

1 AT THE ANNUAL MEETING OF THE NORTH WESTERN INSHORE AND CONSERVATION AUTHORITY HELD AT STONECROSS MANOR HOTEL 6TH JULY 2021

PRESENT – MEMBERS

Councillor A. J. Markley	Cumbria County Council
Councillor P. Williams	Cheshire West and Chester Council
Councillor M. Wilson	Cumbria County Council
Councillor J Parr	Lancashire County Council
Dr J. Andrews	MMO appointee (Marine Environment)
Mr R. Benson	MMO appointee (Commercial)
Mr R. Lomax	MMO appointee (Marine Environment)
Mr S. Brown	MMO appointee (Recreation)
Dr C Mihailovici	MMO appointee (Marine)
Mr. B. Leigh	MMO appointee (Anglers and Recreation)
Mr S. J. Manning	MMO appointee (Commercial)
Mr L. Stainton	MMO appointee (Recreation)
Mr K. Thompson	MMO appointee (Commercial/Aquaculture)
Mr P Capper	MMO appointee (Marine Environment)

IN ATTENDANCE

L. Browning	Natural England
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NWIFCA OFFICERS ATTENDING

CEO, Head of Enforcement (HOE), Senior Operational Support Officer Whitehaven (SOSOW), Clerk.

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Dr E Baxter	MMO appointee (Marine Environment)
Mr N Baxter	MMO appointee (Marine Environment)
Mr G. Pidduck	MMO appointee (Commercial)
Ms C Salthouse	MMO appointee (Marine Environment)
Mr R Donnan	MMO appointee (Commercial)
Mr W Friend	MMO appointee (Recreational)
Mr M Taylor	MMO
Ms S Kennedy	Environment Agency
Mr S Garner	Environment Agency
Councillor N Brookes	Blackpool Council
Councillor S Clarke	Lancashire County Council

2 APPOINTMENT OF CHAIRMAN (AGENDA ITEM 1)

The Chief Executive welcomed members.

Two nominations for Chair were received for Cllr Williams and Cllr Wilson

Mr Leigh raised a point of order regarding the election of the chair highlighting that the vote had not been held in line with the constitution. Following further discussion, it was concluded to accept the nominations.

RESOLVED Councillor P. Williams be reappointed Chairman of the North Western IFCA for the year 2021-22, with 9 votes, 3 votes for Cllr Wilson and 3 abstentions.

3. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS (AGENDA ITEM 2)

Cllr Williams welcomed new members Councillor Jean Parr, Dr Cristina Mihailovici, Mr Richard Lomax and Mr Phil Capper.

The chair advised on Covid protocols for the meeting. He also expressed the Authority's gratitude for the service of Mr Trevor Jones, who had now left the authority.

4. APPOINTMENT OF VICE CHAIR (AGENDA ITEM 3)

Nominations for Vice Chair had been received for Councillor A Markley and Dr J Andrews. The nomination for Dr Andrews was proposed by Councillor Williams and seconded by K Thompson. Councillor Markley withdrew his nomination and Dr Andrews was duly appointed Vice Chair.

5. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS (AGENDA ITEM 4)

Agenda Item 9, Mr B Leigh. agenda items 9,11 and 12 Mr S Manning and Mr R Benson, agenda items 8 and 12 Dr J Andrews.

6. MINUTES OF MEETING 18th MARCH 2021 (AGENDA ITEM 5)

It was proposed by the Chair that the minutes are a correct record and should be signed by the Chair; the Chair also advised that some grammatical changes were received late and would be incorporated in the minutes. Vote: All in favour

7. MATTERS ARISING (AGENDA ITEM 6)

Mr Leigh asked if the Authority had had any success in utilising county councils' recruitment websites for its vacancies. Councillor Wilson confirmed that Cumbria County Council had agreed.

The Chair requested an amendment to the order of the agenda, moving the Annual Plan up to item 8. Proposed: Chair. Seconded: Mr B Leigh. Vote: All in favour.

