

Heysham Flat Mussel Inspection 31-07-2026

Officers present: AP, GG

Tides: LW 07:42 1.7m (Liverpool tides)

Officers inspected the mussel bed on Heysham Flat to assess whether further settlement and growth had occurred since the previous inspection. Access to the outer skears was not possible due to the depth of water in Dallam Dyke and the available tidal window. Officer survey tracks are shown in Figure 1.

At the eastern extent of the bed (Wpt 001), sparse areas of seed mussel were present, with approximately 30% coverage. The substrate consisted predominantly of exposed cobble and boulder over a thin layer of sand.

From Wpt 002, a substantial area of live *Sabellaria* was observed extending along the southern edge of the bed towards Wpt 005. Around Conger Rock (Wpt 003), large areas of dead shell were present, interspersed with patches of algae.

West of Conger Rock, from approximately Wpt 006 onwards, larger areas of undersize mussel were observed on muddy substrate. From this point, officers mapped the extent of the mussel bed. A dense settlement of seed mussel was recorded west of Conger Rock, extending towards Dallam Dyke and along the northern edge of the skear. Further areas of *Sabellaria* were also present around Wpt 007.

Across the main section of the mussel bed, indicated by the blue hatching in Figure 1, seed mussel coverage was generally greater than 80%, with the mussel occurring over deep mud. Seed mussels were approximately 20 mm in length.

Towards Dallam Dyke, mussel coverage decreased considerably, with areas of exposed cobble present (Figure 7).

Along the northern edge of the skear, separated from the main mussel bed by a channel, a further extensive area of live *Sabellaria* was observed. Historically, dead *Sabellaria* structure has been recorded beneath seed mussel within the main part of the skear. During this inspection, however, any underlying structure could not be identified due to the depth of mud present.

Gulls were observed on the mussel bed during the inspection.

