

22 MEETING OF THE TECHNICAL, SCIENCE AND BYELAW SUB-COMMITTEE ON TUESDAY
11TH FEBRUARY 2025 AT TRUCKHAVEN, CARNFORTH 10AM

PRESENT MEMBERS

Mr. T. Jones	Chair	MMO Appointee
Mr. S. Brown	Vice Chair	MMO Appointee
Mr. B. Leigh		MMO Appointee
Mr. G. Pidduck		MMO Appointee
Mr. R. Benson		MMO Appointee
Mr. N. Baxter		MMO Appointee
Mr. K. Thompson		MMO Appointee
Mr. S. Johnston		MMO Appointee
Mr. J. Turner		Environment Agency
Mr. L. Stainton		MMO Appointee
Ms. S. Isles		Natural England

NWIFCA OFFICERS ATTENDING

M. Taylor (CEO), J. Moulton (Head of Enforcement), A. Plumeridge (Head of Science), L. Loud (Science Officer), G. Grose (Science Officer), S. Reid (Admin Officer).

OTHERS PRESENT

M. Rowlings, Cllr. S. Brookes, P. Buchan, S. Van Der Plank, A. Coke, M. Clarke.

23 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Mr. L. Browning, Mr. P. Capper.

24 CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS (Agenda Item 1)

The Chair extended a welcome to all members present and to Pamela Buchan from Exeter University, Sien Van Der Plank from Southampton University, Alexia Coke from Natural England and Mark Clarke from Clarke Film and Media who were all in attendance to discuss their Oral Histories Project.

The Chair welcomed all other members of industry and explained that they would be invited to ask questions or make comments but requested that they introduce themselves before speaking.

The Chair reminded members to sign the attendance register and complete declarations of interest slips if required.

25 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (Agenda Item 2)

Mr. Pidduck declared an interest in Item 6 and Item 8.

Mr. Jones declared an interest in all Agenda Items.

26 MINUTES OF TSB MEETING 5TH November 2024 (Agenda Item 3)

The minutes were accepted as a true and accurate record.

27 MATTERS ARISING FROM MINUTES (Agenda Item 4)

There were no matters arising.

28 ORAL HISTORIES PROJECT (Agenda Item 5)

Pamela Buchan, Sien Van Der Plank and Alexia Coke introduced themselves and took members through a PowerPoint Presentation illustrating the key points of the Oral Histories Project. The presentation covered the context and background to the project, the methodologies and the findings. The findings will be documented in a film produced by Clarke Film and Media and in a report which will be available for viewing.

The HOS thanked Pamela Buchan, Sien Van Der Plank, Alexia Coke and Mark Clarke for their work. She asked how NWIFCA would apply the findings in its decision making processes. The Chair and the members offered their thanks for a detailed presentation which highlighted subjects which have been raised historically. The Chair expressed that the project would help NWIFCA to achieve its vision. The HOE aired his interest in the interactions with international fishers as one fifth of NWIFCA's Byelaw 3 cockle and mussel permit holders being of Eastern European heritage. P. Buchan stated that only one fisherman interviewed was Polish but ideally the project would have featured more, and this was a potential gap. Further discussion took place around NWIFCA needing to adhere to legislation and work within it. Currently, it is perceived that the NWIFCA are working within outdated regulatory frameworks which do not take into account social and economic factors. The Authority is looking to find ways to address socio-economic issues raised.

A. Coke stated that the PowerPoint would be available for public viewing once the final report is published. The CEO stated that the outputs from the project will be published on the NWIFCA website once they are received.

29 WHELK MCRS WORK (Agenda Item 6)

Science Officer Gemma Grose talked members through her recent Whelk Minimum Conservation Reference Size (MCRS) work as detailed in Report Number 1.

Mr. Turner asked if any research had been conducted into the impact of pressure on whelk growth. The HOS explained that she had not come across any and most of the available research focussed on the impact of water temperatures on the size of whelks. Further research would be conducted within three years to allow further samples to be processed and analysed. Mr. Thompson asked what the collection date of the whelks was. SO Grose explained that the data range was from September to December. Data from some areas was collected every month, however this was not possible for every ICES rectangle due to North Western Protector going offline during the survey period. Mr. Turner enquired what the implication would be if the MCRS was increased to 68mm and if it would protect more female whelks. Mr. Stainton reminded the members that they must consider the socio-economic effects an increase would have on fishers. HOS responded by saying that an increase to 68mm had been discussed, however the Science Team have some

concerns with the confidence of some of the survey results. Mr. Pidduck supported the MCRS remaining at 65mm and highlighted that there are minimal boats prosecuting the fishery. Mr. Leigh offered his reasons to support the recommendation. The HOS said the Science Team's work had been based on best practise in collecting samples and analysing the data. There are still some aspects to explore.

