

NWIFCA Technical Science and Byelaw committee meeting

10th of May 2022: 10:00 a.m.

Agenda Item

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SCIENCE REPORT FOR INFORMATION 1ST OF FEBRUARY – 10TH MAY 2022

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

Recommendation: Report for information, Receive the report

This quarter, the main priorities of the science team have been to carry out the work resolved at the TSB meetings on the 1st of February, begin our cockle and mussel survey schedule, prep for the introduction of the Potting Permit byelaw and complete ongoing work on management plans, HRA's and consultation responses. The following provides information in addition to the work reported on in Agenda item 5a and 6 regarding the byelaw update and survey and inspection notes respectively.

Key achievements since the previous TSB:

- 1) Byelaw 4 – Potting byelaw completed final review and submitted to defra
- 2) Whelk track records collated and prepared for review, letters submitted to applicants and appeals panel members assigned.
- 3) Seven consultation requests and four dispensation requests responded to
- 4) Survey schedule prepared, and inspections eight sites completed with corresponding survey/inspection notes.

ONGOING WORK STREAM UPDATES:

Small fish surveys with the EA in the wyre estuary – early discussions with the EA
Cockle management plan preparation -`

1. 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

Analysis of the 2019 data is currently underway. Once the analysis has been completed a report will be provided to members at a future meeting. Current plans to extend the scope of whelk research are underway. 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. Next steps will be to identify permit holders willing to provide samples from respective areas. The aim of the project will look to determine an appropriate MLS based on size-at-maturity of the district whelks.

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. Early surveys of the mussel stocks in the bay have also been undertaken by officers in order to provide post-winter biomass estimates.

d) EA Small fish surveys

NWIFCA have recently been in discussions with the EA to be involved in 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)

No further updates

b) Marine Natural Capital in the Solway

A meeting was held on the 4th of February by Cumbrian Wildlife trust and Solway Firth partnership to discuss current work and possible collaborative partner projects.

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

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.

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. Crown Estate are currently undertaking a Plan-Level Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) to assess potential impacts to European Marine Sites prior to awarding seabed rights. Further information can be found on the Crown Estate website with links to the process and maps of the proposed areas: <https://www.thecrownestate.co.uk/en-gb/media-and-insights/news/2021-offshore-wind-leasing-round-4-signals-major-vote-of-confidence-in-the-uk-s-green-economy/>. It is expected that the HRA will have been completed spring 2022

b) Mersey Tidal Power Project

The sixth online environmental workshop for the Mersey Estuary Tidal Barrage project ran last month and was attended by NWIFCA. The workshop was again attended by representatives from wide ranging environmental agencies both statutory and non-statutory with knowledge and expertise in the area of potential influence from the proposed barrage.

The potential location of the proposed barrage was presented, with discussions over the potential impact of each option. The workshop discussed changes in sediment and channel movements in the Mersey, the constraints of the project, and the key concerns of environmental agencies. Currently, the project is still in the initial scoping stage. In terms of fish/ fisheries, they are looking at carrying out multi-year duration surveys. A survey schedule will be made available in 2022.

Developers will be holding meetings with NWIFCA on week beginning 25th of April to discuss the works.

Consultations this quarter:

- Aldingham Beck Culvert Outfall MMO
- Duddon Estuary Pipeline remediation works - re-consultation MMO
- bp and EnBW Round 4 Offshore Wind Farm Deep Geotechnical Survey MMO
- Aldingham Beck Culvert Outfall Consultation 2 MMO
- Llanfairfechan Splash Deck Repairs NRW
- Geophysical Surveys Mona Offshore Wind Farm 2022 NRW
- Deep Geotechnical Surveys Mona Offshore Wind Farm 2022 NRW
- Central Rhyl Ground Investigation Works NRW

Dispensations this quarter:

- Cefas offshore catch sampling programme 2022
- AECOM Mersey Gateway Surveys 2022

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. This quarter, TAG was held on the 2nd of March and members discussed updates on HPMA's and fisheries management plans which are national projects each IFCA is involved in.

6. NWIFCA BIOSECURITY PLAN 2021-2024

A first draft of an updated NWIFCA biosecurity plan has been produced and been reviewed by NE. The final version will be sent back to NE before it is made available on our website.

22nd May 2022