

**NWIFCA Annual Meeting:  
10<sup>th</sup> June 2016: 11.00 a.m.**

**AGENDA  
ITEM NO.  
13**

**SCIENCE AND SURVEY UPDATE:  
27<sup>TH</sup> FEBRUARY – 14<sup>TH</sup> MAY 2016**

**Purpose:** To provide an update on science and related work

**Recommendation:** The report be received.

**Introduction**

1. This report is for information. No decisions from members are needed at this time.

**Staffing and Recruitment**

2. This quarter has seen the departure of Sarah Temple from the Science Team and the recruitment of a new officer in Belinda Vause. Sarah's leaving was a great loss to the team after over two years of dedication, and we wish her well in her new employment with the MMO Marine Planning department on the south coast. Belinda has previously worked for Sussex Sea Fisheries Committee/IFCA and recently returned from two years working for the British Antarctic Survey. She is a very welcome addition to a strengthened team. Once the induction of all science officers has been completed, we anticipate developing the NWIFCA science core substantially.
3. The advent of longer days has meant the team has been busy with cockle and mussel surveys and inspections assisted by IFCOs across the District, along with the following workstreams:

**Bivalve Mollusc Working Group (BMWG)**

4. The meeting of BMWG planned for spring was postponed due to the opening of the Leven cockle fishery. It was re-scheduled for Friday 13th May, where two cockle buying representatives were present. The draft Morecambe Bay Cockle Management Plan was tabled for discussion and a presentation given on cockle life history and ecology. The majority of the measures have been agreed and documented for both the Mussel and Cockle Plans. The main outstanding issue for both Plans is the bird food requirements for oystercatcher, knot, eiders and herring gulls. Natural England tabled reports on the use of the Stillman Bird Model. Discussions will continue with Natural England and RSPB to find a way forward.
5. The District's cockle and mussel beds have been surveyed and the group discussed potential commercial fisheries. More information is given below. Industry have scheduled a heli-flight out over the seed mussel beds in north Morecambe Bay on which a science officer will be present. Following this the findings of the inspection will be discussed by the seed mussel dredger and Byelaw 3 permit holder reps to see if agreement can be reached on how to split the area up for the different sectors, before coming back to the Science team with their recommendations. Any fisheries will be subject to full HRA before the Authority can authorise them.

**Assessment of Fishing Activities in European Marine Sites**

6. This Review work has a Defra deadline of the end of 2016 and the bulk of it has been

completed. Table 1 provides a progress report. Table 2 provides a summary of the work to date. 36 assessments have been completed or are awaiting sign off. Some changes have been made to the way these totals have been worked out as explained in the text below.

**Table 1: Review of Fishing Activities in European Marine Sites – remaining assessments.**

<u>Started</u>	<u>Yet to be Started</u>
Static fixed nets and drift nets – Dee Estuary	Beam trawl (shrimp), light otter trawl, Multi-rig trawl – Dee Estuary
Drift nets – Mersey Estuary and North Wirral Foreshore	Light otter trawls - Mersey Estuary and North Wirral Foreshore
RA-SPA-002 Beam trawl (whitefish and shrimp), light otter trawls	Beam trawl whitefish – Morecambe Bay
Beam trawl shrimp - Morecambe Bay*	Light otter trawl – Morecambe Bay
Potting – Morecambe Bay*	Static nets and drift nets – Morecambe Bay
Shrimp push nets – Morecambe Bay*	Static nets – Solway Firth
Beam trawl shrimp – Solway Firth	Stakenets – Solway Firth
Stakenets – Morecambe Bay	

**Table 2: Review of Fishing Activities in European Marine Sites – Assessment table – 21st April 2016**

	Expected Total	Not yet started	Currently underway	Assessment complete and in final discussion with NE	Assessment complete and signed off by NE	On website and huddle
Non-occurring “Light” TLSE	11+ 4 <sup>1</sup>	0	0	0	11	(11) 13 <sup>th</sup> July 2015
Currently recreational only	8 <sup>2</sup>				8	(7) 21/04/16
TLSE	18	3	3	3	9	(6) 21/04/16
Joint assessments with MMO	1 <sup>3</sup> (inc. 4 gears)		1			
Appropriate Assessments	11 <sup>4</sup>	3	3	1	4	(4) 21/04/16
<b>Totals</b>	49	6	7	4	32	-

Changes in figures are due to the following:-

- 1 Fisheries assessed as non-occurring are subject to a light TLSE only. 11 are done and signed off. 4 working documents containing activities since been found not to occur will be combined with the original 11 at the end of the review.
- 2 fishing which is currently only recreational has not been assessed as it is not commercial.
- 3 Cross border site Liverpool Bay EMS with MMO - joint assessments.
- 4 Increase in AA due to expected TLSE going through to AA (netting activities).