8. FINANCIAL REPORT (AGENDA ITEM 7a)

The CEO presented the Finance report on behalf of the Head of Finance. He pointed out that any questions would be forwarded to the Finance Officer who would respond directly via email.

The Chair commented on a healthy result for the year with £250,000 to be added to the reserve, half of which will be allocated to the fund for the replacement of the NW Protector and the remainder added to the General Reserve. He also commented that the likely reasoning behind this being the effects of Covid and a reduction in staff headcount.

Mr Leigh asked for cost estimates for the replacement of the RHIB based in Whitehaven. The SOSOW reported that work had begun on this and a quote in the region of £220,000 had been received. This remains an ongoing process.

Mr Benson queried figures in the finance report. The Chair said there was an apparent error, which indicated the existence of a negative bank balance. The CEO said he would raise the point with the Finance Officer. A two-year audit is proposed following the lifting of Covid restrictions.

Councillor Markley explained the reserve fund for a new vessel. The current vessel was purchased second hand with funds already available. The reserve is being built up to prevent the Authority going back to local authorities for further funding, as this comes from public money, the aim being to make the Authority self-sufficient.

Mr Stainton raised a query as to where this extra money was coming from and asked whether a new vessel at an estimated cost of £3 million is considered value for money. In response, the Chair said there were options to charter the vessel out to gain extra income, to

bodies such as Natural England, Environment Agency or universities for scientific purposes. It is a statutory function so therefore is needed.

Mr Manning requested a breakdown of the costs the Authority charges for sampling and asked if the costs been accurately calculated. In response, the CEO reported that costs of sampling had been properly calculated and charges are made up of officer time and fuel, to achieve cost recovery. Mr Manning asked if NWIFCA could provide the service at a loss.

Dr Mihailovici suggested looking at more options for making income from our vessel and officers in aiding outside projects. The Chair welcomed her comments and was open to any suggestions but must be mindful of time constraints on officers and staff. The CEO commented that the Authority has statutory duties, which take precedence but is also open to suggestions.

RESOLUTION: TO ACCEPT THE FINANCE REPORT

Proposed: Councillor Markley. Seconded: P Capper. Vote: 13 in favour, 2 abstentions.

Motion carried.

9. REPORT ON EXTRAORDINARY FINANCE SUB COMMITTEE MEETING 5TH JULY (AGENDA ITEM 7B)

Councillor Markley reported on the meeting, which had been held to discuss the extra funding request from RPA, who had been contracted to conduct a review of the Authority. The original contract was awarded at a cost of £15,000 but they have requested a further £6,610 to complete a more comprehensive report and interview a further 4 people. The sub-committee recommended that the extra funding should not be granted and that the review should be undertaken in accordance with the agreed contract of £15,000 so not to contravene the original legal tendering process. It was resolved that it should be brought before the meeting of the full Authority.

The Chair gave a little more background and explained that this extra funding request was only received very recently. He reported that Gurpreet Padda, who is heading up the RPA team, had previous experience of the fishing industry and had worked with EIFCA in the completion of her doctorate.

In the original contract, there was provision for 12 interviews each with an expected duration of 30 minutes. These interviews had overrun considerably, with some lasting in excess of 2 hours. In his opinion and taking into account the experience of RPA, he felt these overruns would only have been out of necessity: it has also been brought to the attention of the Chair that a further 3-4 people had contacted RPA requesting that they should also be interviewed. The further interviews and processing of that information and reporting would naturally incur further charges. Concerning the legality of extending the contract there is provision in the constitution for a contract that is esoteric in nature to bypass the tender process. Taking into consideration that there is a contractor in situ, who has already completed a significant amount of the work required and that the extra funding is affordable, the Chair felt that the authority could ill afford to lose momentum and that, if necessary, a new contract could be awarded for the extra work without any legal conflict.

