

**NWIFCA Technical, Science and Byelaw
Committee**

31st October 2017: 10:00 a.m.

**AGENDA
ITEM NO.
5**

SCIENCE REPORT
17TH JULY – 13TH OCTOBER 2017

Purpose: To provide an update to members on work of the Science team in the last quarter

Recommendation: Members approve the report.

1. MARINE PROTECTED AREAS IN THE NWIFCA DISTRICT:

The Senior Scientist continues to participate in the monthly national “Marine Protected Areas Management Working Group” conference calls, with colleagues from Defra, Natural England, IFCAs, MMO and EA.

a) Marine Conservation Zones

Tranche 2 - West of Walney MCZ – Recover Objective. Cross-boundary site from 4.3nm to beyond 12nm. Potential for management of nephrops and other bottom towed trawling.

MMO have been in touch and confirm that they consider it appropriate for the MMO to carry out the full MPA assessment for the 0-12nm area of the site. Defra colleagues have stated that they feel management in the offshore section of the site (beyond 12nm) does not need to be addressed at this moment in time and with the wind farm extension taking place, it makes more sense to focus on one measure for the 0-12nm area of the site. They asked NWIFCA if there is agreement for MMO to lead this assessment and that NWIFCA understand and agree that any MMO byelaw implemented for this site would need NWIFCA to enforce in the 0-6nm area. CEO confirmed agreement to this approach. Officers asked to be fully included in any discussions regarding management measures and dialogue with the industry.

Tranche 3 – three estuarine sites Ribble MCZ, the Wyre / Lune MCZ, and the Solway MCZ. No further developments.

b) Assessment of Fishing Activities in Marine Protected Areas

Three assessments remain to be completed from the EMS Review. Progress on these have been held-up by the necessity to complete individual HRAs for on-going cockle and mussel fisheries – Morecambe Bay cockles, Leasowe cockles and Dee Estuary size mussels – see separate report for detail. Work will soon begin on MCZ assessments for Cumbria Coast MCZ and Allonby Bay MCZ. Fylde MCZ and West of Walney MCZ assessments to be completed by MMO with IFCA data (cross boundary sites). NWIFCA MMPA Monitoring and Control Plan in draft – see separate report for detail.

c) Bait Collection Habitats Regulations Assessments

As previously reported there is confusion as to what is being required by Defra of IFCAs for bait collection assessments – ie. what kind of bait collection is to be included and the rationale for singling

these activities out. TAG Chair and Ms Knott drafted a letter sent to Natural England lead Mike Quigley as an initial attempt to reach clarity. After a lengthy wait an email response has been received from Defra that states:

"I know that several people have asked for greater clarification on Defra's position on bait collection and what deadlines apply to the identification of measures to manage it.

It's important to be clear that Defra's expectations that regulators must manage activities within protected sites (whether SSSI, MCZ or EMS) to deliver the conservation objectives haven't changed. That said I think it makes sense to park further discussions until we have had a chance to understand the outputs of the MMO report on bait collection/ digging due later this year. A large part of the problem with managing this activity is that the scale of the problem is not well understood. I understand there are plans for a workshop early next year to discuss options for management, this could perhaps include the cross-warranting issue (refers to IFCOs being cross-warranted to enforce SSSI legislation) where that would make a difference".

In the meantime, NWIFCA will continue to collect and collate activity data and await the outcome of the MMO report and the workshop before working on any assessments.

2. NWIFCA NEW VESSEL

Science Officers have made two visits to ensure science input into the refit of the new NWIFCA vessel. Officers have found the meetings with the Holyhead Marine team, and our Master and engineer, very promising. The refit will include provision for outdoor wet lab, as well as indoor dry computer and tech work areas. The facility to take quads out, dry out on the beds and effectively double tide through use of the berths on-board, along with increased capacity for using sub-tidal grab, scientific dredge and trawls, and side scan sonar will massively improve the capabilities of the scientific work carried out by NWIFCA.

