

NWIFCA Authority Meeting
1st of December 2022: 11:00 a.m.

Agenda Item

10

SCIENCE REPORT FOR INFORMATION
29TH OF SEPTEMBER – 1ST OF DECEMBER 2022

Purpose: To provide an update on the work of the Science Team in the quarter.

Recommendation: Report for information, Receive the report

This quarter, the main priorities of the science team have been to carry out the work regarding the annual mussel and cockle surveys, completing HRA's for the required fisheries, developing new research proposals and facilitating HPMA work.

Key achievements since the previous meeting:

- 1) Presented our work on mussel management at the 2022 TAG conference
- 2) Completed Southport cockle fishery HRA
- 3) Developed two research proposals for funding bids
- 4) Developed and agreed an action plan for cockle MLS studies
- 5) Facilitated HPMA workshop for Newcastle University Researchers
- 6) Four consultation requests and two dispensation requests responded to
- 7) Completed two mussel inspections and two surveys

ONGOING WORK STREAM UPDATES:

1. POTTING PERMIT BYELAW

The science team have been working to set up a database for the suitable logging and analysis of returns data. From discussions with Sussex and North Eastern IFCA, we have explored using a similar interactive database that would allow fishermen to submit returns

2. COCKLE AND MUSSEL

- a) Surveys and inspections

The science team undertake a reduced number of surveys and inspections during the autumn period.

Surveys and Inspections this quarter

Mussel

Seafield slip inspection	28-10-22
Heysham inspection	12-09-22
Foulney Dutch wand survey	13-09-22
Walney Dutch wand survey	14-09-22
Low Bottom Dutch wand survey	29-09-22

Cockles

None

-

c) Mussel minimum landing size

At the Technical Science and Byelaw meeting held on the 1st of November, the Authority agreed an approach to investigating the presence of 'stunted' mussel on the Foulney mussel bed and the impacts of reducing MLS in this area – as requested by industry members.

d) Southport

The NWIFCA science team completed a HRA for the Southport cockle fishery which was submitted to NE on the 22nd of September, and signed off on the 6th of October. The fishery subsequently opened following classification on the 26th of October.

e) Dee cockle fishery order

At the Authority meeting on the 29th of September, a member of the public raised the issue of future management of the Dee cockle fishery once the regulating order expires. Members of industry have enquired as to whether cockle beds on the English side of the Dee will be managed under different regulation post 2028.

The Dee cockle beds straddle the border between England and Wales. The fishery is managed by the Natural Resources Wales (NRW) under a 2008 Regulating Order. Cockle beds on the English side of the boarder are co-managed with the Environment Agency, who have signed over responsibility of management to NRW. The regulating order that allows NRW to manage the fishery will expire on the 1st of July 2028.

On the 8th of November, the SS met with a NRW representative responsible for managing the Dee cockle fishery. Early discussions within NRW indicate that the organisation is looking to re-apply for another regulating order and are not pursuing the possibility of it becoming a public fishery. However, the process is at a very early stage and engagement with current license holders will begin 2023. NRW need to confirm with the EA as to their role in a future RO, and will keep NWIFCA engaged in the process. The SS will attend a consultation meeting for the Dee fishery RO in the New Year.

3. NWIFCA RESEARCH PROJECTS

a) Fisheries Industry Science Partnership Scheme (FISP)

The Fisheries Industry Science Partnership (FISP) scheme is a £10 million government fund which seeks to: improve data collection, particularly for data limited species, enhance knowledge of technical measures including fishing gear selectivity, and/or build a better understanding of the ecosystem benefits and environmental impacts of aquaculture.