Mr Leigh gave a brief overview of the tender process, and concluded that it had been undertaken correctly, the authority does report to Defra and is audited in line with statutory requirements, but has not yet undertaken a review of this kind, and he considered it the right

time to do so in view of Brexit etc. It is regrettable that RPA has left their request so late but he considered that their request was appropriate.

Mr Capper remarked that we had limited the request to £15,000 worth of information; if RPA has £21,000 of information, how would it be decided what to include and what to omit from their report if the extra funds were not paid. He felt it would likely compromise the quality and accuracy of the review. He also considered the extra work should be undertaken under scrutiny. The Chair clarified that the extra funds is for work still to be undertaken.

Mr Stainton commented on the likelihood of RPA requesting yet further funding and had an end point been agreed; the Chair agreed it was a valid point but considered it extremely unlikely.

Councillor Markley referred back to the terminology, stating that suitable wording needs to be agreed to be able to extend the contract or issue a further contract within the legal tender process. In response, the CEO advised caution as the original contract was advertised at £15,000, which may have limited the number and variety of applicants; extending the contact by a further £6,000 may result in unsuccessful applicants raising a complaint about proper procurement process. His advice was that we should complete the contract at the original cost, study the report and if it were felt further work would then be appropriate, to review the situation again.

Mr Brown sought clarification on the tender process, which was explained by the CEO, the authority advertised the contact and details of its requirements; RPA had responded with a full specification of what work they would carry out.

Dr Andrews felt the legalities could be considered a distraction and deemed it unlikely a challenge would be mounted in relation to the extra funding requested. He added that it was time to reach a decision and to proceed in order to avoid losing momentum.

Councillor Parr commented that it was a grey area and queried the process of extra people requesting interviews is outwith the remit. She considered that the tender process worthy of a revisit as we cannot be sure what a different applicant on a larger budget would have offered and therefore, the original contract of £15,000 should be upheld.

Councillor Markley stated that representing Cumbria County Council he was unable to agree to a change of contract if it could be considered illegal and public finance must be taken into consideration. In response, Mr Thompson referred back to the reserve fund for the vessel and queried the legality of that; this comment was strongly refuted by Councillor Markley and the Chair again reiterated the validity of the reserve fund. The CEO also refuted Mr Thompson's comments regarding the reserve funding.

Dr Mihailovici felt that the review would pay for itself in the long term as it may report on areas that require improvement that may also produce a cost saving.

The Chair recommended that the whole issue should be considered in two distinct ways, based simply upon 'could we?' and 'should we?'. This proposed that members should decide whether, in the event of it being permissible, it would be *desirable* for the Authority to advance the additional funds requested. The second decision would be based upon the *legality* of advancing additional funds over and beyond the agreed contract price. As a result, the following two resolutions were proposed: -

RESOLUTION: MEMBERS AGREE TO PROVIDE THE EXTRA FUNDING ON THE UNDERSTANDING THAT NO FURTHER MONIES BE PROVIDED TO COMPLETE THE

REPORT AND SUBJECT TO CONSIDERATION OF THE LEGALITY OF THIS PROPOSAL,
DEFINED BY THE ADVICE TO BE OBTAINED FROM THE SECOND RESOLUTION

Proposed: The Chair, Seconded: K Thompson. Vote: 10 in favour, 2 against, 2 abstentions. Motion carried.

The legality of this was again commented on by B Leigh, who was of the view that a variation of the contract was not unusual. Councillor Wilson felt that the extra detail would be useful; Dr Andrews stated that a decision needed to be made. It was agreed that the Chair would speak to the legal department through the S151 officer at Cheshire West and Chester Council to seek clarification.

RESOLUTION: THE CHAIR TO CONTACT CHESHIRE WEST AND CHESTER COUNCIL
LEGAL DEPARTMENT TO SEEK CLARIFICATION

Proposed: R Benson. Seconded: B Leigh. Vote: 11 in favour, 1 against, 2 abstentions.

