

**NWIFCA Technical, Science and Byelaw
Committee**

7th February 2017: 10:00 a.m.

**AGENDA
ITEM NO.**

7

SCIENCE REPORT
15TH OCTOBER 2016 – 6TH JANUARY 2017

General

Officers are pleased to welcome Alex Aitken to the Science Team who started at the beginning of January. Ms Aitken had some previous experience of working with Northumberland IFCA while carrying out her MSc thesis on recent trends in the Northumberland brown crab fishery. She has made an excellent start, mapping fishing activity from MCSS data around St Bees Head, in the Cumbrian Coast MCZ, the Solway proposed SPA extension, and the West of Walney MCZ.

Work has been on-going on completing the EMS Review assessments, formulating and starting to implement the NWIFCA Recreational Angling Strategy, facilitating discussion over sub-tidal mussels in the Solway, and being key contributors to an internal workshop on the use of the 'bird food model' for cockle and mussel fisheries with Natural England, RSPB and NRW.

More detail and an update of key areas of work carried out by the team over the past quarter is provided below.

MARINE PROTECTED ARES IN THE NWIFCA DISTRICT:

a) Marine Conservation Zones

Tranche 2 - West of Walney MCZ – Recover Objective. No further updates.

Tranche 3 – three estuarine sites Ribble MCZ, the Wyre / Lune MCZ, and the Solway MCZ. Discussion on-going with Natural England and fishermen over knowledge of occurrence and distribution of smelt in these estuaries.

b) Review of Fishing Activities in European Marine Sites

The table below (Table 1) provides an update of the progress on the review of Fishing Activities in EMS and the number of assessments carried out and left to be completed. Progress has been slowed by the release of the formal consultation on the SPA extension to the Solway, which impacted on the progress of the netting HRA. The completed netting HRA is now having to be revisited to include a larger area and more bird species.

A further HRA has been carried out and signed off by Natural England following approval of the management measure by the Authority:

- size mussel hand-gathering at Heysham Flat

Table 1: Review of Fishing Activities in European Marine Sites – Assessment table – 17th January 2017

	Expected Total	Not yet started	Currently underway	Assessment complete and in final discussion with NE	Assessment complete and signed off by NE	On website and huddle
Non-occurring “Light” TLSE	11 + 4 working which will be combined ¹	0	0	0	11	(11) 13/07/15
Non-occurring commercial activity currently recreational only	8 ²	0	0	0	8	(8) 12/10/16
TLSE	13 ³	0	0	0	13	(13)20/12/16
Joint assessments with MMO	1 ⁴ (inc. 4 gears)	0	1	0	0	-
Appropriate Assessments	12 ⁵	0	6	0	6	(6) 20/12/16
Totals	45	0	6*	0	38	38

Changes in figures are due to the following:-

- ¹ Non-occurring light TLSE’s added to 4 working documents which will be combined with original non-occurring for each site when review process has been completed. Reduced number of total assessments due to additional activities found to be non-occurring in the district.
- ² Activities to have been thought to be commercial found to be recreational.
- ³ Decrease in TLSE due to expected TLSE going through to AA (netting activities).
- ⁴ Cross border site Liverpool Bay EMS with MMO - joint assessments.
- ⁵ Decrease in AA due to some activities being combined for a site (types of netting activities), (otter and beam trawl for fish).
- * Joint assessment with MMO lead by MMO and not included in NWIFCA figures.

Interestingly an article on the ‘Revised Approach’ showing its importance as a change in Defra fisheries management and marine policy has been published in a scientific journal, and is provided as Annex A.

RECREATIONAL ANGLING STRATEGY

Ms Carroll has drafted the NWIFCA Recreational Sea Angling Strategy (provided at Annex B). It is intended to be a working document and will grow over time with the feedback and input gained from input and engagement with sea anglers. As part of the Strategy, an angling email address has been set up, and business cards and leaflets are being made to distribute widely amongst angling groups and shops. A list of contact names and email addresses is being compiled currently and engagement with sea anglers will begin via email, with the view to setting up meetings with clubs to find out more about what sea anglers' needs and views are, as well as what data they hold which they would be prepared to share with the science team. Feedback from members is positively welcomed.

Angling email: angling@nw-ifca.gov.uk

NORTH WEST COAST CONNECTIONS - NATIONAL GRID formal S 42 consultation on routing options for 400KV cables from Moorside nuclear power station

The Senior Scientist attended a public event in Heysham and provided a full written response to the Section 42 public consultation. The main subjects in the response relate to the positioning of the ventilation / emergency shaft islet in the Bay, and focus on the assumptions made about how the hydrology and sedimentology will be affected. The greatest concern is that no modelling has been carried out to date and the level of confidence given to these assumptions of little change. It has also been pointed out that although NWCC surveys carried out on the intertidal area around the islet may have revealed a low abundance of infauna, this is highly variable and subject to enormous change – in the case of cockle recruitment, and that changes in elevation can affect this recruitment. A copy of the NWIFCA response is available to Members on request from the science team.

FYLDE COAST PROTECTION SCHEME

Officers met with the Fylde Coast Protection Scheme consultant engineer prior to submitting the MMO Marine License consultation response in order to fully understand the proposal. In a cordial meeting representation was made over the perceived impact on local fishermen around Seafield Road slipway, with a clear recommendation that dialogue is carried out as soon as possible to amend the project plans in that area.

HALITE GAS STORAGE CAVERNS – PREESALL, WYRE

Following the granting of planning permission in July 2015 by the Secretary of State, Amber Rudd, Officers have been keeping a watching brief on developments. The Science Team were approached by representatives from Mott MacDonald who are working with Halite Energy Group to ensure early engagement is made with relevant stakeholders in advance of necessary surveys and approvals, and a meeting was held where NWIFCA concerns and previously established position regarding the brine discharge and intake waters were reiterated. It does not appear that there will be any physical development for a while. The link to the Planning Inspectorate's webpage and copies of the DCO and associated reports can be found here:

<https://infrastructure.planninginspectorate.gov.uk/projects/north-west/preesall-saltfield-underground-gas-storage/?ipcsection=docs&stage=app&filter1=Drawings>

Science Officers
19th January 2017