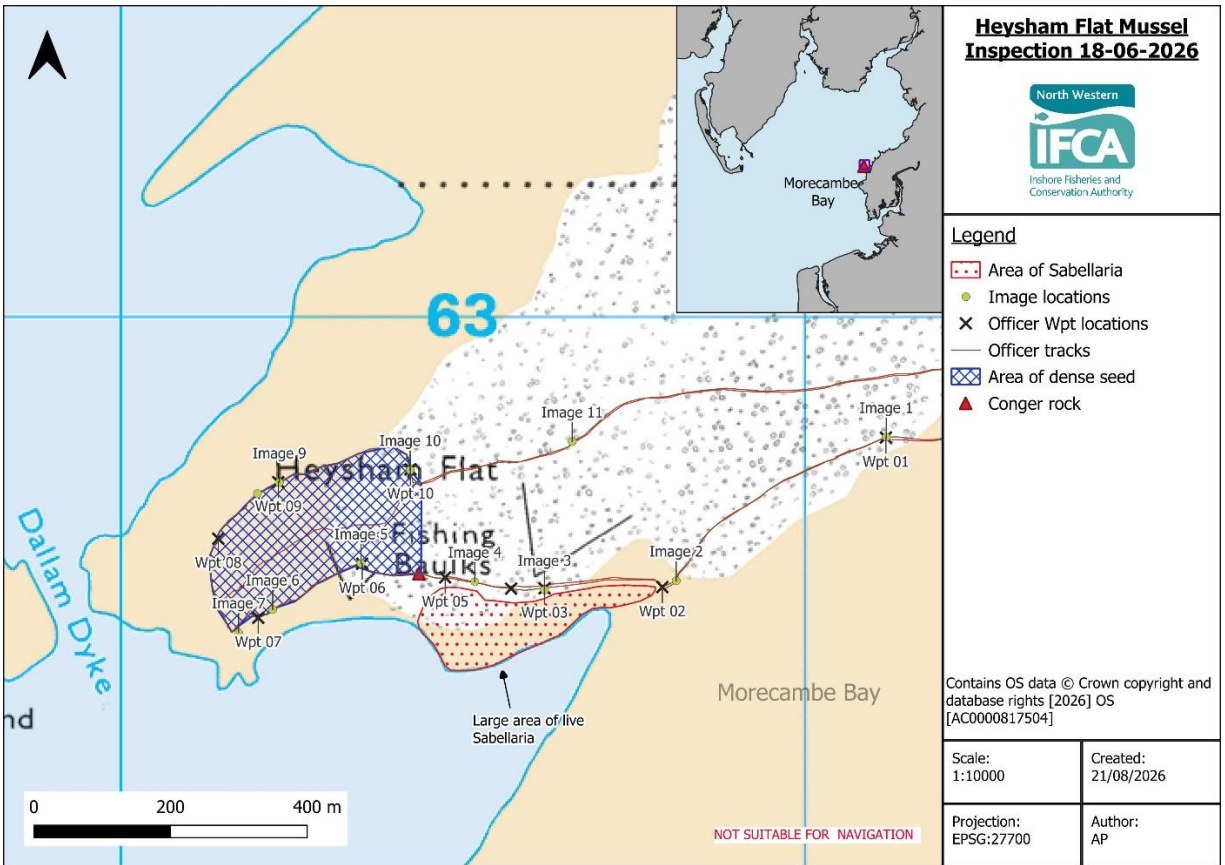


Figure 1: Location of Heysham Flat mussel bed and features



Image 1. Sparse mussel seed on thin veneer of sand and cobble



Image 2. *Sabellaria* on Southern portion of skeer

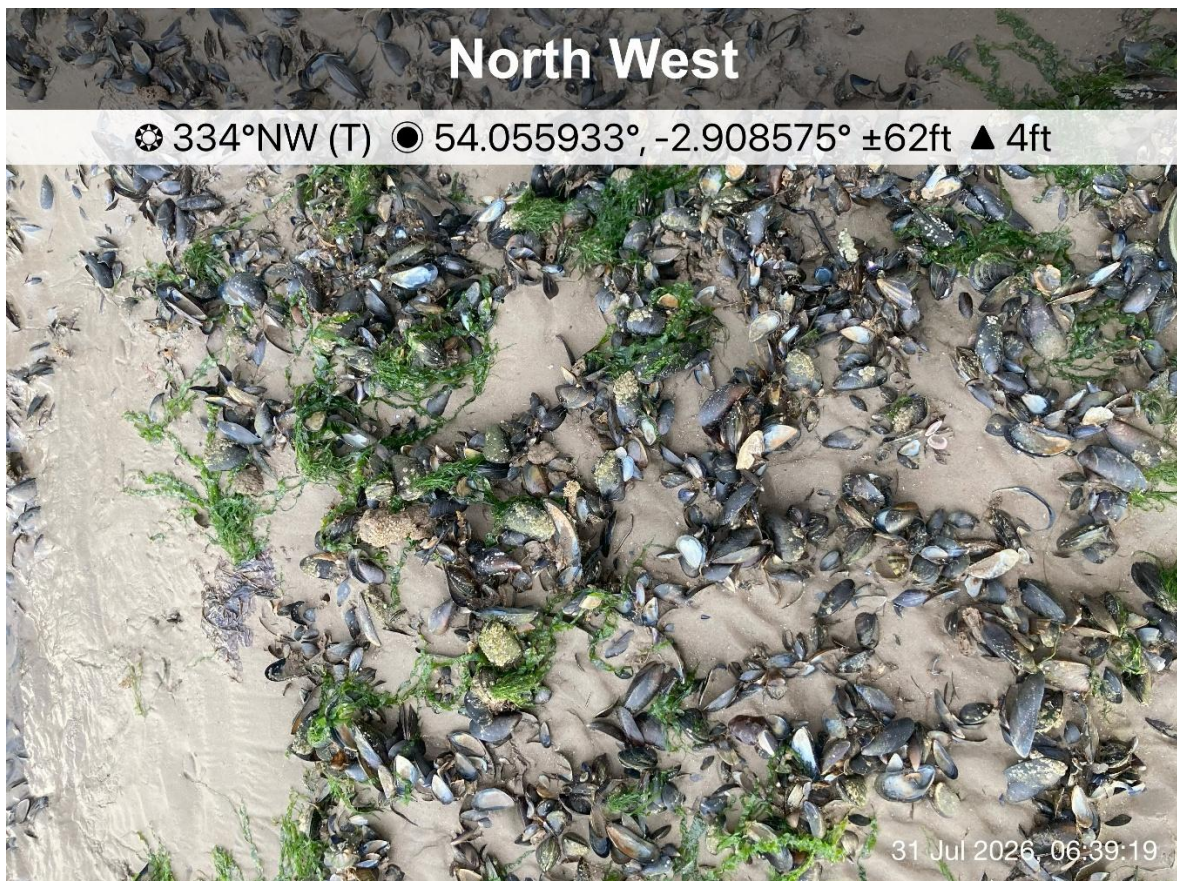