Motion carried.

10. APPOINTMENT OF TSB (AGENDA ITEM 8)

CEO announced that the members elected to TSB 2021-22 were as follows

Dr Baxter, Dr Andrews, Mr Brown, Mr Leigh, Mr Pidduck, Mr Benson, Mr Thompson and Mr Manning. The Chair and Vice Chair are appointed ex-officio, with statutory appointees from MMO, Environment Agency and Natural England.

RESOLUTION: THE MEMBERS LISTED ABOVE SHOULD BE APPOINTED TO THE TSB
COMMITTEE.

No recorded proposer or seconder but the vote was all in favour with one abstention.

Motion carried.

11. ANNUAL PLAN (Now AGENDA ITEM 9)

The CEO gave an overview of the Annual Plan, which is required by the Marine Act, for the benefit of new members. The format of the report is mostly dictated by DEFRA, containing a set of performance indicators and success criteria. Also included is a set of internal Authority performance indicators. The format remains unchanged year on year and it is reported on at each quarterly meeting. This meeting is monitoring Q4 of the plan; the September meeting will begin the monitoring of next annual plan.

Mr Leigh asked the CEO if he was happy with the responses from DEFRA and asked whether enough attention had been given by them to the report; CEO responded that he felt DEFRA paid little attention to the annual plan. Mr Leigh observed that although there is a national vision, each separate IFCA is quite different. He pointed out that some regulatory measures had been omitted. All byelaws should be included in the plan; he also suggested that in meeting DEFRA success criteria, the Authority should adopt a traffic light system rather than reporting matters as 'ongoing'.

Dr Andrews remarked that the Authority is yet to feel the full impact of the economic situation, the impact of Covid19 and the severity of cuts to expenditure. The Annual Plan document is the Authority's ideal opportunity to sell NWIFCA and to show that it is worthy of public financial support. He considered the plan published by NEIFCA to be a far superior presentation and that we should seek to make similar improvements. Our plan contains many errors, which he will report to the office. He noted that the version published on the

website is out of date. He recommended that a working group be set up to tackle the upgrading of the plan. Councillor Wilson agreed that this would be a good idea. Councillor Parr asked the CEO if he required more support in preparing the document, and in response, the CEO stated that he received no input from DEFRA and little input from members, whom he felt should own this document. However, but the statutory requirements are being fulfilled. Councillor Parr felt it was maybe a box ticking exercise by DEFRA but a living document, regularly reviewed, would be beneficial.

Dr Andrews felt that the Annual Plan needed to be worthwhile and relevant and anything less would be a dereliction of duty. Mr Browning offered the support of Natural England if requested, as the document is a form of high level MPA plan.

Councillor Markley voiced his concerns on the possible impact of developing the plan, on officer's workload and asked if this is something that could be outsourced. The Chair felt the meeting had rejuvenated an interest in the plan. He supported the setting up of a working group.

HoE felt our plan was actually more informative with more data and information than other IFCA plans even if it did not contain fancy pictures. He also pointed out that DEFRA gave little input. Dr Andrews responded that it was the way of the world people that preferred 'fluff and pictures' which, rightly or wrongly, would always attract more attention.

Councillor Wilson commented on the fantastic work already done and was fascinated by what actually goes on in the bay area. He felt it would also be a better advert for tourism and it would encourage people to show an interest in the function of the NWIFCA.

Mr Brown considered it a dry document and supported previous comments asking for better presentation and marketing, which will aid future funding. Dr Mihailovici concurred; it needs dynamics adding, also a risk management plan and an improved digital interface.

The Chair felt we could see an impact on future funding if the authority did not sell itself. HoE stated there were ongoing meetings across IFCA's relating to DEFRA and spending reviews.

Volunteers to sit on working group were: Chair, Vice Chair, Councillor Wilson, Chair, B Leigh, L Browning, R Lomax and Dr Mihailovici. HoE to head up the group on behalf of officers.