**NORTH WEST COAST CONNECTIONS - NATIONAL GRID work on routing options for 400KV cables from Moorside nuclear power station**

7. National Grid have now published their choice of ‘route corridor’ (Fig. 1) for the high voltage cabling from the new nuclear power station at Moorside, near Sellafield. Full information can be found on their website:  
<http://www.northwestcoastconnections.com/bgo/overviewwherewearenow.asp>

which states: ‘We have decided to go ahead with plans for a new connection that will take the following route corridor. This is made up of two parts:

- a route going north from Moorside to a point on the existing grid network at Harker substation, near Carlisle and;
  - a route going south from Moorside across the Furness peninsula then under Morecambe Bay to connect in at a point on the existing grid network at Middleton substation near Heysham in Lancashire.
8. The route corridor that we have decided to progress will, in the main, follow the path of existing pylon lines owned and operated by Electricity North West (ENW). These existing 132kV lines are used to distribute electricity to homes and businesses in the region. However, they do not have enough capacity to accommodate the amount of electricity a power station the size of Moorside will generate. As we go forward we need to decide which of the existing 132kV lines could be removed and replaced with our higher voltage equipment.
  9. Having chosen a route corridor for our new connection linking Moorside to our existing electricity network, we will study it in more detail to pinpoint where in that corridor the connection will run. This is called finding the 'route alignment'. We will evaluate or 'appraise' our chosen route against a wide range of technical, environmental, socio-economic and cost factors. We call this 'options appraisal' and we have defined a list of criteria to use when we carry out this work'.
  10. Officers are aware that there are a large number of stakeholders of the Lake District National Park who are vociferously opposed to certain sections of the chosen route, the positioning of 50m pylons and their effect on the visual amenity of the Park. A watching brief is being kept on how this develops as calls for a review of the off-shore route may influence future plans.
  11. Officers were concerned that borehole survey work using jack-up barges for the proposed routing of the tunnel under Morecambe Bay had been scheduled in without consultation with fishers who would be affected and possibly prevented from accessing fishing grounds while work was carried out, despite continuous work over the past five years to ensure Grid engage with fishers throughout. Although National Grid had employed a Fisheries Liaison Officer this was a disappointing outcome and concerns were raised very openly with them. TSB has asked officers to write directly to Grid expressing the concerns.
  12. The Science Team battle with this issue on a weekly basis with numerous developments along the north-west coast. Developers seem to interpret the term 'consultation with fishermen and fishery interests' as 'tell them what you are doing once it's been decided'.

### **Moorside Power Station**

13. Officers remain engaged with technical meetings for the new nuclear build at Moorside – and in particular the MOLF – Marine Offloading Facility – by which materials for the build will be transported to the site, and how this will affect fishing stakeholders, fishing grounds and the marine and coastal environment.