3. MONITORING AND ASSESSMENT WORKSHOP

The Senior Scientist joined a one day workshop facilitated by Environment Agency and attended by colleagues from Natural England, Sefton Council – Regional Coastal Monitoring Programme, the National Oceanography Centre Liverpool and Liverpool University. The aim of the day was to focus on the varying monitoring requirements of each organisation, what monitoring work is on-going, what resources are available and what potential there is for sharing resources in the future to assist each to fulfill their obligations. As ever there is a desire to ensure duplication does not occur, and to work as effectively as possible to achieve the most out of budgets available.

The workshop was timely in so far as how it links in with the future potential of NWIFCA resources with the acquisition of the new vessel, and formalising NWIFCA monitoring duties regarding MPAs through the Monitoring and Control Plan – see separate agenda item and paper.

4. RESEARCH PROJECTS

- a. Natural England – were asked for project ideas for some underspend money. They consulted with NWIFCA science and were successful in receiving small amounts of funding to carry out the following fisheries focused projects:
 - i) Drone surveys of crab tiles in the Mersey Estuary and North Wirral Foreshore – to assess the benefits of using drones over foot survey – comparing time and accuracy. Surveys have gone ahead and Officers await report from NE.

- ii) Investigation with fishermen into use of nephrops creel pots in the West of Walney MCZ as an alternative to trawling. No update at present time.
- b. Lobster Genetics - NWIFCA Officers continue to facilitate the sending of samples from fishermen to Manchester University PhD student Graeme Fox for research using genetics to assess the current stock units of the lobster fisheries around the UK and Ireland.
- c. Lancaster University – officers have been assisting two Masters students with dissertation projects, the outcome of which is intended to aid understanding of cockle movements in Morecambe Bay. The two students attended a cockle survey on Pilling Sands to gain a better understanding of the environment. This site visit resulted in an attempt to entrap cockles on the bed to prevent them from moving, while assessing control areas for cockle immigration / emigration. Unfortunately as expected the cages were washed away. The project outlines are:
 - i) A desk study of cockle movements and influential factors.
 - To assess the relationship between sediment dynamics and cockle movements.
 - To determine direction and rate of movement of cockles of different sizes/ages within the Morecambe Bay.
 - To inform future modelling/prediction possibilities
 - ii) An investigation into the temporal variations of Morecambe Bay channel movements and the relative influence of this upon cockle bed settlements.
 - Examine temporal variations of channel movements in the Lune channel in relation to the cockle bed settlements at Pilling sands, Lune Island and Middleton Sands through the mapping of a time series of channel movements and known cockle bed locations.
 - Evaluate the influence of climatic variations on sediment movement within the ecosystem and thus channel movement due to the potential implications on cockle migration.
 - Determine the sediment type and elevation.
- c. Bangor University PhD

Mr Feather has been sampling and surveying Morecambe Bay mussel beds, focussing on Foulney, throughout the summer and intends on continuing through the winter. He will also incorporate some bird feeding observations on the mussel beds during this time. Officers are assisting him whenever possible.

5. NORTH WEST MARINE PLAN – cause and effect working group meetings

Science Officers attended three 'cause and effect working group' meetings with MMO over the Northwest Marine Plan. It was deemed important to have close involvement in this stage of development of the next iteration of the NW Marine Plan, to ensure NWIFCA expertise and knowledge influenced its contents and direction.

6. BASS MEASURES


The 2017 EU Bass measures are being enforced by Officers. It is Officers' understanding that they will be reviewed by the EU at December Council and further measures will be implemented in 2018.

7. RECREATIONAL ANGLING STRATEGY – PROGRESS REPORT

The NWIFCA Recreational Sea Angling Strategy (V.1) was tabled at February's TSB meeting. As previously reported, the Strategy is intended to be a working document that will develop over time. Other work priorities have limited the amount of engagement with sea anglers. However progress has still been made. Annex A contains a Progress Report detailing the implementation of the RSA Strategy over the 10 months (January to October 2017). Feedback for V.1 has been documented and will be incorporated into V.2 in due course.