Mr Manning requested that members be better informed of any updates.

RESOLUTION: THAT THE REPORT BE ACCEPTED

Proposed: B Leigh. Seconded: Councillor Wilson. Vote: 14 in favour, 2 abstentions, Motion carried.

RESOLUTION: TO ESTABLISH A WORKING GROUP TO ASSIST WITH THE UPDATING OF THE ANNUAL PLAN

Proposed: Dr Andrews. Seconded: Councillor Wilson. Vote: All in favour.

Motion. carried.

BREAK FOR LUNCH AT 13.15PM

12 PATROL AND ENFORCEMENT REPORT (NOW AGENDA ITEM 10)

Head of Enforcement reported that work and duties had continued during Covid restrictions.

On 10th June, a new SI was issued prohibiting the landing of bass intertidally across the UK. The SI purports to give an exemption, which allows NWIFCA to issue up to 26 permits to allow bass to be caught as a bycatch by intertidal nets. However, there is no definition of 'bycatch' in the SI and no legislative framework for issuing these permits so the SI is ineffective.

The revised bycatch limits and so-called allowance for shore-based netting are to be introduced from 30th July.

NWIFCA are collaborating with Ocean Mind looking at a project to utilise technology to enhance the protection of Marine Protected Areas. HoE is sitting on a working group, which will assist in site selection of various MPAs around the IFCA districts. Innovative monitoring tools, such as electro-optical imagery and infrared imagery from satellites will be trialled. The partnership aims to provide cost effective and high impact deterrents.

HoE is working with other IFCAs on a project introduced by Seafish to introduce freely available electronic resources for fisheries stakeholders to use both on shore and aboard vessels.

The successful prosecution of Jones Trawlers ongoing since 2018 was also reported resulting in fines of £48,500.

In-house training has continued on procedures including the use of new SF1 forms to document inspections. A number of officers have completed outsourced ATV training, first aid and intelligence training.

Officer E. Thinnesen is one of the first IFCOs nationally to complete the full National Accreditation Scheme.

Byelaw 3 Reporting – the industry has been severely affected post Brexit with the inability to export to the EU. Officers have at every opportunity raised this issue with partner agencies. The lack of opportunities for exporting cockles can be seen impacting the gatherers with only a small quantity gathered by Byelaw 3 permit holders. The gathering of mussels increased from February to April on Foulney when a temporary Class A rating was introduced. This allowed orders to be directly exported to the continent.

North Western Protector and Protector Bravo have again performed well with no mechanical faults to report.

Mr Benson asked what volume of cockles had been taken from Pilling; in response, figures to hand were from February, March and April, which totalled 4 tonnes.

Dr Andrews queried the bass regulations; nets can be deployed but the catch cannot be landed. Chair asked about rod and line limits, and it was noted that these were set separately.

Mr Manning said that he had recently taken out a netting permit. He raised concerns about the new bass legislation saying that it makes local intertidal fisherman look dishonest, and every effort should be made for this to be enabled legally. HoE in reply stated that this was not the aim, but there was no legal framework in place for NWIFCA to issue permits. HoE questioned how, if fishermen should catch 2 plaice and 26 bass, the bass could be

considered a bycatch, when the fishermen could state that his nets were set to catch plaice; he considered some of Mr Manning's comments misconstrued. Mr Manning felt most strongly that local fishermen has been severely disadvantaged due to Brexit, and that more needs to be done. HoE disputed the comments that bass was not a target species.

Dr Andrews commented that the problem is the wording of the legislation with no percentages being quoted as to what defines a bycatch. CEO stated that representations have been made to DEFRA regarding the new SI and the significant problems it will cause. There is no current framework to issue the 26 permits allowable but there is no reason for the number of 26 and he feels drafting of the SI has erroneously picked up by the use of Byelaw 26.

