

Bivalve Mollusc Working Group – Meeting 4th September 2015 – 1400 hrs. Carnforth

NOTES of Meeting

<u>Present:</u>	Stephen Atkins (Chair)	<u>Apologies:</u>	Richard Henning
	Mandy Knott		Emily Baxter
	Andrew Deary		Calum Booth
	Chris Lumb		Terry Davies
	Gary Pidduck		Kelsey Thompson
	Tim Manning		Ian Dixon
	Kim Mould		Sarah Temple
	Rob Benson (for Kelsey Thompson – aquaculture)		
	Graham Wood		
	David Harpley		

1. Chairman's introduction

Introduced agenda which today concentrates on active and potential fisheries. No further progress has been made with the Management Plan due to work from active fisheries.

2. Notes of last meeting – agreed as true record

3. Matters arising – none

4. Update on Heysham Flat hand-gathered fishery which opened on 17th August

25 – 30 gatherers working. 400-450 tonnes removed to date. Compliance good, and observation of exclusion zone is good. Some issues around permit renewals and many seem to have applied late for them. They will be issued as soon as possible. A couple of local residents have raised concerns about access arrangements – these are directed to the council who are dealing with it. Other residents have comments on how well the fishery is working. HSE have inspected and not raised any issues. Difficult to say how long fishery will last.

ACTIONS: - None

5. Constraints on removing mussels from the Bay – particularly in relation to bird feeding requirements (eiders and oystercatchers)

Explanation from Natural England on legal position and that the NWIFCA has to ensure there is no impact on the bird features of the designated sites before authorising any fishing activity. That size mussel fisheries will need to undergo assessments in future as part of the Defra EMS review – and that measures will be incorporated into the Management Plan to ensure fisheries are EU Directives compliant.

Natural England (with involvement from RSPB) have offered to produce a paper on bird requirements to assist the formulation of those measures. Questions around whether mussel forms a principal food for eiders in Morecambe Bay. Research needed.

ACTIONS: progress the paper on bird food requirements – CL.

6. The proposal to authorise a limited dredge fishery on New Brighton Mersey – ‘sub-tidal’ seed mussel bed.

Highly vulnerable and unstable seed mussel area found by Graham Wood off New Brighton. Tracking and photographs shown. Mapping needs altering as not true position. Only uncovering on largest tides. Original area estimated at 50ha with around 2000 tonnes, now only holding around 300-400 tonnes. Covered in starfish at eastern end. Tide running through it. Two boats know to be interested so far – Mare Gratia and Maria Lena. Need to discuss with local mussel gatherers first. Natural England agree it is unlikely to remain for too long and therefore agree a HRA can conclude no adverse effect on integrity of the sites from dredge fishing activity. Need for industry to discuss with Mersey Port Health, Cefas and FSA whether it is within prohibited waters (falls outside of mapping demarcation).

ACTIONS: discuss with local hand-gatherers and explain reasons for authorising dredge – MK;
carry out HRA – and submit to NE asap – MK;
authorise fishery and publicise on website – MK;
consult with Mersey Port Health, Cefas and FSA – industry.

7. Possibilities for other fisheries 2015-16:

Falklands seed mussel – inspected by NWIFCA and found to be size mussel relatively hard-in with little mussel mud. Spat evident in small volumes. No fishery.

ACTIONS: monitor its development – NWIFCA with industry.

Heysham Flat bottom skears – NWIFCA and reps from hand-gatherers and dredge industry to access them on large tides at end of September to assess whether to leave to see if it persist and grows to size or allow seed mussel fisheries – dredge and hand?

ACTIONS: inspect on tides at end of September – MK, RB, TM.

Foulney bed – discussion on future management particularly of mussel that ‘ruins’ – gets stunted and pearled. Suggestion to eco-dredge it above 3m line and relay it in area between Foulney ‘Ditch’ and oyster frames at same height on beach. This will clear an area and allow new settlement which could then be harvested before it reaches pearling stage at 25mm.

Natural England are contracting consultancy to survey mussel beds in the Bay at end of month for EMS condition monitoring. They will assess them as biogenic reefs and for biodiversity – especially for red algae communities. NWIFCA requires this information prior to taking these proposals further. Suggest that industry (both sectors) discuss what areas suitable for removing mussel and where for relaying. Pointed out that Seasalter should be involved in discussions particularly about relaying.

ACTIONS: discuss which areas to consider for mussel removal and relaying – industry;
provide GPS tracks of these areas to NE for contractors asap – TM;
consult with Kelsey Thompson – MK;
provision of habitat survey data to NWIFCA asap – NE.

Duddon – has received heavy spatfall late on. Covered remaining size mussel. Leave it to grow on and monitor.

ACTIONS: desist from fishing there now to protect spat – Byelaw 3 permit holders;
monitor stock – NWIFCA and industry.

Fleetwood beds – Perch Scar as a potential seed fishery? Photographs shown – similar to last year. Gary Pidduck reported that tide races through there at up to 7 knots and it will get washed out. Will need an HRA to be carried out.

ACTIONS: Inspection on next big tides – GW and NWIFCA;
if stock allows open to hand and dredge fisheries – NWIFCA.

8. Do the mussels in Morecambe Bay constitute a brood stock for the bay?

Kim Mould opened discussion with comment that the adult mussel within the Bay will contribute to the broodstock but is not the only contributor. Genetic studies show that all Irish Sea mussel is related. Mussel larvae requires old mussel, hard substrate, hydroids etc to settle on – there can be primary and secondary settlement. Remain in water column for 6 weeks. Morecambe Bay flushes in this time. Seed mussel not mature enough to contribute.

Discussion on research proposals being put forward at the moment with Liverpool, Bangor and Lancaster Universities – on larval dispersal in Irish Sea and on bird prey requirements in Morecambe Bay.

ACTIONS: progress research proposals and funding applications – MK, CL, CB, Trevor Jones.

9. Update on Ribble mussels

Mandy Knott provided photographs of current mussel stock at Seaford Road – Ribble. Area to west to be left to grow to size. Area of seed to east to remain and be monitored as earlier settlement did not wash out.

ACTIONS: monitor MLS from fishery – NWIFCA enforcement;
monitor development of bed – NWIFCA science.

10. Summary of actions and next stage

To make progress on Management Plan in time for next meeting.

11. Date of next meeting

Thursday 19th November 10.00am Carnforth.

12. AOB

None.