

**NWIFCA Quarterly Meeting:
6th December 2018: 11.00 a.m.**

**AGENDA
ITEM NO.
10**

SCIENCE AND SURVEY QUARTERLY REPORT TO 16th NOVEMBER 2018

Purpose: i) to provide an update on work carried out in the last quarter;
ii) to provide a draft response for Members approval on Defra's consultation on changes to marine licensing exemptions.

Recommendation: i) that Members approve a response to Defra's consultation on changes to marine licensing exemptions.

1. MARINE PROTECTED AREAS IN THE NWIFCA DISTRICT:

The Senior Scientist continues to attend the monthly tele-conferences of the Marine Protected Area Management Group - now renamed the Inshore Fisheries Working Group to keep up-to-date with developments and feed-in NWIFCA MPA work. This group is facilitated by Natural England,

a) Marine Conservation Zones

i. MMO have notified NWIFCA that the West of Walney byelaw has been sent to Defra for signing off. All bottom towed gear will be prohibited across the whole of the MCZ.

The science department is engaged with a two year EMFF funded project entitled 'Developing a participatory approach to the management of fishing activity in UK offshore Marine Protected Areas'. The project is led by the JNCC and includes partners including MMO, Natural England, National Federation of Fisherman's Organisations (NFFO) and Bangor University. The aim is to develop a participatory process establishing, evaluating and adapting fisheries management measures in MPAs that include sedimentary habitats as protected features. Fisheries management in West of Walney MCZ is being used as a case study.

ii. No further news on Tranche 3 MCZ sites. Expect Defra to announce designations in spring 2019.

b) Assessment of Fishing Activities in Marine Protected Areas

Work continues on HRAs for all bait collection activities in all NWIFCA District MPAS. Questionnaires have been distributed to angling stakeholders and those returned are providing additional data. Requests have been made to Natural England and MMO for any other data provided during the Irish Sea MCZ Project. Work to assimilate all available data will begin in January 2019 when there will be a full two years of IFCO sightings data available. Individual site HRA templates have been drafted. Assuming no unforeseen interruptions it is expected that NWIFCA will meet a March 2019 deadline in completing all assessments.

c) NWIFCA MPA Monitoring and Control Plan

Work is on-going to ensure the annual schedule of reviews of HRAs is completed in accordance with the NWIFCA MPA Monitoring & Control Plan. Assessments of fishing activity for Cumbria Coast MCZ and Allonby Bay MCZ are in draft.

d) **Association of IFCAs Marine Protected Area Project**

The Science Team continues to provide data to the Defra funded Association of IFCAs Marine Protected Area Project, a one year project designed to summarise the IFCAs' experience of Defra's Revised Approach to Fisheries Management in EMS (European Marine Sites). Notification has been received of 'an opportunity to consolidate and celebrate the achievements made to date by the ten IFCAs in managing fishing activities in MPAs and share our learning experiences' at the Houses of Parliament in February (Annex A).

2. **Defra Consultation on proposed changes to Marine Licensing Exemptions**

Defra are carrying out a consultation on proposed changes to existing exemptions to the marine licensing process. The consultation commenced on 2nd November and will be open for responses until midnight on 14th December 2018. Any agreed changes are to come into effect from 6th April 2019.

This consultation may be of particular interest to those involved in the following marine activities:

- Recreational diving
- Recreational sailing
- Shellfish farming
- Scientific surveys
- Coastal protection
- Emergency repairs to subsea cables and pipelines

TSB agreed that a response should be drafted and brought to the Authority for approval before submission. This is provided at Annex B. The main area of concern for NWIFCA are the proposed changes to shellfish aquaculture exemptions. The consultation documents do not provide a great deal of clarity over the underlying issues that apparently were brought to Defra's attention by industry. Following a verbal consultation with SAGB, the draft response assimilates NWIFCA information and data provided by SAGB.

Consultation documents are available here: <https://consult.defra.gov.uk/marine-planning-licensing-team/revisions-to-marine-licensing-exemptions/>

Recommendation: that Members approve a response to Defra's consultation on changes to marine licensing exemptions.

3. **NWIFCA RESEARCH PROJECTS**

- a) Nephrops creel potting – Natural England project with assistance from NWIFCA. Plans are in development to progress this project in 2019.
- b) Bass populations and tagging study – Cefas workshop held in Carnforth in September attended by around a dozen fishers from both commercial and recreational sectors, with presentations from Cefas, Bangor University and NWIFCA. Three tagged fish have been caught and returned to Cefas, and a small number of the Data Storage Tags (DST) have been found on the south east coast from north-west tagged fish. These are being analysed by Cefas scientists.