NWIFCA science officers have developed two proposals to discuss with TSB and industry to bid for the following round of funding from 21st of November to 5th of Jan 2023. The proposals for this work include; 1) Investigating the long-term sustainability of the intertidal shrimp fisheries, 2) use of drone technology and machine learning for monitoring mussel stocks. Both projects are in the process of obtaining industry and academic partnerships. Meetings have been held with Salford University researchers. Applications for bidding will be submitted in December.

b) Whelk Fisheries in the North West

Given the introduction of Byelaw 4, there is a good opportunity to assess the fishery, identify key fishing grounds, and establish a sampling schedule for determining the size-at-maturity in the NWIFCA district. A sample proposal was agreed at the Authority meeting in June. The aim of the project will look to determine an appropriate MLS based on size-at-maturity of the district whelks, and possibly the size frequency of catch. This work is currently on hold for two reasons; 1) there are only two vessels providing returns for whelk across the district and as yet, not many permit holders are targeting whelk, and; 2) The best time to sample whelks for SOM estimates is in the summer prior to the autumn breeding season. NWIFCA officers will discuss with industry the reason for low up-take of fishing, and prepare for sampling to begin in the spring.

c) EA Small fish surveys

NWIFCA assisted the Environment Agency in small fish surveys as part of a continuation of the water framework directive and an extension of this work into natural capital. Surveys took place in the Wyre Estuary for one day in October using a beam trawl and seine netting to survey juvenile fish species. Information from this survey will be shared with us.

2. MARINE PROTECTED AREAS IN THE NWIFCA DISTRICT:

a) Highly Protected Marine Areas (HPMAs)

Following on from the report provided at the 29th September Authority Meeting, NWIFCA have been in discussion with Sarah Coulthard from Newcastle University. Sarah is conducting research into the impacts of the Allonby Bay HPMA on local users. This information will be submitted to Defra in addition to the online consultation responses which closed this month. The project was initiated on short notice, with researchers planning a visit to interview stakeholders on the 20th and 21st of October. The aim of the work is identify the connection between stakeholders and the site.

NWIFCA have assisted by collating information on local tackle shops, angling clubs, charter boats and recreational users for researchers to contact. NWIFCA officers have also contacted commercial and recreational potting stakeholders, published information on the website/twitter/facebook pages, and had local IFCO's inform stakeholders on their patrols. Officers will attend the local drop-in session to hear concerns, and the SS will be attending the Defra update on the 20th of October.

The information from the consultation will be shared with NWIFCA and Defra once complete.

b) Marine Natural Capital

No further updates

3. FISHERIES MANAGEMENT

a) Fisheries Management Plans

The purpose of the fisheries management plans is to define the fisheries, assess and account for their possible socio-economic and environmental effects and give a framework for their sustainable management.

FMPs are required at a national level under the Fisheries Act 2020. Following Brexit, the UK Fisheries Act 2020 placed FMPs as the main tool for reforming UK fisheries management. The Joint Fisheries Statement (JFS) will provide a more detailed, follow-on document from the Fisheries Act when it is published in November 2022. It will set out the final list of Fisheries

Management Plans. This will include the chosen stocks, the authorities involved, and the timetable for implementation. IFCA's are expected to contribute to this work. It is currently being led by Seafish who are holding consultations across the UK this year.

Internal, regional management plans for NWIFCA's own key species would help to establish a baseline for clear management decisions and establish key knowledge gaps, from which a research plan can be developed. A cockle and mussel FMP will be a key work stream for the science team in the coming year.

4. MMO MARINE LICENCE AND OTHER CONSULTATIONS FOR THE QUARTER

a) Offshore Wind Leasing Round 4

No further update

b) Mersey Tidal Power Project

No further update.

c) Geological Disposal Facility (GDF)

No further update

Consultations this quarter:

- Walney 0102 Wind Farm Cable Stabilisation
- West of Duddon Sands Arrat Cable Stabilisation
- Skerton Weir Fish Pass Improvements
- Wyre Beach and Dune management Schemes 1 and 2

Dispensations this quarter:

- Hull Marine Lab
- Wyre Rivers Trust

5. WORKING GROUPS AND MEETINGS

a) Technical Advisory Group

The SS and science officer Gemma Grose attended the TAG conference in Jersey on the 11th to 12th of October. The SS presented their current work on mussel management with the attendees. The conference offered an excellent opportunity to connect with other IFCA's, to share knowledge and gain advice on how to approach challenges and new fisheries management plan work streams.

b) Whelk Working Group

NWIFCA attend, and contribute to, the biannual Whelk working group (WWG). The group brings together members of all IFCA's, NE, relevant stakeholders, researchers and government bodies (Welsh government, cefas etc.) from across the UK to share research and current management strategies in order to learn from one another. A meeting was held on the 29th of September where updates on work were shared.

17th of November 2022