

**NWIFCA Technical, Science and Byelaw
Committee**

1st November 2016: 10:00 a.m.

**AGENDA
ITEM NO.**

8

WEST OF WALNEY MCZ MANAGEMENT OPTIONS

Purpose: To provide Members with an update on discussions with Defra / MMO over management of this cross-boundary site.

Recommendation:

Consider if a separate IFCA byelaw for the area inside 6 miles is justified and efficient noting that an MMO byelaw and/or a CFP measure will be required for the area with much heavier fishing activity outside 6 miles.

Current position

1. West of Walney MCZ was designated in January 2016. Defra wish to have management measures in place within two years.
2. This MCZ is the first in the NWIFCA District with a 'recover' objective. Management measures are expected to be required including restrictions on bottom towed 'demersal' fishing gear.
3. Natural England and JNCC will advise on acceptable gear types and intensity of fishing which can be permitted to recover mud habitat fauna such as seapens and burrowing megafauna.
4. The site extends from 4.3 miles from baseline, to outside 12nm although the area outside 12 is small and will be covered by the proposed windfarm extension. As reported to the Authority in September, discussions are continuing with Defra and MMO over different regulatory options.
5. At the August meeting, TSB agreed MMO should be asked to make an MCZ byelaw covering 0-12 miles as the preferred option for consistent management. Defra/ MMO should be responsible for any measure in the area outside 12 miles if such is needed.

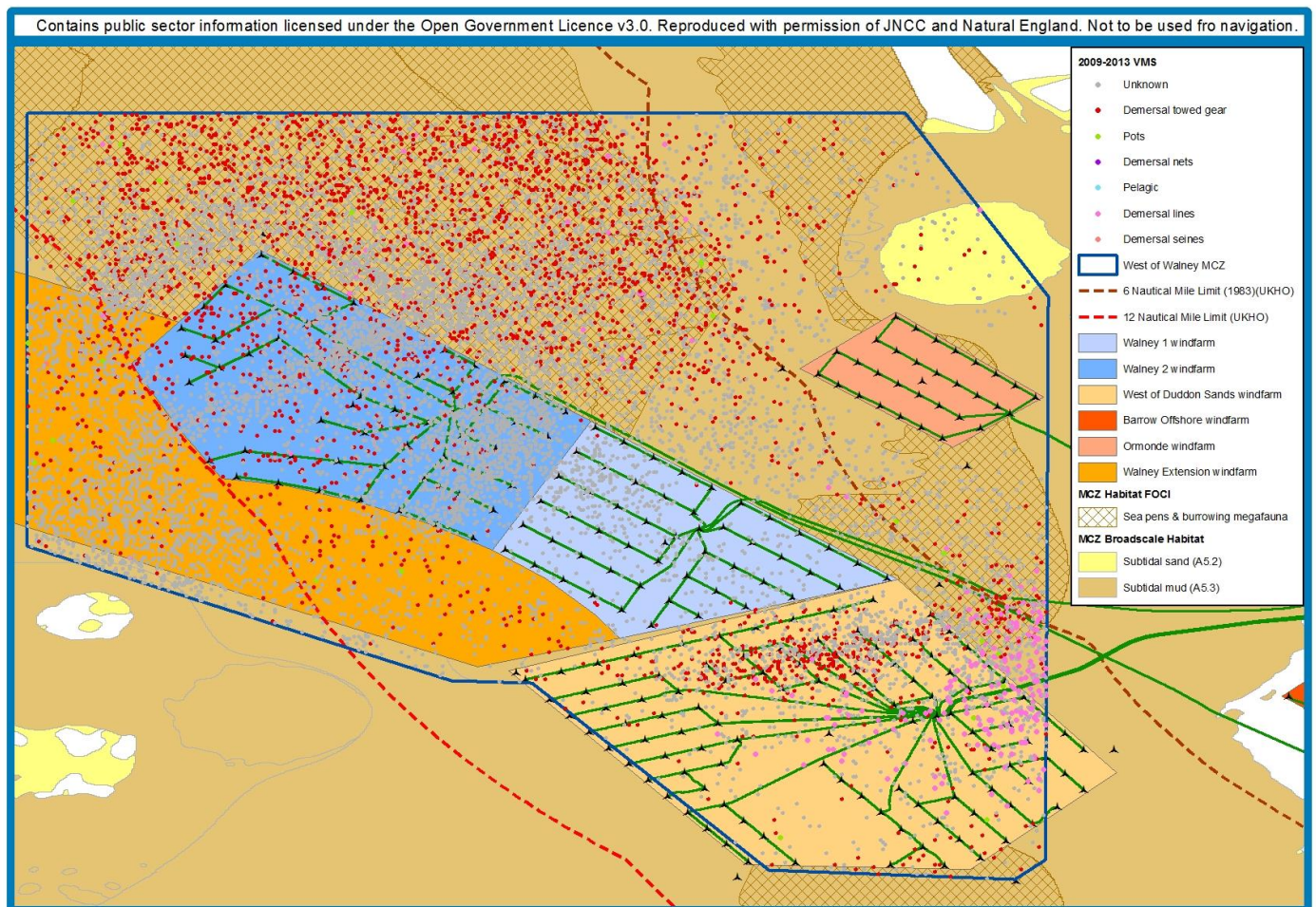
Fishing activity data

6. Work to compile fishing activity data on the part of the site in the District has begun. Figure 1 shows UK and non-UK vessel data from the Vessel Monitoring System (VMS).
7. In respect of the part of the site in the NWIFCA District, the data shows almost no demersal fishing activity in the windfarm area as would be expected and relatively less fishing on the rest of the NWIFCA area compared with the area between the 6 and 12 mile limits. All the fishing activity on the site within the NWIFCA District is assumed to be UK vessels as no non-UK activity is recorded.
8. There may be a significant amount of under 15m vessel activity which is not recorded on the VMS although there are relatively few under 15m vessels towing demersal gear which would regularly fish so far from port.
9. The 6-12 mile area carries most of the fishing activity on the site. The majority is UK vessels active outside the area of the windfarm. There is significant non-UK activity in this area.
10. The area of the site outside 12 miles will be almost entirely covered by the Walney Extension windfarm. The two remaining areas, a narrow strip to the south of the proposed windfarm and a small triangle area to the North may have subtidal mud with seapens and burrowing megafauna. These areas are likely to be too close to the windfarm to be heavily fished.

Decisions on management measures

11. Further information is unlikely to appear so the data above may be all that is available. Defra will decide whether measures are needed for the area outside 12 miles, in which case a single CFP measure from 6 to outside 12 miles may be recommended. In this case NWIFCA could be expected to make a management byelaw for the area inside 6 mile area to prohibit bottom towed fishing. However, the area of such a closure would be small and impact on fishing activity relatively low. Such a byelaw would be difficult and inefficient to enforce and would have relatively little conservation benefit.
12. The absence of fishable areas of the site outside 12 miles once the windfarm extension is completed suggests that conservation measures may not be needed for this area. In this case management could be achieved with an MMO byelaw 0-12 miles or an MMO byelaw 6-12 miles and an IFCA byelaw 0—6 miles. The former option would be the most consistent and enforceable solution. An IFCA byelaw would again be difficult and inefficient to enforce and would have relatively little conservation impact.

Figure 1: West of Walney MCZ Fishing Activity Data 2009-2013 showing UK and non UK fishing activity recorded on the UK VMS system inside the site. NB: under 15m vessels generally do not have VMS and are not recorded.



CEO
24th October 2016