RESOLUTION: TO SET THE NWIFCA DISTRICT WHELK (*BUCCINUM UNDATUM*) MCRS AT 65MM, WITH A VIEW PERIOD THREE YEARS FROM THE DATE OF IMPLEMENTATION.

Proposed: Mr. Leigh, Seconded: Mr. Brown, 7 in favour, 1 abstention, Carried.

30 SHRIMP WORK (Agenda Item 7)

SO Lucy Loud talked members through her recent Shrimp Work as detailed in Report Number 2.

Mr. Leigh asked if the decline in shrimps was specific to our region or if it was general to the UK. SO Loud explained that she had found that it was quite specific to our region. Other fisheries have reported fluctuations but not a continued decline in the shrimp population. HOE suggested comparing the historical data to climatic events or fishery events such as a cockle boom. He also asked why there was a gap in the data presented. SO Loud explained that the missing data was due to shrimp data being grouped with other species such as prawns during this time and this made it unusable. CEO stated that this project is a starting point for further work around what the Authority can do about the decline in the shrimp population. Mr. Johnston asked if international research had been conducted around the link between wind farms and the decline in the shrimp population. SO Loud stated that she had not found any research around wind farms and the decline in the shrimp population. The historical research found is usually based around temperature and seasonal fluctuations rather than external impacts. Mr. Stainton asked if there was any research around the improvement in water quality and the decline in shrimp. SO Loud said that this had been mentioned by several fishers during the consultation.

RESOLUTION: TO RECEIVE THE REPORT

Proposed: Mr. Brown, Seconded: Mr. Baxter, all in favour, Carried.

31 SURVEY AND INSPECTION SCIENCE REPORT (Agenda Items 8 and 9)

HOS referred to Report 3 which detailed the surveys and inspections which had taken place. The Chair asked the HOS for an update on the use of the drone. HOS explained that Senior Science Officer Jon Haines had conducted a survey with the drone. Mapping software training has been organised for March which will cover 3D mapping. SSO Haines will use the survey information during his training. The Chair referred to the work conducted in the Solway and expressed how it is a difficult location to conduct a survey scan from a boat. The HOS expressed an interest in talking to The Chair about the more up-to-date scanners he had mentioned as the software for their current equipment will shortly become unsupported. Mr. Pidduck enquired about the classification of the North

Walney Channel mussel bed. The HOE explained that the classification process does not fall under the NWIFCA.

RESOLUTION: TO RECEIVE THE REPORT

Proposed: Mr. Stainton, Seconded: Mr. Thompson, all in favour, Carried

32 DATE OF NEXT MEETING (Agenda Item 10)

It was proposed that the next TSB Meeting should be moved to a slightly later date due to the Science Team undertaking early surveys of the Morecambe Bay Cockle Beds. The Chair decided to move the meeting to Thursday 29th May.

33 AOB (Agenda Item 11)

Mr. Benson requested for the closed tides at Pilling Fishery to be opened to give fishers a greater option for fishing days and times. Mr. Leigh asked if the restriction was removed, would there be a greater number of people prosecuting the cockle bed at Pilling. The CEO said that it would pose a risk and the HRA would need to be resubmitted to Natural England as what is being requested could potentially put a greater effort on the fishery. The HRA also covers the disturbance to pink-footed geese and Natural England will be required to reassess this. The HOE asked if the request could be taken away from the meeting to give officers and Natural England chance to discuss the proposed changes. The CEO felt that the changes were doable, but it would be subject to the HRA. The HOS raised concerns about changing the HRA again as the Authority has already shown flexibility by changing the fishing days as previously requested. Mr. Stainton expressed that wildfowling stopped their activities on 20th February due to the geese migrating. Ms. Isles responded by explaining that the proposal could still increase disturbance in the area and Natural England would need to consult the Habitat Regulations. The statutory deadline for Natural England to respond to a HRA is 28 days.

RESOLUTION: CHANGE THE FLEXIBLE PERMIT CONDITIONS TO OPEN PILLING FISHERY ON ALL TIDES, SEVEN DAYS A WEEK SUBJECT TO A HRA BEING APPROVED.

Proposed: Mr. Leigh, Seconded: Mr. Thompson, 6 in favour, 2 abstention, Carried.

Mr. Stainton referred to the last Authority Meeting and the discussion which took place around additional members being added to the TSB sub-committee. Mr. Leigh drew attention to Paragraph 11.5 which outlined the makeup of the TSB members. The current TSB has a high number of members who are commercial and therefore one solution would be to expand the committee by co-opting additional members who have expertise in the work being undertaken by the sub-committee. Mr. Johnston agreed that the TSB does need to be more balanced and asked if the number of members on the sub-committee could be extended on a permanent basis. It was explained that a request to the Authority would need to be made if the committee wished to extend the number of people on the sub-committee. If member were co-opted on a short-term basis, it would be at the discretion of the Chair and the CEO. The committee felt this matter should be paused until after the next AGM in June.

The Chair thanked everyone for attending – meeting closed at 13:50.