- c) Razor Clam collaborative research – progressing slowly with a further meeting with an interested party from industry.
- d) Whelk Fisheries in the North West – a study of whelk age and size at maturity is commencing. A first sample of whelk to be provided by North West fisherman from NE Irish Sea stock is awaited.
- e) BLUECoast - the BLUEcoast consortia is led by NOC (National Oceanographic Centre) and aims to inform coastal management by reducing uncertainties in the prediction of medium-term (years) and long-term (decadal and longer) regional sediment budgets, morphological change and how the coast recovers after sequences of storms. To do this they have selected several representative coastal systems, one of which is Morecambe Bay. NWIFCA scientists are working with NOC researchers to find ways of benefitting both parties in furthering understanding of tide, wave, weather and sediment dynamics and cockle recruitment and distribution.

4. WHELKS

Individual fact finding discussions using a specific whelk fisheries questionnaire have been held with seven whelk fishers to gain improved understanding of the fishery and the interests in it. Detailed discussions with IOM and Jersey State whelk fisheries managers have also been carried out. Officers participated in a recent Cefas stock assessments workshop. Investigation into Welsh and Scottish whelk management is underway. Further internal discussion with experienced IFCOs has been conducted.

A detailed report will be produced for February TSB providing recommendations for whelk management under the new Potting Permit Byelaw.

5. NWIFCA POTTING PERMIT BYELAW

A full report was provided to TSB on the informal consultation carried out with industry on the proposed draft byelaw. Issues brought to light that need addressing were highlighted in the report. A further 'drop in' day was organised in Preston for 12th November. However no stakeholders attended, but Officers and Authority member Steve Brown took the opportunity to discuss in depth some of the remaining issues.

The informal consultation responses will be compiled and will help to inform a second draft of the byelaw which will be provided to February TSB. In the meantime it will be sent to MMO for their advice, which if received in time will be included in the report to TSB.

TSB requested a written procedure to be followed by the Authority when reviewing flexible permit conditions within flexible permitting byelaws. Considering this approach to byelaw-making is being adopted by NWIFCA and others. Ms Knott will draft such a procedure. This will be brought firstly to TSB for approval and subsequently presented for the Authority to adopt.

6. MMO Evidence project non-lethal deterrents suitable for control of seals from fishing vessels

As previously reported MMO have been carrying out a literature review on non-lethal deterrents for controlling seals from fishing vessels. The summary report sadly does not provide any firm answers to the problems fishermen face from seals but is provided at Annex C, with the full report available online from:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/non-lethal-deterrents-suitable-for-control-of-seals-from-fishing-vessels-mmo1131>

7. RECREATIONAL ANGLERS ENGAGEMENT

Engagement with the RA sector has progressed through attendance at angling matches and presentations given to angling clubs. The bait collection questionnaire has been widely circulated, and responses are being analysed.

8. MOORSIDE NUCLEAR POWER STATION - NATIONAL GRID NORTH WEST COAST CONNECTIONS

According to national media reports the proposed NuGen nuclear power station at Moorside in West Cumbria is in jeopardy due to lack of investors. No official word has been received yet, but this has implications for both the Moorside development and the National Grid North West Coast Connections project and the proposed tunnel under Morecambe Bay. Officers will report further as soon as any firm news is received.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-46122255>

9. NORTH WEST MARINE PLAN – MMO

The Senior Scientist attended two webinars on developing policy documents for the NW Marine Plan, on the subjects of Recreation and Tourism, and Fisheries.

10. CROWN ESTATE OFFSHORE WIND LEASING

Officers provided a response to a consultation with the Crown Estate over potential new offshore wind leasing sites stating concerns over previous loss of fishing grounds from windfarms and other developments in the NE Irish Sea and the impact on socio-economics and viability of fishing in the District.

A press release received on 16th November states that both the Irish Sea and North Wales have been included in five regions that the Crown Estate proposes to include in plans for a new leasing round (Round 4), on the basis that they are technically feasible, include sufficiently large areas of available seabed for offshore wind development and have lower levels of development constraint.