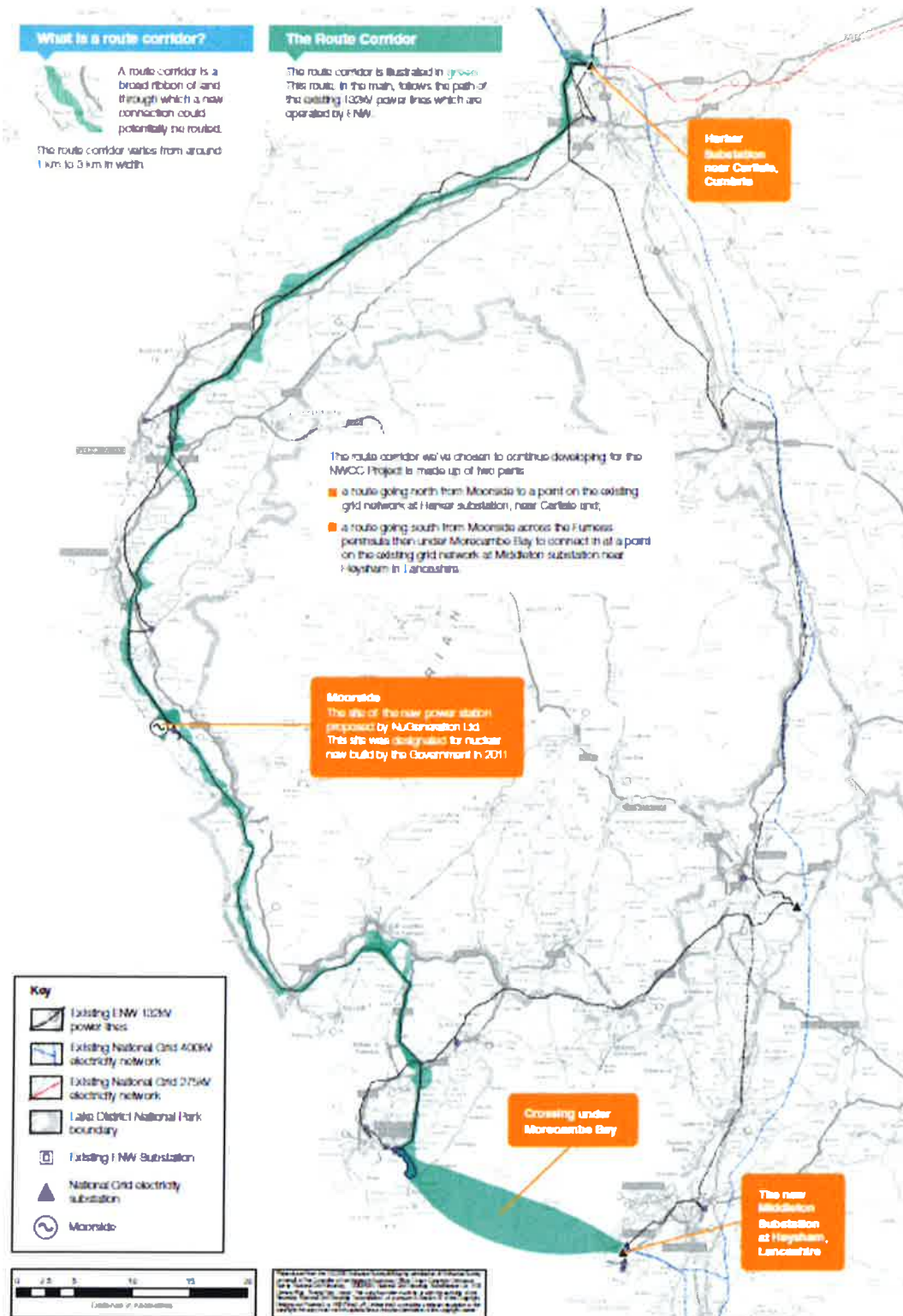


Fig. 1. National Grid's corridor route now published.

## Marine Planning – MMO Launch of the North West Inshore & Offshore Marine Plan Areas

14. Ms Vause attended a meeting in Blackpool where presentations were given by the MMO outlining the purpose and the process for Marine Plans in the UK. Marine Planning aims to:
- Achieve integration between different objectives;
  - Recognise that the demand for use of our seas and the resulting pressures on them will continue to increase;

- iii) Manage competing demands on the marine area, taking an ecosystem-based approach;
  - iv) Enable the co existence of compatible activities wherever possible;
  - v) Integrate with terrestrial planning (ref: UK Marine Policy Statement).
15. The European Maritime Spatial Planning Directive commits all EU states to have Marine Plans in place by 2021. In addition, the UK is committed to having Marine Plans through UK legislation (Marine and Coastal Access Act and the Marine Policy Statement). The UK coastline has been split into 11 areas; in the North West we have the North West Inshore Area (0 to 12nm) and the North West Offshore Area (12nm out to the border with Isle of Man territorial waters). There are 11 stages to producing a Marine Plan. Stage 1 is the Statement of Public Participation to agree how and when interested people will be involved. Consultation on this draft document is live now and stakeholders are being asked to provide feedback on this by 13th May: <https://www.connect.marinemanagement.org.uk/consultations/draft-spps>
16. Then follow steps 1-5. When the Statement of Public Participation is agreed and signed off by the Secretary of State evidence gathering will begin, most likely to be late summer 2016. It is proposed that the first draft NW Marine Plans will be completed by the end of 2016. There will be 3 iterations and then it will go out for Public Consultation (stage 6).
17. In addition, the Marine Information System (MIS) was introduced which includes an interactive map. By choosing a sector or topic of interest such as energy, dredging or biodiversity you can find policies and considerations relevant to a specified area. Data can be submitted, and errors seen in data commented on, through this portal. It is still under development for the North West.

