

**NWIFCA Technical, Science and Byelaw
Committee**

8th August 2017: 10:00 a.m.

**AGENDA
ITEM NO.
8**

COCKLE AND MUSSEL REPORT

Purpose: to provide an update to members on the District cockle and mussel fisheries

Recommendations: that approval for opening of cockle fisheries on 1st September should be conducted via email

The most up to date results from mussel and cockle surveys can be found in Annex A.

1. **Solway Sub-tidal Mussels**

Two authorisations for carrying out scientific dredge were issued as agreed at February TSB. The third operator has not been back in touch following a request for further information. The authorisations have not yet been used as the fishermen are busy on the shrimps which are fetching a good price at present due to the closure of other European shrimp grounds.

2. **Solway Cockles – Middle Bank**

No authorisations for carrying out suction dredge for stock data collection were issued. The operator has not been back in touch following a request for further information.

3. **Duddon Estuary Mussels – Hardacre**

The area has been inspected but the previous hard ground is no longer exposed and no mussel has been observed.

4. **Active / Potential Fisheries - MUSSELS**

- i. Heysham Flat seed mussel – hand-gathering. Following email correspondence with TSB Members and discussion at BMWG, at the time of writing Officers are awaiting formal advice from Natural England following submission of the HRA, and arrangements have been made to meet with the council to discuss the opening of the fishery. Inspections are being carried out regularly to ascertain when the seed mussel and the bed has reached the right stage for opening. A verbal update will be given at the meeting.
- ii. Heysham Flat seed mussel – dredge fishery. Following email correspondence with TSB Members and discussion at BMWG, at the time of writing Officers are awaiting formal advice from Natural England following submission of the HRA. A helicopter inspection is being carried out to ascertain when the seed mussel and the bed has reached the right stage for opening. A verbal update will be given at the meeting.
- iii. Foulney and North Morecambe Bay – depending on how stock behaves a possible size mussel fishery later in the year.

5. **Potential Fisheries - COCKLES**

- i. Wirral - Leasowe – subject to summer survey and HRA a fishery on this bed is likely. The HoE has convened a multi-agency planning meeting. Subject to agreement by TSB, further reporting and approval to open on 1st September will be carried out by email.
- ii. Ribble – Penfold North - the cockle stock at Penfold North in the Ribble still persists in high abundance in a dense muddy patch, which has spread out across the sands. The mud is extremely gloopy and difficult to walk on and impossible for a quad to traverse. The cockle is growing far slower than predicted and the majority has still not reached size, despite it being 2015 settlement. Logistically it will prove difficult to survey, and officers would need to discuss with industry practicalities of fishing it were it to reach size and be opened. A further verbal report will be given at TSB.
- iii. Morecambe Bay – Pilling Sands – stocks persist and a further full survey is planned for the week of TSB. Potential for a low level fishery from 1st September, subject to HRA. Subject to agreement by TSB, further reporting and approval to open on 1st September will be carried out by email.
- iv. Morecambe Bay – Flookburgh and Leven Sands - results from survey in week beginning 24th July provided in the survey report will be discussed at TSB.

6. **BIVALVE MOLLUSC WORKING GROUP**

A meeting was held on 10th July, the notes from which will be provided to Members by email prior to TSB. Work is underway to agree a set of principles for when authorisation would be considered for seed mussel harvest, to be brought to TSB for approval.

Science Team
20th July 2017