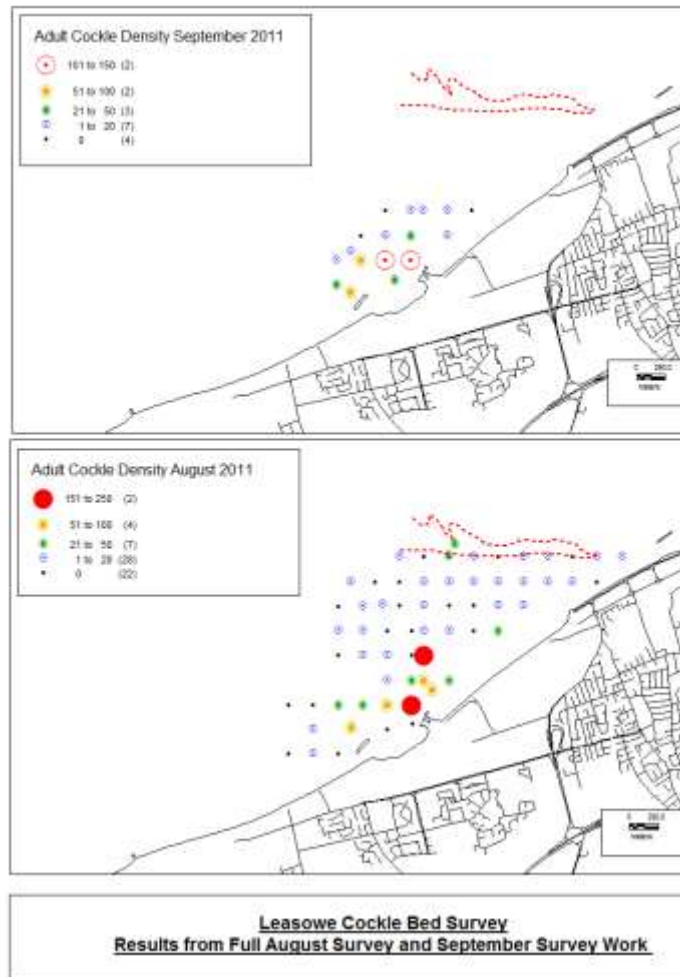


Fig 1. Leasowe Cockle Bed Adult Density of August and September 2011 Surveyed Points

5. Leasowe has been open since the 1st September and during the adverse weather and easier access than the Southport beds, this site has had approx 30 -100 gatherers a tide. Gatherers have been working close to shore within the denser areas. These dense areas may be the result of last year's fishery where riddling bags found to have undersize cockle occurred.

Wirral Multiagency Operational Plan

6. Following last year's fishery Wirral Council have revised the multiagency operational plan which officers have attended meetings regarding its development. Officers have provided relevant information to various Council departments to help aid in the planning for the fishery and maintain a strong working partnership with Mersey Port Health Authority.

Helen Ake
Scientific and IFCA Officer
20th September 2011