

NWIFCA Technical, Science and Byelaw Committee

3rd November 2020: 10:00 a.m.

Agenda Item

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SCIENCE REPORT FOR INFORMATION 22ND JUNE - 30TH SEPTEMBER 2020

Purpose: To provide an update to members on the work of the Science Team in the last quarter

Recommendation: Report provided for information.

This quarter has been busy with the annual cockle surveys and HRAs, Morecambe Bay mussel management, facilitating TSB, and developing the methodology for survey of buried clams in vast intertidal areas. The Chinese Mitten Crab surveillance surveys were re-started after a break (missing one quarter) due to covid restrictions.

1. NWIFCA RESEARCH PROJECTS

a) Razor Clam collaborative research

Bangor University Shellfish Centre electro-dredge study - a detailed HRA was agreed with Natural England and MMO dispensation was issued. Officers await news from the Bangor University scientist on when vessel work aboard industry vessel may be started;

b) Whelk Fisheries in the North West

Samples for size of maturity (SOM) study continue to be supplied and are processed and analysed in the Carnforth lab.

c) Plastics in mussels

Cumbria University project will re-start with a new student taking over. Mussel samples have continued to be collected and stored and will be provided to get the project up and running again.

2. WHELK WORKING GROUP (WWG)

A further meeting was held virtually via Teams in August of this multi-agency / multi-area group. Both Cefas and Welsh Government are working towards developing whelk stock assessment models, Jersey States shared their methodology using Catch Per Unit Effort (CPUE) biomass index as a proxy. Various IFCA's are involved in reviewing their potting byelaws, regional size at maturity research, management options on MLS and closed seasons, and considering the implications and compliance options of different MLS in different areas within the District. The Marine Conservation Society invited submission of information on whelks to inform their Good Fish Guide - UK whelk fisheries generally have very low sustainability scoring. The first Annual Report of the work of the group is in draft and will be circulated to members once published. Collaboration has been agreed with the Seafish led 'Whelk Management Group' (WMG) established under the Shellfish Industry Advisory Group, to share information when appropriate and to have representation from the WMG on the IFCA led Working Group.

3. MARINE PROTECTED AREAS IN THE NWIFCA DISTRICT:

a) NWIFCA MPA Monitoring and Control Plan

The rolling programme of review of HRAs for all activities in all sites continues to ensure if any significant change occurs the HRAs are still fit for purpose and management is appropriate.

4. WYRE RIVERS TRUST BIOSECURITY PLAN LAUNCH

Dr Hartley attended the Wyre Rivers Trust biosecurity workshop via Teams. The overall aim of the workshop was to discuss biosecurity, invasive non-native species (INNS) pertinent to the Wyre Catchment, and how to stop the spread. Topics covered included promoting information sharing and access to wash down areas. The discussions held during the workshop were intended to contribute to the development of the Wyre Rivers Trust biosecurity plan.

5. MMO MARINE LICENSING STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT MEETING WITH IFCAS

MMO Marine Licensing Team invited IFCA TAG members to a virtual engagement meeting, in order to establish quarterly discussions around areas of interest and concern. The Terms of Reference are being drafted, and IFCAs have supplied MMO with a brief on what kinds of marine license consultations need IFCA response, the capacity of IFCA teams to provide detailed responses, other priority workstreams, in order for MMO to better understand the demands on IFCAs' time when responding to consultation requests. These engagement meetings are very welcome and it is hoped will improve the system in the future.

6. LOCAL DECISION MAKING IN UK FISHING MEETING

The All-party Parliamentary group on fisheries held an online event on 'Local Decision Making for UK Fisheries'. The IFCAs were represented by Tim Smith of North Eastern IFCA. Tim did an excellent job of representing the IFCAs and raising awareness of our important role. The event can be watched here:

<https://www.fisheriesappg.org/blog/2020/10/1/regional-decision-making-all-our-panelists-answers>