Image 3. This mussel and dead shell with algae

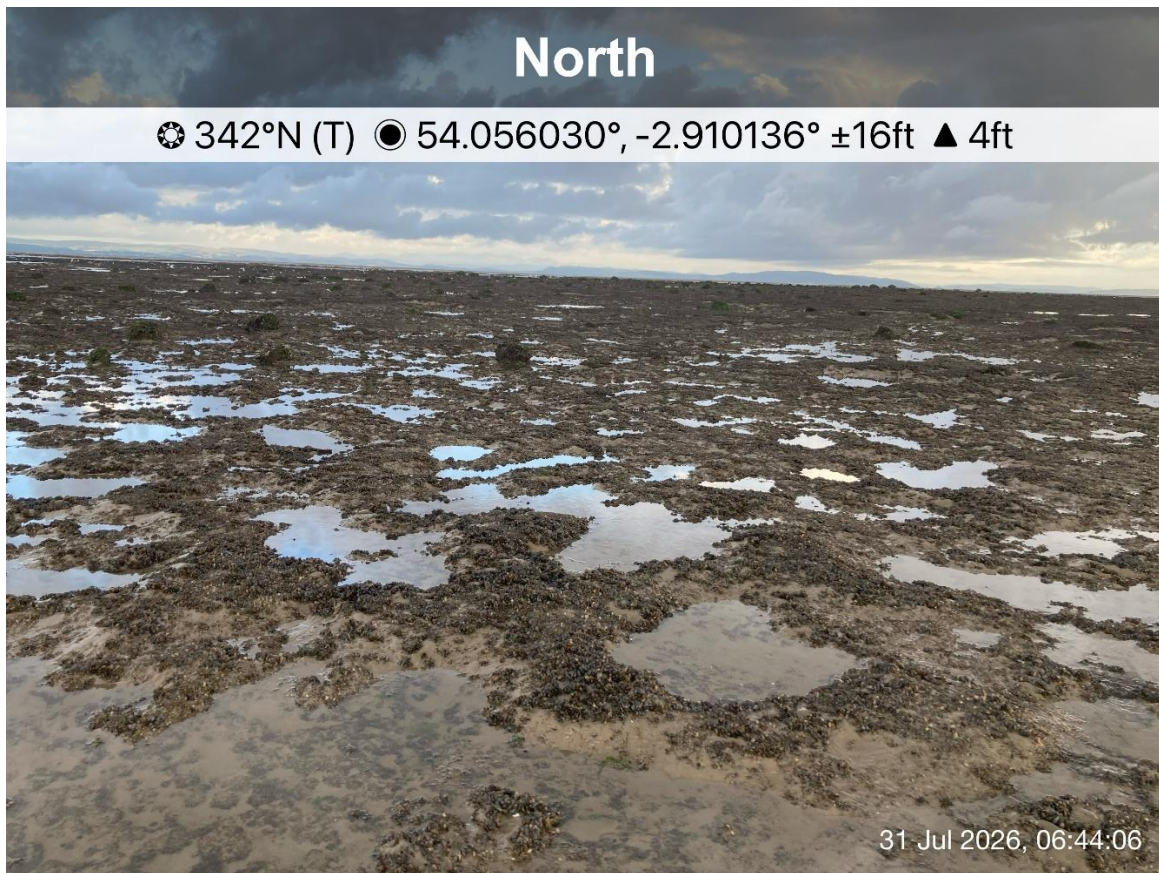


Image 4. Denser seed on thin sand veneer



Image 5. Presence of dead shell



Image 6. Dense uniform seed on thick mud beyond Conger Rock



Image 7. Thick mud present and patches of dense seed

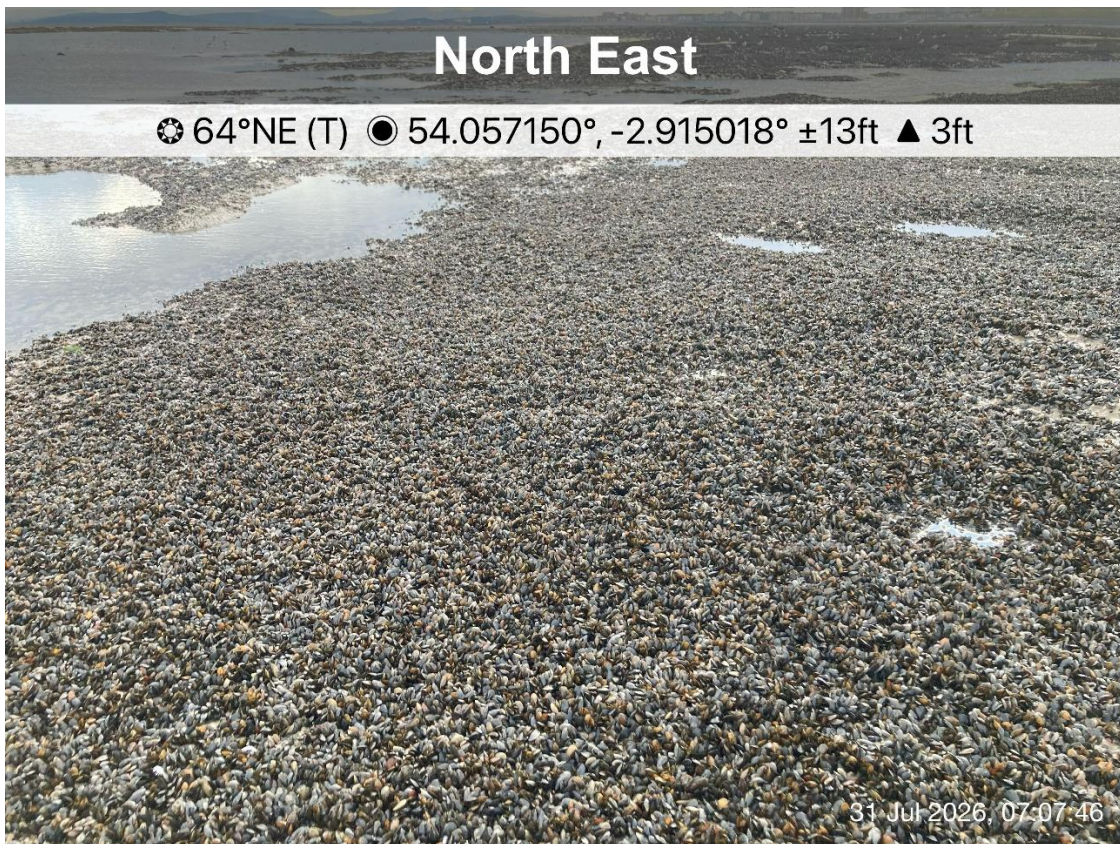


