

# NWIFCA TSB Quarterly Meeting: 5<sup>th</sup> November 2024

REPORT NO.  
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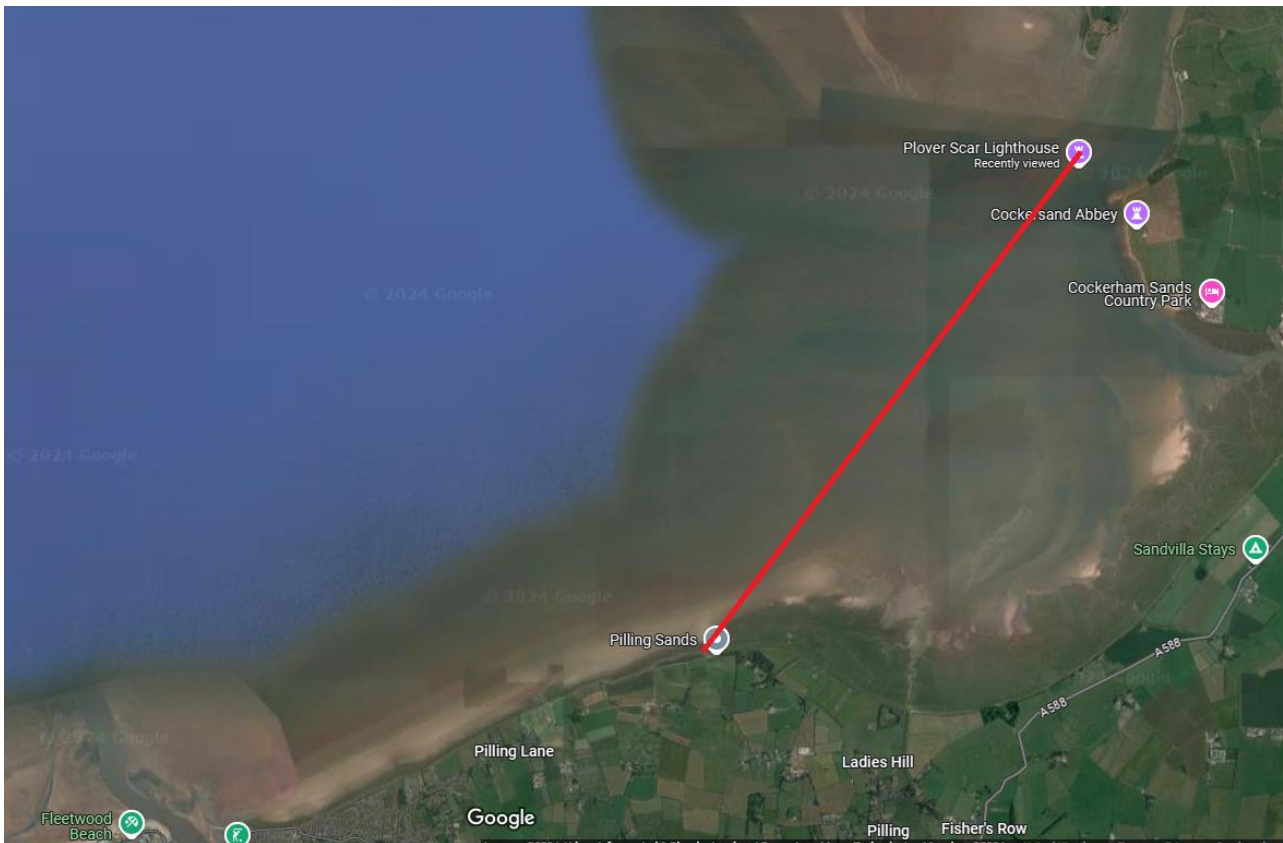
## PILLING COCKLE FISHERY

**Purpose:** To decide a way forward for the 2024/25 cockle fishery at Pilling.

**Recommendations:** Members vote to open the fishery to the west of Fluke Hall Lane slipway.

### 1. Background

At an Extraordinary General Meeting (EGM) of the TSB on 26<sup>th</sup> September, members voted to open Pilling cockle fishery to the west of a line drawn in a general northeasterly direction from Fluke Hall Lane slipway to the “Abbey lighthouse” (known as Plover Scar Lighthouse), subject to HRA.



*Figure 1: Indicative map showing the line from Fluke Hall Lane slipway to Plover Scar Lighthouse, with the area to the east closed and to the west opened; exact coordinates of each end of this line were provided to fishers.*

An amended HRA was submitted to Natural England and the fishery was opened on Monday 7<sup>th</sup> October on the basis of one tide per day, Monday to Friday. Inspections figures from the first four days of the fishery showed:

- 345 gatherer days (average 86.25 gatherers per day)

- 26 individual gatherers inspected
- Each inspected gatherer had an average of 369kg
  - Of which, 20.7% was undersized

Therefore, officers estimated that, in the first four days, 127.3t of cockle had been removed from the fishery, 26.4t of which was undersized.

After the open tide on the fourth day of the fishery (Thursday 10<sup>th</sup> October), and having analysed the above data, I took the decision to close the fishery after the following day's open tide. This decision was taken in order for the Authority to remain compliant with its obligations under [section 153 of the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009](#) and [regulations 63 and 64 of The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017](#).