<http://mis.marinemanagement.org.uk/>

#### Relevant Contacts

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Chris Sweeting, Marine Planner with responsibility for fisheries. MMO, Newcastle office

### **Mussel Fisheries**

18. A full report on the state of the mussel fisheries to date was provided to TSB on 10<sup>th</sup> May and BMWG on 13<sup>th</sup> May. Further assessments are scheduled for the rest of the summer and discussion is on-going around their management in Morecambe Bay. No mussel settlement has been reported in the south part of the District. The Ribble beds will be inspected once / if a settlement is reported. The Solway beds will be surveyed in due course. Officers await reports from industry on the presence of sub-tidal mussel in the Solway.

### **Cockle Fisheries**

19. Indications in autumn of 2015 was that a late but substantial cockle settlement had occurred across the District and Officers planned surveys of all beds at the earliest opportunity. A full update to the beginning of May was provided to TSB and BMWG. Further surveys are scheduled in on the beds where a commercial stock looked promising.
20. The Leven cockle fishery was authorised following a full HRA and management measures included in the conditions of the authorisation to ensure the fishery was Habitats Regulations compliant.

### **Fleetwood 'Stone Island**

21. Members may be aware of media and local interest in a cobble island that has developed

off the coast at Fleetwood. This follows the publication of drone footage on social media. Retired IFCO Steve Brown had been taking Science Officers out to it for the past few years during low water mussel inspections, and it has been growing steadily and now protrudes above the water line on most tides, standing around 10m high and 600m in length. The Senior Scientist has contacted Wyre Borough Council Civil Engineers who are carrying out the sea defence work at Rossall to ask if they have any modelling which may have predicted this development. There is interest in investigating how this structure, naturally formed but possibly influenced by anthropogenic forces, could be affecting the hydrology and sedimentation in the Bay.

### **Small Fish Surveys**

22. The Science Team are keen to develop a schedule of small fish surveys in the District to enhance our understanding of key areas that are important to juveniles of commercially fished species, not least of which is bass. Contact has been made with the Environment Agency who survey some of the District's rivers are part of the Water Framework Directive work. We would not wish to duplicate that work, but to use any data relevant to fisheries that fall under the NWIFCA remit. Efforts are on-going to learn their survey techniques, and carry out our own surveys to plug the gaps. This might entail surveys in estuaries and saltmarshes. Belinda Vause already has experience in this area as she was instrumental in drawing up Standard Operating Procedures for IFCAs carrying out small fish surveys in her time with Sussex IFCA.

### **Authorisations and MMO Marine Licence consultations this quarter**

Anchorsholme – United Utilities Outfall  
Burbo Bank Extension Debris Clearance - DONG energy  
Lune estuary – EA Benthic surveys  
Leven Viaduct repairs  
Liverpool University Mersey surveys  
Mersey Gateway Project - AECOM surveys  
NERC Catchments Releases Dee and North Wales 2016  
United Utilities: River Lune Drought Permit EAR Report  
West Cumbria Mining – borehole surveys  
Workington Rail Transport Hub

### **Meetings, workshops and courses attended**

IFCA sonar camera demonstration – Eastern IFCA  
Wader Bird Training with RSPB, NE and MMO  
Wyre Estuary Group – discussion over joint working on small fish surveys  
Byelaw 3 permit holders stakeholder meeting over Byelaw 3 review  
C-Bass Steering Project Group – Defra  
Solway Firth Partnership Quarterly Meeting  
Leven cockle fishery - Joint Agency Planning meeting  
Shellfish Liaison Group Meeting  
NWIFCA Enforcement Team meeting  
Dee Estuary Sea Fisheries Liaison Group meeting  
Lancaster University research proposals meeting – sediment transport and cockles  
Cumbria Wildlife Trust Marine Trainees programme – delivery of one days training on NWIFCA  
Bird Model update – meeting with NE  
Powerboat level II course  
Internal website development – with LDNP

**Senior Scientist**  
**20th May 2016**