

NWIFCA Technical, Science and Byelaw Committee

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

Agenda Item

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NEPHROPS CREELS STUDY - CUMBRIA WILDLIFE TRUST

Purpose: To provide information to members on continuing research by Cumbria Wildlife Trust into feasibility of a nephrops creel fishery in the northeast Irish Sea

Recommendation: Members approve further work on this project with Cumbria Wildlife Trust.

Background:

1. Last year Natural England funded research into the feasibility of developing a nephrops creel fishery in the northeast Irish Sea. Cumbria Wildlife Trust worked with a fisherman in Barrow to trial a pilot creel fishery within the West of Walney Marine Conservation Zone where trawling for nephrops is now prohibited under the West of Walney Marine Conservation Zone (Specified Area) Bottom Towed Fishing Byelaw.
2. Between May and July 2019, 50 pots across 4 strings were deployed, and eight surveys of the catch were undertaken within this site (beyond 6nm, outside NWIFCA District).
3. In August 2019, Cumbria Wildlife Trust applied to the NWIFCA for a derogation against the Cumbria Sea Fisheries Committee Byelaw 25 - Requirement for escape gaps in pots, creels and traps to allow three further surveys to be undertaken using the North Western Protector in an area identified by local fishermen closer to Whitehaven and within the 6nm limit.
4. The results of these pilot surveys can be found in Annex A showing potential and that further research would benefit future recommendations.
5. Between August and November 2019, Cumbria Wildlife Trust undertook some initial consultation with the fishing industry in Whitehaven to determine whether there was sufficient interest in the creel fishery to apply for funding to undertake a larger scale trial. A number of fishermen expressed an interest in the research and, as a result, an application to the Maritime Fisheries Fund (MFF) was developed and submitted by Cumbria Wildlife Trust at the end of November 2019 with the following aim:

To work in partnership with small-scale coastal fishermen to undertake research on the implementation of a creel fishery for Nephrops off Cumbria. This project fits with one of the key priorities of the fund, projects which investigate the potential to limit the physical and biological impacts of fishing on the ecosystem and the seabed.
6. The project would expand on the pilot project, which investigated the feasibility of using creels to catch Nephrops, by working with three small-scale coastal fishermen to investigate the use of creels at more of a commercial scale – i.e. 400 creels per fisherman to align with the measures proposed in the new potting byelaw for u10m vessels entering the whelk fishery. The findings and insight from the project would then be disseminated amongst the local fishing community and further afield to share best practice and any insight gained from the research.
7. In August 2020, the MMO approved the MFF funding for the creel fishery project, to cover the costs associated with purchasing the fishing gear required to undertake the study.

8. The next steps include further consultation with the nephrops fishing fleet, before purchasing the gear and undertaking the research next year. Cumbria Wildlife Trust and the Science Officers from the NWIFCA are looking to arrange the first meetings in November.
9. Officers request approval from TSB to further this collaborative project with Cumbria Wildlife Trust.

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Senior Scientist
21st October 2020