Science Team
17TH October 2017

ANNEX A

| Progress Report: Implementation of NWIFCA Recreational Sea Angling Strategy | | | |
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| Step | January 2017 (Plan over 6 months) | October 2017 Progress Report (at 10 months) | Suggested Next Steps Timeframe as yet unknown |
| 1 | Science team work with digital comms officer and IFCOs to undertake the work needed to develop and then implement RSA Strategy. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Legacy of the Cefas Sea Angling 2012 Project was a hurdle to overcome; - IFCOs worked to get email contacts from anglers; - Digital Comms Officer created database for contacts and materials (see Step 2). | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Science team to work more closely with Digital Comms Officer; - Increase involvement of IFCOs, as work priorities allow. |
| 2 | Design engagement material - e.g. business cards, leaflets, posters to inform sea angling community and generate interest aims of NWIFCA RSA Strategy | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Approval given for printing of leaflets and business cards. - Leaflets : £76.00 - Business Cards: £47.00 - Total spend to = £123.00 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Continue to give out materials; - Revise leaflet annually as new information becomes available or as Strategy progresses; - Increase coverage by utilising tackle shops and targeting angling matches. |
| 3 | Business cards have website link, contacts etc. and "Sea Anglers: Drop Us a Line". | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Completed end Jan 2017. - IFCOs handed out cards during routine patrols.  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Review card annually to ensure details are correct; - Continue distribution of card. |
| 4 | Create webpage dedicated to Sea Angling and promote Strategy | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Webpage content currently drafted. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Finalise draft and launch webpage online; - Keep webpage up to date; - Regularly add News articles. |

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| 5 | <p>-IFCOs to assist in giving out business cards and leaflets;</p> <p>-AC to get out with IFCOs and alone/with Digital Comms Officers as much as possible.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Cards given out at angling matches and to individuals; - Email addresses/contact details for 78 anglers acquired; - AC patrolled North Wirral and Merseyside regions twice and engaged with around 12 anglers; - other work priorities prevented more engagement. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Science officers to attend angling matches; -Continue to gather contacts for mailing list; - Make contact with more angling clubs; - Explore better use of social media; - Increase coverage by utilising tackle shops and club competitions; - IFCOs to continue handing out cards to sea anglers during patrols. |
| 6 | <p>Initial correspondence gives opportunity to gauge general feeling of sector, in email form with structured questions. Aimed at encouraging anglers to express opinions, concerns or feelings about IFCA or other issues.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - one email sent to newly created mailing list; -“Seeking Sea Anglers” as subject line to attract attention; - No structured questions asked, just informing about Strategy and asking for email feedback and important issues; - “Seeking Sea Anglers” paragraph plus link to “Register as a Stakeholder” and “Drop Us A Line”- posted on Twitter and NWIFCA Website News Feed; - Authority member Brian Leigh helped post it on sea angling Forums and Facebook pages; - 22 Sea Anglers registered as stakeholders through link on website; - 56 sea anglers gave email addresses when asked by IFCOs; - 9 individuals responded to angling email inbox; - Mailing list total now at 78; - Contact made directly with 3 angling clubs: Furness Fishing Association (beach section) Furness Fishing Association (boat section) Blackpool Boat Angling Club | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Finalise V. 2 and publish on website; - Contact mailing list with update on progress and link to V. 2; - Maintain contact with current mailing list; -Increase number of people reached; - Consider asking targeted questions via email; - Consider using online survey; - Connect or re-connect with angling clubs. |
| 7 | <p>After initial correspondence, hold meetings with clubs or groups of individuals where an outline of draft RSA Strategy will be presented. Anglers feedback needed to develop strategy and incorporate their views</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Attendance at meetings by science officers was attempted on a number of occasions; unfortunately dates not compatible with other work priorities; - Feedback received on V1 from anglers and club secretaries; - Brian Leigh instrumental in assisting with social media promotion of Strategy and call for anglers to join mailing list. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Connect or re-connect with sea angling clubs; Request to attend club meetings; - Hold specific meetings with anglers; - Increase social media presence; - Include anglers in consultations (plans or projects) in a transparent and fair way. |