

# NWIFCA Technical, Science and Byelaw Committee

13<sup>th</sup> of August 2024: 10:00 a.m.

Agenda Item

7

## SCIENCE REPORT FOR INFORMATION 24<sup>TH</sup> OF MAY – 13<sup>TH</sup> OF AUGUST 2024

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

**Recommendation:**

- a) Receive the report

### UPDATE FOR THIS QUARTER

This quarter, the main priorities of the science team have been to complete the second round of Morecambe Bay cockle surveys, and additional Leasowe and Southport surveys, liaise with partner organisations regarding the ongoing marine natural capital work, undertake a first round of HPMA surveys, prepare for the introduction of the new permit database, and undertake mussel inspection and surveys where necessary.

### Key achievements since the previous TSB meeting:

- 1) Completed seven cockle surveys, and five mussel inspections with associated reports.
- 2) Progressed HPMA work with Natural England and Defra – completed the first run of the Allonby Bay HPMA potting study from North Western Protector.
- 3) Responded to four consultation requests with several dispensation requests in progress.

### ONGOING WORK STREAM UPDATES:

#### 1. POTTING PERMIT BYELAW

##### a) Permit database

The science team have been working to set up a database for the suitable logging and analysis of returns data. Science officers are contributing to the returns section to improve recording returns and new ways of analysing the data to help management. Officers are also leading on the roll-out of the returns database to the Byelaw 4 permit holders, initiating a trial-run period and informative materials to help fishers with the transition to the new system

#### 2. COCKLES AND MUSSELS

##### a) June/July surveys

NWIFCA officers undertook a full survey of Morecambe Bay, Southport and Leasowe cockle beds in June/July this year. The results of these surveys are provided in Agenda Item 6 - Survey and Inspection Report August 2024.

## NWIFCA RESEARCH PROJECTS

### a) **Whelk Fisheries in the North West**

A new sampling schedule for determining the size-at-maturity for whelks was developed for the summer of 2024. The aim is to identify the size-at-maturity for whelks in the NWIFCA District as previous work has not provided a consistent dataset and it was important to assess the appropriateness of the MLS stipulated in the flexible permit conditions. The results of this work were presented at the meeting on the 6<sup>th</sup> of February.

### b) **Shrimp research in the North West**

Our new science Officer, Lucy, will be leading on developing a summary report for the state of the NWIFCA shrimp fisheries. There is a need for the Authority to better understand the current and historical state of the fishery, in order to best focus future research efforts and projects. Historical declines in the number and size of shrimp caught has led to concern among some stakeholders as to the condition of the fishery.

## 3. MARINE PROTECTED AREAS IN THE NWIFCA DISTRICT:

### a) **Highly Protected Marine Areas (HPMAs)**

NWIFCA have agreed a baseline monitoring program for assessing the changes in Allonby Bay HPMA with Natural England.

NWIFCA will lead in collecting data and undertaking potting surveys from North Western Protector to gain an understanding of the levels of crab and lobster in the HPMA. Officers will measure and tag lobsters as part of the project. The project will likely last for >3 years and aims to begin June 2024. The first survey ran successfully from 11<sup>th</sup> to 15<sup>th</sup> of June, with the second round scheduled for August.



Images show officers deploying pots off North Western Protector for the July HPMA surveys.

**b) Marine Natural Capital**

Morecambe Bay is the focus of marine Natural Capital study through the Association of IFCA's and Natural England. NWIFCA has provided information and historical data on the Bay to provide to the Association. The evidence collated will be combined with additional evidence on associated socio-economic value data to develop local placed-based natural capital assessments of fisheries and Morecambe Bay.

NWIFCA have been working with the Association of IFCA and Natural England to develop a project looking into the social values of stakeholders, and how this can be used in management decision making. As part of the project, NWIFCA is assisting NE in setting up interviews with local stakeholders, and Exeter University will be analyzing the interviews to identify social values. There will be further engagement with the Authority as this project progresses, to see how this type of data could be used to assist with cockle fishery management decision making.

**4. FISHERIES MANAGEMENT PLANS**

**a) National (excl. cockle)**

No further update

**b) Cockle fisheries management plan**

No further update

**5. MMO MARINE LICENCE AND OTHER CONSULTATIONS FOR THE QUARTER**

**a) Morecambe Bay Offshore Wind**

No further update

**b) Mersey Tidal Power Project**

No further update

**Consultations this quarter:**

- River Esk/Esk Viaduct - Construction of new works
- Anchorholme Coastal Protection Scheme 2024
- Lidge Gate Wall
- Janson Pool Culvert Replacement

**Dispensations this quarter:**

In progress

**6. WORKING GROUPS AND EXTERNAL PARTNERSHIP WORK**

**a) Technical Advisory Group**

The most recent TAG meeting was held on June 26<sup>th</sup> in Cornwall and online. Main themes discussed were national fisheries management plans and approaches to determining spatial management.

**b) Whelk Working Group**

No Further update

**29<sup>th</sup> July 2024**