

**NWIFCA Authority Meeting**  
**29<sup>th</sup> of September 2022: 11:00 a.m.**

**Agenda Item**

**11**

**CONSULTATION ON ALLONBY BAY CANDIDATE HIGHLY PROTECTED MARINE AREA**

**Purpose:** To provide an update on the current status of the proposed highly protected marine area in Allonby Bay.

**Recommendation:** Receive the report

**Update on the Allonby Bay candidate HPMA**

**1) Defra engagement:**

The consultation period lasts from 24 June to 28 September 2022. NWIFCA was invited by Defra to attend in person and online workshops on 6 & 7 September. The purpose of these meetings was for Defra to present the process behind site selection, the reasoning for the selection of the current proposed sites, and to gather stakeholder views and evidence.

The SS, a science officer and members of the Whitehaven enforcement team attended the in person meeting in Maryport on the 6<sup>th</sup> of September.

The presentation by Defra detailed the process of candidate site selection using ecological, social and economic criteria developed by JNCC, NE and Cefas. Locations with existing and/or consented physical structures and activities that would be prohibited within an HPMA (dredging and dumping etc.) were discounted.

NE considered Allonby Bay in a good ecological state, and easily able to achieve pristine condition if activity in the site was limited.

Defra applied socio-economic criteria focusing on the activities that would be impacted by the site. This included understanding what wild capture fishing and recreational angling occurred in the site.

The workshop offered attendees the opportunity to raise questions about the site, and encouraged individuals to contribute both positive and negative points about the potential designation.

All were encouraged to complete the online consultation form provided by Defra. This form is aimed at collecting as much information from individuals as possible. It is not suitable for organisation responses, and it was discouraged for anyone to make a collective response as it will count only as one consultation response during data collation.

A drop in session the following day (7 September) was available to anyone who wished to discuss any topics further. The consultation will close on 28 September and a summary of consultation responses will be published in the months following this. The views and evidence gathered will inform the Secretary of State's final decision as to which of the candidate sites to designate and their boundaries. Sites must be designated by 6 July 2023.

**2) Points raised:**

The table below provides a summary of the key points raised by stakeholders at the meeting as logged by the SS

<b>Stakeholder Attendees</b>	<b>Concerns and/or support for the designation</b>
<i>Wildlife trust</i>	Supported the site due to its natural condition in the early consultation phase
<i>Maryport Harbour representative</i>	Concerned over the potential impact to the harbour. If recreational fishing boats were prohibited from the site, it could lead to people leaving the harbour.
<i>Commercial fisher (pots and netting) representatives</i>	Concerned that they would no longer be able to access the site and the resources therein. Concerned about displacement activity affecting other areas. Concerned the current information used by Defra on their revenue from the area was not correct
<i>Local residents</i>	Concerned about other activities that were still going ahead – ie sewage release, and the possibility of blue flag status for the beach Supported protection due to the natural beauty of the area Concerned about enforcement
<i>Recreational fisher</i>	Concerned about the loss of fishing opportunities Supported protection of mussel beds which have historically been in decline

**3) Questions answered:**

<p><b><i>What activities will be prohibited?</i></b></p> <p>It is anticipated that the following activities will be prohibited in HPMAs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Recreation and commercial fishing including bait collection</li> <li>- Dredging</li> <li>- Construction</li> <li>- Anchoring</li> </ul>
<p><b><i>Will IFCA be responsible for the management and enforcement of the site?</i></b></p> <p>Yes – Similar to the MCZs process, on designation, IFCA's will be required to undertake a site assessment to determine the impact of the activities currently taking place. The criteria for this should be provided by NE and/or Defra. IFCA will then need to consider implementation of a byelaw, and associated enforcement.</p>
<p><b><i>Will other impactful activities such as water pollution or disturbance from dog walkers be managed?</i></b></p> <p>No – Currently there is not a mechanism for limiting these other activities</p>

### ***Why is recreational fishing considered a damaging activity?***

NE discussed studies on the impact of recreational fishing on protected sites and that there was evidence to suggest its cessation was beneficial to a sites condition.

#### **4) NWIFCA's response to consultation and next steps**

The consultation questionnaire posed to stakeholders is not fit for the type of response NWIFCA would provide.

Given our position as a regulatory body, it is important our position remain objective and we encourage local stakeholders to respond in the form Defra has provided.

The next steps currently underway are:

- 1) Increasing awareness amongst stakeholder groups regarding the consultation of the site and encouraging engagement with the questionnaire. This involves local IFCO's talking to recreational fishers, tackle shop owners etc. distributing information on where and how to fill out the questionnaire.
- 2) Consulting with industry and collating information on activity from their reports and our vessel and shore sightings activity log. This information will then be passed on to Defra in the form of a report.
- 3) Discuss with Defra the expectations for enforcement of the site (should it be designated), and any support that is required.

**14<sup>th</sup> of September 2022**