Mr Stainton asked if there was a mechanism for issuing a larger number of permits; the response was in the negative. Mr Stainton felt it was criminalising local fishermen, who need to earn a living. HoE again stated there was only one district-wide permit, which is Byelaw 26 and after cockle and mussel fishing, bass is the next biggest issue.

Mr Leigh remarked that we should not criminalise genuine fishermen and the problem is the wording of the SI, which has been brought about due to the decline of bass and the adverse effect on juvenile bass by intertidal fishing.

Mr Brown stated that SIs do not normally apply to intertidal fishing, only from a boat, and again agreed that the SI is badly worded and suggested that the strongest objections had to be raised with DEFRA. He felt that Byelaw 26 permits are being abused by a few for the selling of bass, and every effort be made to expediate our netting byelaw.

Mr Manning stated there were no current byelaws in the district preventing the catching of bass, and asked if an exemption could be applied for. Boats are permitted to lay nets yet intertidal fishing is prohibited. In response, the Chair stated it was not within the Authority's remit to make those changes.

Mr Browning reported that he had been seconded to DEFRA and had some insight into this decision. The exemption being granted by this SI is based on the EU TAC and quota regulations. DEFRA does recognise the impact of fishing in the North West and this is their attempt to appease. Unfortunately, it has not been properly thought through. Dr Andrews thought the regulation perverse and proposed that DEFRA be contacted. Mr Benson remarked that he considered the exercise a waste of time as it was likely to be ignored.

Councillor Parr asked what the timescale is for the mapping project, when it is likely to become available; and was it thought there was a general lack of regulatory knowledge amongst some fishermen. HoE anticipated October, November time.

RESOLUTION: THAT DEFRA BE CONTACTED AND ASKED TO LOOK AT THE LEGISLATION AGAIN AND TO MAKE IT WORKABLE

Proposed: Dr Andrews. Seconded: Chair. Vote: 14 in favour, 2 abstentions.

Motion carried.

Mr Leigh referred to the patch reports and asked if there was sufficient staffing to act at Leasowe if required during the upcoming holiday period. HoE stated that preparations are in hand and we are better place than in earlier in the year. The Chair asked if better signage was an option as Wirral Borough Council had agreed to allow use of their signage; he also asked if some of these signs could be made bi-lingual in view of the ethnicity of some of the

offenders. Dr Andrews also asked about staffing levels and in response was informed the use of Red Snapper was an option if deemed necessary.

Dr Mihailovici asked if better awareness of sustainability was possible and to promote responsible consumption.

RESOLUTION: TO ACCEPT THE HEAD OF ENFORCEMENT REPORT

Proposed: Dr Andrews Seconded: Councillor Wilson. Vote: all in favour, 1 abstention.

Motion carried.

13 **CHIEF OFFICER'S REPORT (now AGENDA ITEM 11)**

CEO presented his report and invited questions from the floor.

CEO gave a brief overview of AIFCA and MAFCO for the benefit of new members.

The Chair highlighted the 10-year IFCA anniversary and was informed that a presentation and videos are available on AIFCA website.

Mr S Brown requested that Mr Trevor Jones and Mrs Irene Andrews now be invited to a future meeting to give formal thanks for excellent service to the Authority. CEO replied that it was intended to do so,

Dr Andrews highlighted the issues currently being caused by the pandemic and the government having now insisted that meetings return to face-to-face. He asked if efforts were being made by AIFCA to allow online or hybrid meetings, if not can NWIFCA make representations. CEO reported that some other districts were having face-to-face meetings and some were not. Legislation will no longer allow remote meetings, with the exception of committee meetings that are not required to be held in public.

Mr Leigh referred to past experience and felt the word 'present' was taken too literally and the legislation would hopefully be revisited at a future date.

RESOLUTION: TO ACCEPT THE CHIEF OFFICERS REPORT

Proposed: Dr Andrews Seconded: Councillor Wilson. Vote: All in favour, 1 abstention.