Details can be found online:

<https://www.thecrownestate.co.uk/en-gb/media-and-insights/news/2018-the-crown-estate-shares-further-detail-on-plans-for-round-4-including-proposed-locations-to-be-offered-for-new-seabed-rights/>

11. HALITE GAS STORAGE AND BRINE DISCHARGE - PREESALL

There has been no official word from either the developers or regulators. However officers have been made aware that Halite has recently been sold to Cheshire Energy Ltd a part of NPL Group and expect to get word at some point soon from EA on a further meeting of the Marine Monitoring Group. A link to the Blackpool Gazette article is here:

12. COCKLE FISHERIES

A full report was provided to TSB on the cockle beds in the District up to the end of October. A craam only fishery was authorised on Flookburgh and Leven Sands beds in Morecambe Bay in October under NWSFC Byelaw 13a - Cockles and Mussels - Management of the Fishery. However, significant non-compliance with this regulation meant that the Authority could no longer be confident that the fishery conformed to the Habitats Regulations Assessment. This created a risk of challenge to the Authority over its management.

TSB approved the immediate revoking of the authorisation and the closure of the fishery until stocks could be resurveyed and the HRA amended if necessary. Morecambe Bay cockle beds of Pilling, Middleton Sands, Flookburgh, Leven Sands and Newbiggin will be surveyed again, and results reported to TSB. Should sufficient stock remain whereby the fishery would remain Habitats Regulations compliant, a revised Habitats Regulations Assessment will be required with appropriate management, before the closure could be lifted and the fishery re-opened.

Industry have called for a Bivalve Mollusc Working Group meeting which is being organised for a date following the surveys to have the data available for discussion.

MUSSEL FISHERIES

13. A full report was provided to TSB on the mussel fisheries. Since the closure of the cockle beds the Foulney mussels have seen a small increase in effort. However the restrictions on the export of mussel to Northern Ireland for re-laying are having a severe impact on the Morecambe Bay fishery. Daera currently do not approve the import of mussel to Northern Ireland due to the perceived risk of transfer of the invasive non-native Chinese Mitten Crab.
14. Since a single reported finding from Walney Channel in May, there have been no further reports of Chinese Mitten Crab in the district despite extensive surveys, publicity and requests to report findings.
15. Export and relaying of mussel is permitted to Southern Ireland (Eire). In one Lough, where the Northern Ireland border runs down the centre of the loch, mussel relaying is permitted on the south side but not permitted on the north side. The different standard puts Northern Ireland operators at a disadvantage and could result in significant socio-economic damage in both North West England and Northern Ireland from damage to the industry and loss of jobs.
16. In the absence of further findings of Chinese mitten crab or evidence that they are present in mussel stock in Morecambe Bay, operators understandably feel Daera may be over cautious in maintaining their restriction on the import to Northern Ireland of mussels from Morecambe Bay. Requests to Daera for explanation of their policy are awaited.
17. NWIFCA could facilitate a meeting of the industry, Cefas and Daera. The next stage would be to ask MPs to seek explanation from departments in England and NI.

18. MMO Marine Licence and other consultations for last two quarters:

MMO Marine Licence consultations

Warrington Centre Park Link
Lincolnshire Time and Tide Bell
Sellafied variation to EPR
Holker Estate Leven Flood Defence June 2018
BOW Rock Placement
Alterations to twelve quays terminal
Liverpool Docks Maintenance Dredging Disposal
Heysham 1 cooling water temperature
Fylde Coastal Protection Scheme- construction method statement
Crown Estate - new offshore wind leasing
Warrington centre park link MLA
Liverpool Cruise Terminal HRO
West Plain Tidal Lagoon
Network Rail Brantsy to Parton
Walney Extension Pontoon/Jetty

Byelaw 1 dispensations

Cefas Fish Surveys
Cefas Clean Seas Monitoring programme
Cefas Bass Tagging with fishermen
EA Water Framework Directive Mersey, Ribble, Lune and Wyre
Ecospan Environmental Ltd - Ecological Survey of West Waterloo Docks Merseyside
BlueCoast sediment sampling North Morecambe Bay

Meetings and Training attended this quarter

Solway Firth Partnership Working Group
Bivalve Mollusc Working Group
North Penfold cockles Multi-Agency Management Group
National IFCA Technical Advisory Group (July)
Prof. Philip Barker. Director. Lancaster Environment Centre
MMO NW Marine Plan webinars x 2
MapInfo GIS mapping, Powerboat, VHF and Advanced Towing training
AIFCA EMS Project meeting - Southern IFCA visit
Health and Safety meeting with NWIFCA H&S consultant
Shellfish Liaison Group meeting
Barrow Wildlife and Heritage Advisory Committee meeting
Cefas Bass Workshop
Peel Ports Sediment Management Group meeting
NFFO West Coast Committee meeting
Cefas Stock Assessment workshop
Solway Firth Partnership Annual Conference - presentation
BlueCoast research project meeting.

**Mandy Knott
Senior Scientist
20th November 2018**