

NWIFCA Technical, Science and Byelaw Committee

2nd November 2021: 10:00 a.m.

Agenda Item
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SURVEY AND INSPECTION REPORT

Purpose: To report survey and inspections in the last quarter.

Recommendation: Approve the following:

a) Receive the report

1. MUSSELS

A full report on the mussel surveys and inspections which have been completed since the last report provided to TSB at the August meeting including the information provided to member via email (24-08-21) on South America in Annex A.

a) Duddon Estuary Mussel Inspection

The bed was surveyed but due to the limited time it would not have been possible to complete a survey using the dutch wand methodology for an estimate of biomass. Instead core samples were taken in transect across the bed and an estimated percentage cover was used to provide the estimated biomass.

A review of the most recent sanitary survey and the location of the bed by FSA and Cefas meant the RMP could be moved to the Northern extremity of the bed without further work needing to be completed. For classification 10 samples and minimum of a week apart are required. The bed has been accessible on more tides than originally predicted and it has been possible to collect the weekly samples with a potential classification by the end of November.

NWIFCA, Natural England and the National Trust had a site visit to discuss access to the fishery and potential for damage to Natterjack Toads. Natterjack toads are listed as a protected species in the SSSI and Ramsar designations and therefore will need to be considered in the HRA. The byway and access onto the beach has changed considerably since the last fishery a large shingle bank has formed on the top of the shore, creating large pools of water which are used by Natterjack toads in the spring and early summer during breeding, and in the early part of life cycle of the species. Discussion between the agencies' were positive with the proposal of the preferred access point being Lowsy Point with access from Sandscale Haws an option outside of the breeding season which is likely to be between late March and July. The change in access between March and July from Sandscale Haws ensures that the fishery remains HRA compliant. The access will be discussed with permit holders over the coming weeks.

b) Morecambe Bay Mussels

I. South America

An inspection was carried out on 24th August 2021. The mussel bed had changed since it was last inspected which is expected due to the time of year, the weather and that it has been fished. There is mussel still present but in a reduced density, a lot of the remaining mussel is

hard in and the layer of sediment has thinned with the mussel being on sand and very little mud present. There are also areas of exposed stony substrate throughout the area. As such the fishery was no longer be HRA compliant and the authorisation and flexible dredge permit conditions were revoked. An aerial overview of South America has been provided in the Heliflight inspection note (09-09-21).

II. Falklands

An industry heliflight was attended by NWIFCA to look at the North Morecambe Bay mussel beds in particular South America and Falklands. The area inspected in July when NWIFCA tried a RHIB out on part shows little change from the previous report.

The areas between the drying bed and Foulney varied in mussel density with bare areas, low density mussel and patches of dense mussels. Some areas had significant starfish. It was not possible to get any area estimates due to conditions, water clarity and mode of survey.

This was the last survey this year and the area will be surveyed next spring to see if any of the mussel has survived the winter.

2. Cockles

No further surveys or inspections have taken place since the last report.

a) Ribble Estuary

Further to the inspections completed by NWIFCA, industry have provided geo reference data for Foulnaze showing evidence of a dense settlement with reports of cockle being 13mm in size. As with the other beds within the Ribble Estuary they will be inspected in early 2022 to assess if the spat has survived the winter.

NWIFCA, 15th October 2021