Motion carried.

14 **REPORT FROM THE EXTRAORDINARY MEETING OF TSB 30TH JUNE 2021 (now AGENDA ITEM 12)**

Dr Andrews, current vice-chair of TSB gave a verbal report on the meeting. The last scheduled meeting held was in February and subsequent meetings had been postponed due to Covid related issues.

The extraordinary meeting focussed on the opening of cockle and mussel fisheries in the district. It was put on record that the science team are currently short staffed, and Mr Haines is the acting Senior Scientist whilst we await the appointment of a SS the team, as a whole should be thanked for their exemplary efforts.

The recommendations from officers were that the cockle beds in Morecambe Bay remain closed for the remainder of the current closed season, which ends 1st September. It was also recommended the beds should remain closed after that date. Following a lengthy

debate, members resolved that Pilling be allowed to open as soon as possible subject to HRA and Newbiggin and Aldingham be allowed to open subject to HRA; it was considered by officers that there was a possibility of opening Pilling but not Newbiggin.

Officers made a number of recommendations regarding seed mussel beds in Morecambe Bay, the subcommittee agreed with the recommendations.

In summary, the recommendations would be to open Perch and Black Skear, to open Heysham Flat as a hand gathered fishery working round the *Sabellaria alveolata*, to open South America as a permitted dredge and hand gathered fishery and the Falklands as a dredge fishery. Officers stated that the opening of beds are subject to HRA approval.

Mr Manning commented that nobody wants to gather seed mussel on Falklands and South America and considered this a waste of time. Heysham Flat are viable, ones sited at Conga Rock are not. He considered that an HRA was not required and that a mussel management plan should be developed.

Dr Andrews declared an interest having worked with dredging companies on the Menai Straits. In view of the work involved in producing HRAs, these should be prioritised in favour of the cockle beds. Further discussions and updates are due for next meeting of TSB on August 17th.

Mr Benson commented that the HRA is an intense document and asked the point of producing these for Heysham Flat as the seed mussel come and go before fished. In response, Mr Browning stated this was to ensure that the Authority complies with the regulations, although it seems to be a foregone conclusion, but there are changes to the site including consideration of leaving sufficient food for birds etc. An overall HRA for the district would be beneficial, but it is more complex than it appears.

RESOLUTION: TO ACCEPT THE REPORT

Proposed: S Manning. Seconded: K Thompson. Vote Unanimous. Motion carried.

15 SCIENCE REPORT (now AGENDA ITEM 15)

The CEO presented the report on behalf of acting SS and requested any questions be emailed to the office.

Mr Leigh referred to the biosecurity plan in the report and in view of invasive species such as Chinese mitten crab voiced his support. Dr Andrews considered it interesting but not necessarily the best use of time.

Mr Manning asked if permission had been granted or needed to re site the Gormley statues on Crosby beach, but the response is not within our remit.

RESOLUTION TO ACCEPT THE SCIENCE REPORT

Proposed: B Leigh. Seconded: R Benson. Vote: Unanimous. Motion carried.

16 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Dr Andrews referred to earlier discussion regarding meetings and asked if there was an anomaly in our constitution. Local Authority members are able to vote by proxy, whereas

MMO appointees may not. Mr Leigh replied that councillors are representatives of public body who provide the funding, but that proxy votes have not previously been used; he was of the view that this is a complex issue. The Chair asked if it was a subject worthy of future discussion, one of the issues was highlighted by Mr Leigh who felt it may put members off attending meetings if a proxy vote is acceptable. Dr Andrews felt it should apply to all or none. The Chair also commented on the lack of attendance of other council representatives at meetings; he thought it very disappointing and failed to understand the reasons behind it.

Dr Andrews asked for an update on the recruitment of a new Senior Scientist. CEO responded that the post has been re-advertised.

The Chair thanked members for their attendance and closed the meeting at 15.40pm,