

**NWIFCA Technical, Science and Byelaw
Committee**

2nd August 2022: 10:00 a.m.

Agenda Item

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SCIENCE REPORT FOR INFORMATION
10TH MAY – 2ND AUGUST 2022

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

Recommendation:

1. Receive the report
2. To agree to the whelk research proposal presented in Annex 1 to this report in order for sampling to commence.

This quarter, the main priorities of the science team have been to carry out the work resolved at the TSB meetings, continue our cockle and mussel survey schedule, assist with the introduction of the Potting Permit byelaw and complete ongoing work on survey reports, HRA's and consultation responses.

Key achievements since the previous TSB meeting:

- 1) Byelaw 4 introduction; including relevant work involved such as contacting applicants, organising the whelk track record appeals panel and determining appeals, re-establishing the whelk MCRS into the flexible permit conditions, and facilitating the transfer of permit administration to admin.
- 2) Undertaking consultation on the request to reduce the MLS of mussel in the district from 45 mm to 40 mm and collating results.
- 3) Six consultation requests and three dispensation requests responded to;
- 4) Final Biosecurity Plan completed and submitted to NE
- 5) Surveys/inspections of eleven sites completed with corresponding survey/inspection notes provided to TSB.
- 6) Development of whelk research plan to progress size-at-maturity work.

ONGOING WORK STREAM UPDATES:

1. POTTING PERMIT BYELAW

Byelaw 4 was sent to Secretary of State by the MMO on 15th Feb 2022 and received sign of on the 6th of June. Officers were briefed by SS on the new byelaw in preparation for its implementation. The next stages of work have involved preparations for reviewing applications, and implementation of the byelaw.

The appeals panel was convened and considered whelk track record appeals applicants on the 20th of June. Applicants were contacted the 21st regarding the outcome of their appeal.

The whelk MCRS was re-introduced into the flexible permit conditions of Byelaw 4 by agreement at the Authority meeting on the 23rd of June.

Administration and processing of new Potting Permit applicants has now been transferred to Whitehaven and we will be maintained from their going forward.

2. NWIFCA RESEARCH PROJECTS

a) Razor Clam Collaborative Research

The main project lead is leaving post and a new researcher has been assigned to the role. Further updates on the progress of this will be provided once we have received confirmation from Bangor as to the status of this project.

b) Whelk Fisheries in the North West

Given the introduction of Byelaw 4, there is now 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. The research proposal for this is included in Annex 1 to this report.

Commercial permit holders from across the district with the potential to provide samples have been contacted to find out whether they are willing to assist with the research. A draft research method has been prepared with the intention of commencing sampling as soon as we gain agreement from fishers and collection and reimbursement of samples can be arranged.

Recent work on our management was presented by the SS at the Whelk Symposium hosted by Blue Marine and drew interest from potential research collaborators in Bangor University.

c) Bird Food Models

Future work looking into bird food models and the interaction of bird food requirements and the cockle and mussel fisheries in Morecambe Bay area has been discussed with NE. The aim is to gain further information to more accurately inform management.

NE provided training resources regarding the development of bird food models which NWIFCA have been progressing with this quarter with the aim of building it into a cockle and mussel management plan for the following year's fishery.

d) EA Small fish surveys

NWIFCA are still in discussion with the EA to carry out joint work in the autumn regarding small fish surveys as part of a continuation of the water framework directive and an extension of this work into natural capital. Possible surveys are being planned in the Wyre Estuary and looking to use fyke and seine netting to survey juvenile fish species.

2. MARINE PROTECTED AREAS IN THE NWIFCA DISTRICT:

a) Highly Protected Marine Areas (HPMAs)

Defra are now consulting on five candidate HPMA's, one of which falls within our district – Allonby Bay.

HPMA's are intended to allow the protection and full recovery of marine ecosystem by prohibiting extractive, destructive and depositional uses and allowing only non-damaging levels of other activities to the extent permitted by international law.

Further information will be provided in due course by the Chief Officer.

b) **Marine Natural Capital in the Solway and Morecambe**

NE are in the process of gathering existing data to inform NE's intertidal survey planning within the Solway Firth SAC and Morecambe Bay SAC this year. NWIFCA met with NE to discuss data sharing and in July we collated our cockle and mussel data from the past 5 years and provided it to NE as part of their Natural Capital assessments of Morecambe Bay.

3. **FISHERIES MANAGEMENT**

a) **Future Inshore Strategic Hand Gathering Implementation Group (FISHGIG)**

No further update

b) **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.

Defra has recently provided an update on the lead IFCA's for each species management plan. NWIFCA is the lead on cockles, and second on mussels with Northumberland IFCA. As yet there has not been any new direction given regarding the approach Defra would like IFCA's to take. The development of these plans will hopefully provide a framework for the development of localised management plans of relevance to our fisheries.

Bird food models and new information available from proposed NE surveys will help provide information for cockle and mussel fisheries management plans which will look to be reviewed in the coming months.

Currently the second draft of the whelk fisheries management plan has been developed and will aim utilise the data collected during the proposed research project to inform on sustainable management.

4. **MMO MARINE LICENCE AND OTHER CONSULTATIONS FOR THE QUARTER**

a) **Offshore Wind Leasing Round 4**

There have been six proposed new offshore wind projects in the latest round of offshore wind leasing. Three of these areas are within the Irish Sea. All of the proposed areas are outside of the district. As yet there is no further update on this.

b) **Mersey Tidal Power Project**

The SS met with MTPP consultants on the 13th of June to discuss progress on the project, responses to current proposals and information sharing. As yet, there has been no update on the proposed location, however we are currently in review of their initial assessment work.

Consultations this quarter:

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| 1. Cumbria County Council Development Land at JJC Hire Ltd, Sandscale Park, Barrow-in-Furness | Cumbria county council |
| 2. Bare Beck Outfall Extension | MMO |
| 3. Mostyn harbour 8 boreholes | NRW |
| 4. Land at St Annes Foreshore - Sand Winning | Lancashire county council |
| 5. Threadlow Point Embankment | MMO |
| 6. Devonshire Dock BAE Barrow | MMO |

Dispensations this quarter:

7. Lake District Coast Aquarium Lobster Hatchery
8. Cefas beam Irish Sea beam trawl surveys 2022
9. Richard Pritchard Environment Agency

5. WORKING GROUPS AND MEETINGS

a) Technical Advisory Group

NWIFCA continue to attend the technical advisory group (TAG) meetings which offer the opportunity for all 10 IFCA member authorities to discuss similar work schemes and share knowledge.

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.

6. NWIFCA BIOSECURITY PLAN 2021-2024

The final draft of NWIFCA's biosecurity plan has been sent back to NE before, and will be made available on our website once approved.

20th July 2022