Image 8. Dense uniform seed on thick mud



Image 9. Northern portion of live Sabellaria across the channel



Image 10. Thinner seed at further edges of the bed

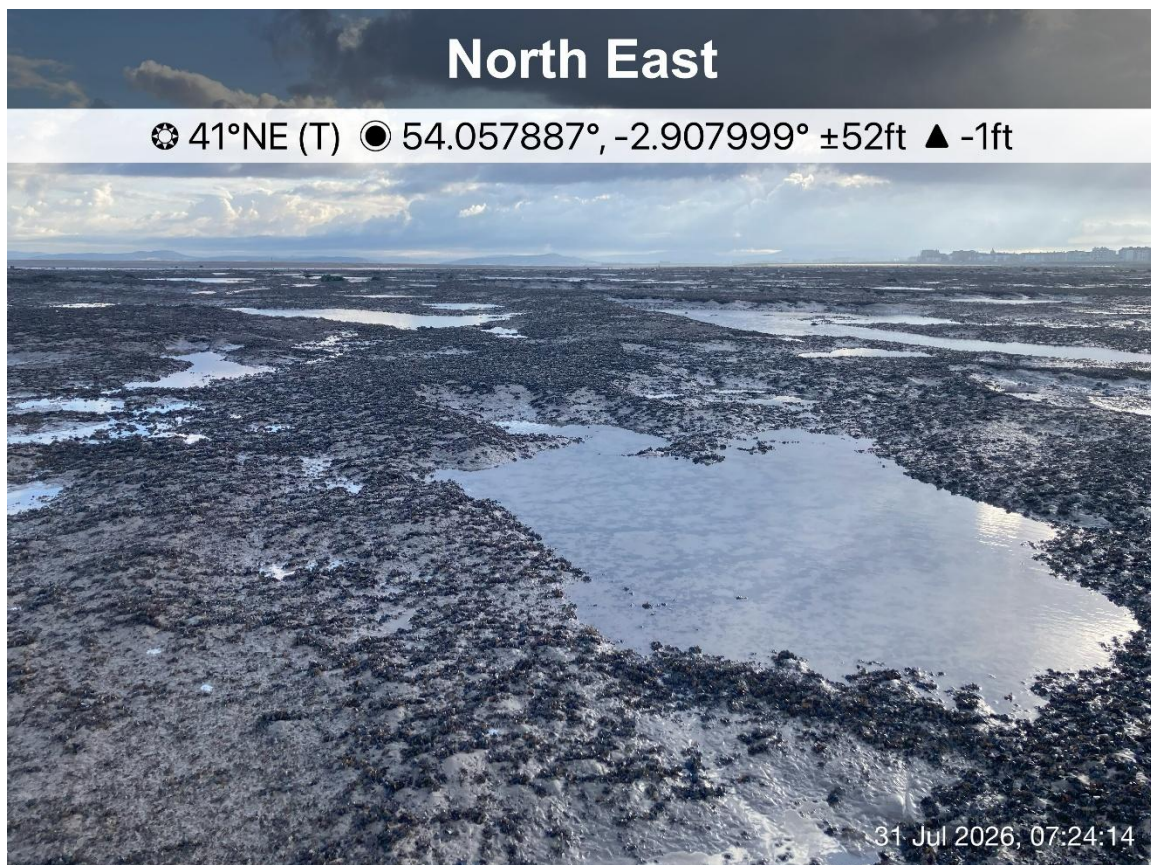


Image 11. Thin, patchy seed before Conger Rock on the eastern side