

NWIFCA Technical, Science and Byelaw Committee

1st of November 2022: 10:00 a.m.

Agenda Item

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SCIENCE REPORT FOR INFORMATION 2ND OF AUGUST – 1ST OF NOVEMBER 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 regarding the annual mussel and cockle surveys, completing HRA's for the required fisheries, responding to consultations and inducting a new member to the science team.

Key achievements since the previous meeting:

- 1) Presented our work on mussel management at the 2022 TAG conference
- 2) Completed 7 cockle surveys, and 9 mussel inspections with corresponding survey notes
- 3) Completed three HRA's for seed dredge fishery at Perch Scar and South America, and for hand gathered seed fisheries at Heysham and Seafield Slip, Lytham.
- 4) Eight consultation requests and one dispensation requests responded to

ONGOING WORK STREAM UPDATES:

1. POTTING PERMIT BYELAW

The science team have been working to set up a database for the suitable logging and analysis of returns data. We are also in discussion with the website developer to set up a form for fishers to more easily submit returns online.

2. NWIFCA RESEARCH PROJECTS

a) Fisheries Industry Science Partnership Scheme (FISP)

The Fisheries Industry Science Partnership (FISP) scheme is a £10 million government fund which seeks to: improve data collection, particularly for data limited species, enhance knowledge of technical measures including fishing gear selectivity, and/or build a better understanding of the ecosystem benefits and environmental impacts of aquaculture.

NWIFCA science officers have developed two proposals to discuss with TSB and industry to bid for the following round of funding from 21st of November to 5th of Jan 2023. The proposals for this work are provided in Agenda Item 9.

b) Whelk Fisheries in the North West

Given the introduction of Byelaw 4, there is 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. A sample proposal was agreed at the Authority meeting in June. The aim of the project will look to determine an appropriate MLS based on size-at-maturity of the

district whelks, and possibly the size frequency of catch. This work is currently on hold for two reasons; 1) there are only two vessels providing returns for whelk across the district and as yet, not many permit holders are targeting whelk, and; 2) The best time to sample whelks for SOM estimates is in the summer prior to the autumn breeding season. NWIFCA officers will discuss with industry the reason for low up-take of fishing, and prepare for sampling to begin in the spring.

c) EA Small fish surveys

NWIFCA assisted the Environment Agency in small fish surveys as part of a continuation of the water framework directive and an extension of this work into natural capital. Surveys took place in the Wyre Estuary for one day in October using a beam trawl and seine netting to survey juvenile fish species. Information from this survey will be shared with us.

2. MARINE PROTECTED AREAS IN THE NWIFCA DISTRICT:

a) Highly Protected Marine Areas (HPMAs)

Following on from the report provided at the 29th September Authority Meeting, NWIFCA have been in discussion with Sarah Coulthard from Newcastle University. Sarah is conducting research into the impacts of the Allonby Bay HPMAs on local users. This information will be submitted to Defra in addition to the online consultation responses which closed this month. The project was initiated on short notice, with researchers planning a visit to interview stakeholders on the 20th and 21st of October. The aim of the work is identify the connection between stakeholders and the site.

NWIFCA have assisted by collating information on local tackle shops, angling clubs, charter boats and recreational users for researchers to contact. NWIFCA officers have also contacted commercial and recreational potting stakeholders, published information on the website/twitter/facebook pages, and had local IFCO's inform stakeholders on their patrols. Officers will attend the local drop-in session to hear concerns, and the SS will be attending the Defra update on the 20th of October.

The information from the consultation will be shared with NWIFCA and Defra once complete.

b) Marine Natural Capital

No further updates

3. FISHERIES MANAGEMENT

a) 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.

FMPs are required at a national level under the Fisheries Act 2020. Following Brexit, the UK Fisheries Act 2020 placed FMPs as the main tool for reforming UK fisheries management. The Joint Fisheries Statement (JFS) will provide a more detailed, follow-on document from the Fisheries Act when it is published in November 2022. It will set out the final list of Fisheries Management Plans. This will include the chosen stocks, the authorities involved, and the timetable for implementation. IFCAs are expected to contribute to this work. It is currently being led by Seafish.

Internal, regional management plans for NWIFCA's own key species would help to establish a baseline for clear management decisions and establish key knowledge gaps, from which a research plan can be developed. A cockle and mussel FMP will be a key work stream for the science team in the coming year.

4. MMO MARINE LICENCE AND OTHER CONSULTATIONS FOR THE QUARTER

a) Offshore Wind Leasing Round 4

No further update

b) Mersey Tidal Power Project

No further update. There is a meeting proposed for the 26th of October to provide stakeholders with further information on the projects progress.

c) Geological Disposal Facility (GDF)

No further update

Consultations this quarter:

- West Coast Main Life Extension: Gantry Replacements
- Dolgarrog Pipe Bridge, Conwy
- Burbo Bank Bird Guano reduction systems
- Threadlow Point Embankment (additional documents submitted)
- Little Bispham to Bispham & Gynn Square to Cocker Square Coast Protection Scheme Ground Investigations
- West Plain Marsh, Flookburgh, Saline Lagoons
- Walney 0102 Wind Farm Cable Stabilisation
- West of Duddon Sands Arrat Cable Stabilisation

Dispensations this quarter:

- Hull Marine Lab

5. WORKING GROUPS AND MEETINGS

a) Technical Advisory Group

The SS and science officer Gemma Grose attended the TAG conference in Jersey on the 11th to 12th of October. The SS presented their current work on mussel management with the attendees. The conference offered an excellent opportunity to connect with other IFCA's, to share knowledge and gain advice on how to approach challenges and new fisheries management plan work streams.

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. A meeting was held on the 29th of September where updates on work were shared.

6. NWIFCA BIOSECURITY PLAN 2021-2024

NWIFCA's biosecurity plan has been completed and reviewed by NE. We were also consulted by a member from Plymouth marine labs, MBA and APEM who are conducting a review of all current marine and biosecurity plans for NE. Their review noted NWIFCA's plan as one of the best and most comprehensive. The final version is now available on our website with updates on how sightings can be reported.

19th of October 2022