

**NWIFCA Technical, Science and Byelaw
Committee**

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

**Agenda Item
7**

SCIENCE REPORT FOR INFORMATION
1ST JULY – 30TH SEPTEMBER 2021

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

Recommendation: Report for information, Receive the report

This quarter, training has continued with new science staff. The majority of the workload has been completing an extensive survey schedule. The main priorities have been the completion of surveys, HRAs, Authorisations and Permit Conditions for potential fisheries.

Mr Elliott Waltho left on 8th October to take up a post with Natural England as a Lead Advisor in the Cheshire and Lancashire area team. Mr Waltho has been a valued member of the team since moving from the IFCO role he previously had.

The further reduction in staff and the prioritisation of cockle and mussel fisheries 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

The survey was planned for September but was unfortunately cancelled due to bad weather. It is hoped to be rescheduled in the coming months prior to the end of November when the MMO dispensation expires.

b) Whelk Fisheries in the North West

All samples obtained from industry have been processed and analysis of the data has started. Unfortunately due to staffing and other priorities the analysis has not been completed for this meeting as hoped. Once the analysis has been completed a report will be provided to members at a future meeting.

2. WHELK WORKING GROUP (WWG)

A further meeting was held online in September of this multi-agency/ multi-area group. A presentation from a Defra representative on Fisheries Management Plans was provided to the group and the potential for whelks to be identified as a priority. An update was provided from each members on the various whelk and potting work streams around the UK. The second annual report for the group is in draft form and once finalised it will be provided to members.

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)

No further update.

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)

The final draft of the package of information has been completed and will be distributed internally to all IFCAs for comment. Once available for external distribution it will be provided to members.

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/>. It is expected that the HRA will have been completed spring 2022.

6. MERSEY TIDAL POWER PROJECT

There was the fourth 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.

The September workshop focused on environmental survey and scope of non-breeding birds and results from a marine traffic study.

7. SURVEY SCHEDULE AND PROGRESS 2021

A full survey and inspection report has been provided as its own agenda item. Annex A provides an update of the surveys that have been completed and those which have been planned in. Most surveys have been completed other than those requiring the use of North Western Protector. A number of surveys were planned and cancelled due to bad weather and in recent months due to issues with the vessel and availability of crew. The middle bank cockle survey will not be completed due to the loss of daylight hours and the requirement for surveying on a spring tide and a mussel side scan sonar survey will be complete when resources and weather permit.

NWIFCA
15th October 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	N
Foulney	Dutch Wand	1	4	Apr	Y	N
Walney Channel	Dutch Wand	1	4	Apr	Y	N
Low Bottom	Inspection	1	2	May		
S. America	Inspection	5	2	Mar	Y	Y
				May	Y	Y
				Jun	Y	Y
				Jul	Y	Y
				Aug	Y	N
Falklands	Inspection	1	4	Jul	Y	Done on Heliflight
Industry Heliflight	Inspection	4	1	Apr	Y	Y
				May	Y	Y
				Jun	Y	Y
				Sep	Y	N

Duddon	Inspection	1	2	Apr	Y	Y
				Jun	Y	Y
				Sep	Y	Potentially

<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
				Oct	Y	Y
				Dec		