All gatherers inspected during the course of the five days of the fishery were non-compliant with paragraph 8 of NWIFCA Byelaw 3 (requirement to not retain any cockle that will pass through a 20mm gauge). A pragmatic approach of no further action was taken with the few gatherers with small amounts of undersized, whilst most were cautioned. Of those cautioned, some offences were disposed of *in situ* by way of a verbal warning, whilst others (where amounts of undersized were larger) were referred on to the Head of Enforcement for further consideration. It is likely that a number of fixed administrative penalties (FAPs) will be issued to several of these gatherers in the coming weeks.

## **2. Reopened Fishery**

The fishery was not compliant with the abovementioned legislation and the HRA process due to the quantities of undersized cockle which were being removed. However, a sustainable, compliant fishery can still be achieved with an appropriate resolution.

Members will recall from the previous TSB EGM that high densities of cockle were recorded in the northeast corner of the Pilling cockle bed, but that, within this area, the percentage of undersized was found to be 65%. During the opened fishery on the week commencing 7<sup>th</sup> October, Byelaw 3 gatherers all fished in this area, due to the high densities. Anecdotal evidence from officers out on the bed that week pointed towards lower amounts of undersized being taken by gatherers working further to the west. This corresponds with the data first presented to members at the TSB quarterly meeting on 13<sup>th</sup> August (see Figure 2 below). This data shows that the area to the immediate west of the Fluke Hall Lane slipway has much lower amounts of undersized, and, whilst overall densities are also lower, it would represent a viable / compliant fishery opportunity.

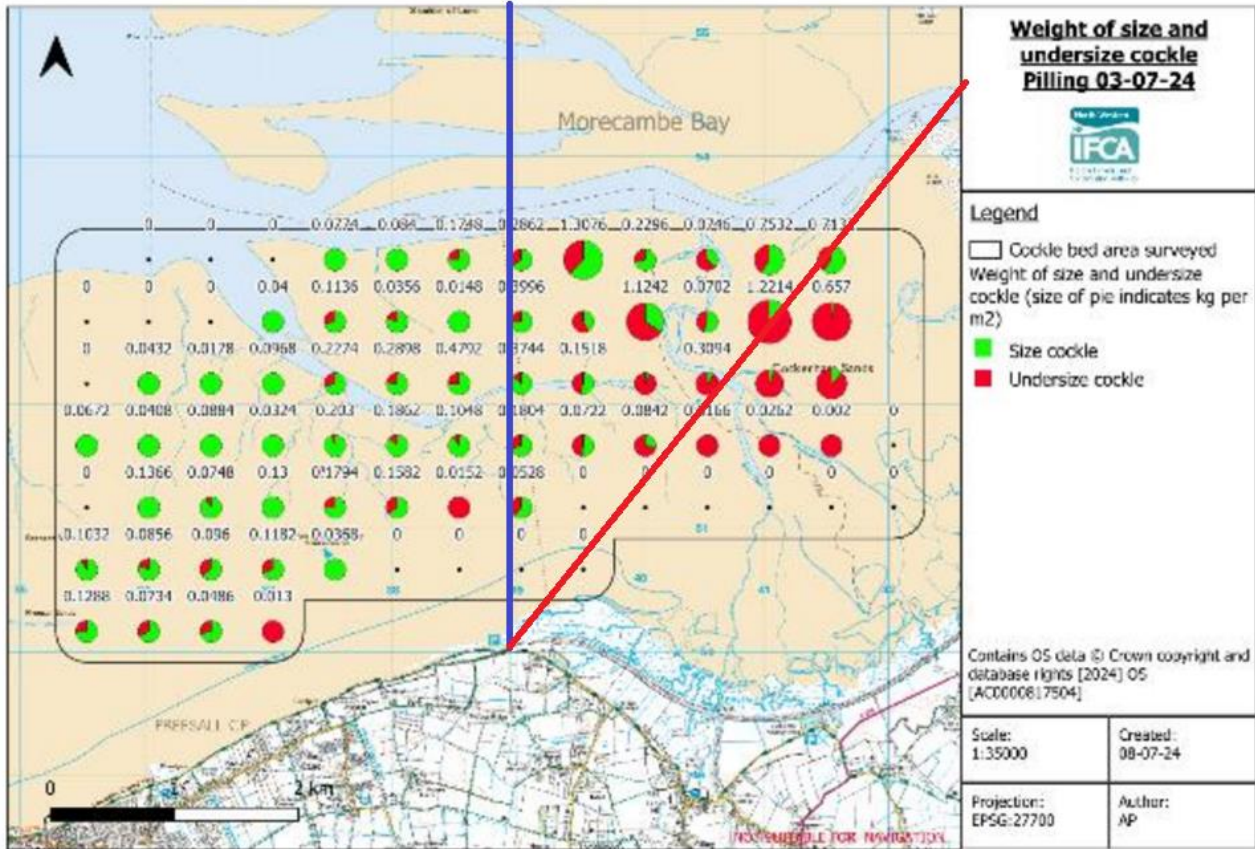


Figure 2: Survey results from 3<sup>rd</sup> July with indicative proposed line for reopening Pilling to the west (blue) and original opening line (red).

Therefore, it is recommended that members vote to reopen the Pilling cockle fishery to the west of a line running due north from the Fluke Hall Lane slipway, as indicated in Figure 2 above. The exact southerly point of this line will be at 53.942580, -2.931799 (what3words relies.cloak.steer). The fishery would be opened on the same basis of one tide per day, Monday to Friday each week for the remainder of the open season (*i.e.* until 30<sup>th</sup> April 2025).

If this resolution is passed, a new HRA would need to be submitted to Natural England for approval.

Mark Taylor, North Western IFCA CEO, 25<sup>th</sup> October 2024.