

**NWIFCA Technical, Science and Byelaw
Committee**

17th August 2021: 10:00 a.m.

**Agenda Item
10**

SCIENCE REPORT FOR INFORMATION
1ST APRIL – 30TH JUNE 2021

Purpose: To provide an update on the work of the Science Team in the quarter.

Recommendation: Report for information, Receive the report

Training has continued with new science staff this quarter whilst completing an extensive survey schedule. The prioritisation of surveys, completion of HRAs, Authorisations and Permit Conditions for potential fisheries as well as being down one member of science staff has meant a continued reduction in some of the other work streams. Therefore the science report is relatively short this quarter.

1. NWIFCA RESEARCH PROJECTS

a) Razor Clam collaborative research

No change from previously reported – HRA and IFCA/MMO dispensations are in place. Awaiting for details on starting the survey.

b) Whelk Fisheries in the North West

Analysis of the data has been put on hold until after the cockle and mussel surveys and work to open fisheries has been completed. It is hoped to provide a report on the work carried out since 2019 at the November TSB meeting. The aims are to better inform management within the potting byelaw and identify further sampling which may be required.

2. WHELK WORKING GROUP (WWG)

A further meeting was held online in June of this multi-agency/ multi-area group. Various IFCAs are involved in reviewing their potting byelaws, regional size at maturity research and management options for whelk. Collaboration has been agreed to centralise useful data collected by the various organisations. Whelk Management Group (WMG) and SEAFISH have launched a Whelk Questionnaire that aims to gather information regarding anecdotal differences in whelk populations noted by fishers.

The Marine Conservation Society had previously invited submission of information on whelks for their Good Fish Guide and the consultation has now closed. New ratings will be published on the MCS website. Fisheries Management plans were discussed as a priority following on from the release of D&S IFCA's plans that were recently published on their website, including one for Whelk.

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 HRAs are still fit for purpose and management is appropriate.

b) HIGHLY PROTECTED MARINE AREAS (HPMAs)

The government response to the Benyon review of HPMAs has been published (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/government-response-to-the-highly-protected-marine-areas-hpmas-review/government-response-to-the-highly-protected-marine-areas-hpmas-review>). On the whole the government accepted the main recommendation set out in the review and will begin introducing HPMAs by identifying a number of locations with English waters as a pilot. The identification of a shortlist of sites is expected in 2021 with designation in 2022.

c) St Bees Closure 5th March – 25th July

The St Bees Voluntary Netting Closure was implemented on 5th March and came to an end on 25th July. There were no detected breaches of the Voluntary Code of Practice.

4. FUTURE INSHORE STRATEGIC HAND GATHERING IMPLEMENTATION GROUP (FISHGIG)

An IFCA based group has been set up with a representative from each IFCA to discuss the management of both recreational and commercial hand gathered fisheries. FISHGIG provides a strategic working group to focus upon shared solutions to future management, through both non regulatory and regulatory means and allows for the sharing of resources and ideas. A further meeting was held with attendance of the Angling Trust and Natural England. The final draft of the package of information is being completed and will be distributed internally to all IFCAs for comment.

5. OFFSHORE WIND LEASING ROUND 4

There have been six proposed new offshore wind projects in the latest round of offshore wind leasing. Three of these areas are within the Irish Sea. All of the proposed areas are outside of the district. Crown Estate are currently undertaking a Plan-Level Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) to assess potential impacts to European Marine Sites prior to awarding seabed rights. Further information can be found on the Crown Estate website with links to the process and maps of the proposed areas: <https://www.thecrownestate.co.uk/en-gb/media-and-insights/news/2021-offshore-wind-leasing-round-4-signals-major-vote-of-confidence-in-the-uk-s-green-economy/>

6. MERSEY TIDAL POWER PROJECT

The third online environmental workshop for the Mersey Estuary Tidal Barrage project. This is 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 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 into Liverpool Bay, centering on the Mersey.

At the moment, the project is in the initial scoping stage where the aim is to take on board comments and questions from stakeholders in order to guide the direction of the next stages. In terms of fish/ fisheries, they are looking at carrying out multi-year duration surveys with an initial focus on some sectors and the potential to extend the scope later on. They are welcoming comments on commercial aspects to be taken into account, and the species that should be included. Their aim is to make all their data open source. They will be looking further into finding key survey periods and have listened to different strategies on how to focus this part of the study. After this initial stage of seeking input, they will move on to produce a more solid evidence plan. They are currently in the process of recruiting an EIA survey lead.

7. SURVEY SCHEDULE AND PROGRESS 2021

A full survey and inspection report has been provide as its own agenda item. Annex A provides an update of the surveys that have been completed and those which have been planned in. As previously mentioned there has been a change in timings to reflect the need to collect data earlier this year. There are number of surveys which were planned for July that have yet to be completed. Officers will plan to complete these in August.

NWIFCA
29th July 2021

Annex A – SURVEY SCHEDULE AND PROGRESS TABLES 2021

Cockle	Type	Number of days	Number of officers	Planned	Complete	Return needed?
<u>Morecambe Bay</u>						
Pilling	Survey	1	4	May	Y	N
Middleton	Survey	1	4	May	Y	N
Warton	Inspection	1	2	Mar	Y	Y
	Survey	1	4	May	Y	N
Flookburgh	Survey	2	4	May	Y	N
Leven	Survey	1	4	May	Y	N
Aldingham	Survey	1	2	May	Y	N
Newbiggin	Survey	1	2	May	Y	N
Duddon	Inspection	1	2	Jul		
<u>Ribble</u>						
Lytham (3 beds)	Inspection	1	2	Jul	Y	N
Southport (4 beds)	Inspection	1	2	Jul	Y	N
<u>Wirral</u>						
Leasowe	Survey	1	4	Jul	Y	N
<u>Solway</u>						
Middle Bank	Survey - Boat	1-2	Boat Crew +4	Jun/Jul		

Mussel	Type	Number of days	Number of officers	Planned	Complete	Return needed?
<u>Morecambe Bay</u>						
Fleetwood (4 beds)	Inspection	2	2	May	Y	Y
				Jul	Y	Y
Wyre End	Inspection	1	2	May	Y	N
Heysham Flat	Inspection	4	2	Mar	Y	Y
				May	Y	Y
				Jun	Y	Y
				Jul	Y	Potentially
Foulney	Dutch Wand	1	4	Apr	Y	Potentially
Walney Channel	Dutch Wand	1	4	Apr	Y	Potentially
Low Bottom	Inspection	1	2	May		
S. America	Inspection	4	2	Mar	Y	Y
				May	Y	Y
				Jun	Y	Y
				Jul	Y	Potentially
Falklands	Inspection	1	4	Jul	Y	Y
Industry Heli-flight	Inspection	3	1	Apr	Y	Y
			1	May	Y	Y
			1	Jun	Y	N
Duddon	Inspection	1	2-4	Apr	Y	Y
				Jun	Y	Y

<u>Dee</u>						
West Kirby	Inspection	1	2	Jul	Y	N
<u>Solway</u>						
Silloth	Side Scan Sonar	8	Boat Crew +2	Apr	Y	Y
				Jul		
				Oct		
				Jan		

Otter Clams	Type	Number of days	Number of officers	Planned	Complete	Return needed?
<u>Wirral</u>						
Leasowe	Survey	8	4	Feb	Y	Y
				Jun	Y	Y
				Sep		
				Dec		