7. DEFRA BLUE CARBON WORKING GROUP

Dr Hartley attended the most recent Blue Carbon Working Group via teams. The group is bringing their discussions together into a knowledge exchange paper summarising existing knowledge on Blue Carbon habitats, identifying knowledge gaps and highlighting current research. The paper focusses on kelp, maerl and biogenic reef, a draft of this paper was discussed at the meeting. Biogenic reefs have the greatest uncertainty surrounding whether they are a net source or net sink of carbon (C), due to the release of C during the calcification process. However, the following project is underway as part of the Scottish Blue Carbon Forum looking at Blue Carbon in bivalve shellfish beds. <https://www.bluecarbon.scot/h-lee>

8. TIDAL LAGOON PROPOSAL - MOSTYN DOCKS, DEE ESTUARY

As reported to the September Authority meeting officers have found out about a proposal for a tidal lagoon on the Welsh side of the Dee at Mostyn. Mostyn SeaPower, a subsidiary of The Port of Mostyn, has developed the proposals. A press release from the Port of Mostyn is attached as Annex A and a summary of the environmental and planning advice provided by AMPmer can be found here: <https://www.abpmer.co.uk/experience/advising-north-wales-tidal-energy-lagoon/>

9. MERSEY ESTUARY TIDAL BARRAGE ENVIRONMENTAL WORKSHOP

Dr Hartley and Ms Knott attended an online environmental workshop convened over the Mersey Estuary Tidal Barrage project. Led by the Merseyside Environmental Advisory Service (MEAS) who have been appointed by the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority to undertake some evidence-based environmental work to support the development of a Mersey Tidal Power project, the workshop was designed to:

- provide a brief on the draft Environmental Strategy for the next phase of the project development, including the mapping method for environmental constraints to inform geographical constraints;
- to disseminate and invite feedback on the draft Environmental Stakeholder Plan;
- to identify requirements for data provision for the Mersey Tidal Power Project to Liverpool City Region Combined Authority.

MEAS state that they are advisors, not project advocates and will be using a data-driven and risk-based approach throughout. They are currently establishing the evidence base across the entire study area, totally neutral of locations and technology. They are engaging with environmental stakeholders, guided by their Environmental Stakeholder Plan, to assemble and map the evidence on environmental constraints to inform the next steps of project development.

The workshop was attended by representatives from wide ranging environmental agencies both statutory and non-statutory with knowledge and expertise in the area of potential influence from the proposed barrage. This area stretches from the Ribble Estuary down to north Wales and out in to Liverpool Bay, centering on the Mersey.

More information on the project proposal: <https://www.liverpoolcityregion-ca.gov.uk/metro-mayor-appoints-industry-veteran-to-deliver-mersey-tidal-power-project/>

10. ANGLING TRUST - ANGLERS AGAINST POLLUTION CAMPAIGN

The Angling Trust have launched an online campaign which “seeks to give anglers a voice in the fight for a better future for our environment by holding the Government to account for its promises, its actions and its responsibilities” in relation to England’s failing water quality against Water Framework Directive criteria citing pollution as the main reason for these poor standards. The link to the campaign: https://anglingtrust.net/get-involved/anglers-against-pollution/?dm_i=3XSU,173DB,2NFRER,49SOV,1

11. WHOLESCAPE APPROACH TO MARINE MANAGEMENT WORKSHOP

Dr Hartley attended the Wholescape Approach to Marine Management Workshop (WAMM), held online. WAMM is an EMFF funded national initiative lead by the rivers trusts and coastal partnerships, aiming to support a more integrated and collaborative approach to the management of estuarine and coastal waters.

This workshop incorporated the South West (SW) and North West (NW) workshops and consisted of presentations from NW and SW Catchment and Coastal Partnerships, a presentation of the Coastal Data Explorer developed by the project and available online at the Catchment Based Approach (CaBA) website, a presentation of the Morecambe Bay pilot project, and concluded with break out groups to explore collaborative working between catchment and coastal partnerships.

Morecambe Bay has been selected as the primary study area for WAMM and the Morecambe Bay Coastal Partnership and the three CaBA partnerships encompassing the Bay catchment (led by Wyre, Lune and South Cumbria Rivers Trusts) have begun a programme of collaborative projects focussing on plastics and water quality.

More information and the outputs from all regional workshops can be found online.
<https://catchmentbasedapproach.org/learn/wamm/>

Mandy Knott
Senior Scientist
20th October 2020