

**NWIFCA Technical, Science and Byelaw  
Committee**

**16th May 2017: 10:00 a.m.**

**AGENDA  
ITEM NO.**

**6**

**SCIENCE REPORT**  
**7TH JANUARY – 29<sup>TH</sup> APRIL 2017**

**General**

1. Another busy quarter for the science team, with a wide and varied workload. More detail and an update of key areas of work is provided below. The announcement of the General Election introduced a period of purdah for government agencies which has led to delays in being able to progress certain aspects of work.

**MARINE PROTECTED AREAS IN THE NWIFCA DISTRICT:**

**a) Marine Conservation Zones**

2. Tranche 2 - West of Walney MCZ – Recover Objective. No further updates. Awaiting information from JNCC and Natural England via Defra. Fishing activity data within the NWIFCA District has been collated.

Tranche 3 – three estuarine sites Ribble MCZ, the Wyre / Lune MCZ, and the Solway MCZ. Discussion on-going with Natural England over knowledge of occurrence and distribution of smelt in these estuaries, with NE working with Rivers Trusts and EA to progress surveys for smelt. NWIFCA Small Fish Survey data will be fed into this if smelt are found.

**b) Review of Fishing Activities in European Marine Sites**

3. Work has continued on completing the Review of Fishing Activities in European Marine Sites; below is an update and summary of the number of assessments which have been carried out and number left to be completed.

- One document for each European Marine Site has been completed containing a list of activities not occurring within the site, for the audit trail;
- Eight documents have been completed containing activities that only occur on a recreational basis within the European Marine Sites. If the status of these activities change and the activity becomes commercial then the activity will be assessed;
- Thirteen assessments have gone through to the Test of Likely Significant Effect and have been completed and signed off by Natural England;
- Of the original activities screened into the Review, twelve assessments which gone through to Appropriate Assessment. Nine of these have been completed and signed off by Natural England, two are with Natural England for review and comment, and one is in progress (Dee Estuary – shrimp and light otter trawling);
- All assessments for the Solway had been completed or were with NE for sign off;

- However due to the boundary of the proposed Solway Firth Special Protection Area (pSPA) being much larger than the current SPA, a further two assessments have to be completed with activity that did not occur within the old boundary (trawling and potting);
- The netting HRA is being reviewed to take the new boundary into account with specific activity data from industry.

## **BAIT COLLECTION HABITATS REGULATIONS ASSESSMENTS**

4. The Senior Scientist has been in discussion with Defra and Natural England about a perceived change in course of action over assessing the impacts of bait collection in EMS. A December 2018 deadline has been set for management of damaging bait collection activities from both recreational and commercial gathering. Only baitworm digging and pumping, and crab tiling are to be included. IFCOs have been recording sightings of these. The HRAs will be completed site by site in due course. No management from current known activity levels is envisaged.

## **RECREATIONAL ANGLING STRATEGY**

5. The draft Strategy has been sent out to a number of clubs and individuals in the angling community, with a request for feedback. IFCOs continue to hand out business cards to anglers whilst on patrol. The [angling@nw-ifca.gov.uk](mailto:angling@nw-ifca.gov.uk) email address is starting to be used more and has received emails and requests for information about fishing in the district.

## **CEFAS BASS TAGGING PROJECT**

6. Officers have been working closely with Cefas Bass Tagging project to facilitate tagging work in the District. The project aims to gain better understanding of the biology of European sea bass, including distribution, migrations and behaviour in UK waters, and now specifically in the north east Irish Sea. It will involve new electronic tagging and mark ID studies working with commercial fishers and recreational anglers.
7. Officers attended MMO meetings with the commercial sector in Barrow and Blackpool over the new bass regulations. Victoria Bendall from Cefas gave a presentation on the project which was extremely well received, with a great deal of interest and support from fishermen. The Senior Scientist would recommend that TSB invite Ms Bendall to a future meeting to present to Members.
8. Electronic Tagging: three commercial rod and line bass fishermen have been identified who are willing to catch bass for the tagging project. Tagging will take place either aboard the fishing vessel or on the Solway Protector and will be undertaken by Ms Bendall from Cefas.
9. T-Bar Tagging: Ms Carroll continues to work with recreational anglers to identify key individuals to attend a training session to learn how to tag bass. Anyone interested please email Abi Carroll on [a.carroll@nw-ifca.gov.uk](mailto:a.carroll@nw-ifca.gov.uk).

## **MMO LIAISON MEETING NEWCASTLE –**

10. Officers sent a letter of concern on behalf of the NWIFCA to the MMO Marine Licensing Team over lack of early consultation with the fishing industry leading to cases of conflict during survey and construction activities of certain developments. MMO responded with an invitation to meet in Newcastle. Other MMO teams took advantage of our visit to add additional meetings including the Fisheries Management Team, the Fishing Vessel Licensing Officer and

the Marine Conservation Team. It was a worthwhile day, improving understanding, communication and relations between the two organisations.

### **MOORSIDE POWER STATION**

- 11 Officers continue to attend EIA meetings with other regulators to discuss and provide comment on baseline reports containing data which will feed into the EIA. Due to the amount of documents that have been produced, Officers have focused on reviewing the following Marine Ecology documents produced by NuGen:-
- Commercial Fish Baseline
  - Subtidal Ecology Baseline
  - Marine Fish Baseline

### **HEYSHAM POWER STATION VISIT AND FISH SAMPLING**

- 12 Members will recall that concerns have been raised on many occasions over the cooling water intake at Heysham Power Station and the number of fish that are entrained in it. EA have provided their sampling data from the bins carried out during 2010-12. Natural England invited NWIFCA to join them and MMO in a visit to the power station. This issue was discussed, and on-going monitoring was proposed and supported by EDF Energy, NE and NWIFCA. Adam Waugh from EA Estuarine & Coastal Monitoring & Assessment Service also considers it worthwhile, not least because it will serve well as a training opportunity for small fish identification. NE are taking this forward with EDF, and working to progress the necessary security checks to allow admission.

### **SMALL FISH SURVEYS (SFS)**

- 13 Officers have been trialing and familiarising with the fyke and seine nets with IFCOs. Further discussion with EA has confirmed that the Mersey has not been sampled since 2009 and NWIFCA SFS would be useful to plug gaps in data, particularly in relation to anthropogenic influence in such a heavily modified water body. Three out of the EA nine sites were chosen due to their relatively higher diversity, and site visits carried out. Surveys will begin on suitable tides.

**Science Team**  
**29<sup>th</sup> April 2017**