



Stakeholder Engagement Plan 2016

**Towed gear management
measures development in The
Wash and North Norfolk Coast
Special Area of Conservation
(SAC) and Inner Dowsing, Race
Bank and North Ridge candidate
SAC.**

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Stakeholder Engagement Plan 2016: Towed gear management measures development in The Wash and North Norfolk Coast Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and Inner Dowsing, Race Bank and North Ridge candidate SAC.

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1. Introduction

As part of Defra’s national project, [Revised approach to commercial fisheries management in European Marine Sites](#) (EMS), Eastern IFCA is assessing the impacts of commercial fishing on the designated features of EMS in our district and introducing management measures, where required. Assessments are being completed in accordance with the requirement of Article 6 of the EU Habitats Directive.

The Revised Approach is being applied on a risk-prioritised and phased basis. [A generic matrix of fishing gear and EMS feature interactions](#) has been prioritised on the basis that interactions are either ‘red risk’, ‘amber risk’, ‘green risk’ or ‘blue risk’ (Table 1).

Table 1. Definitions of interaction risk categories used in the Revised Approach (Adapted from Defra, 2015).

Risk	Definition
Red risk (high)	<i>Where it is clear that the conservation objectives for a feature (or sub-feature) will not be achieved because of its sensitivity to a type of fishing, - irrespective of feature condition, level of pressure, or background environmental conditions in all EMSs where that feature occurs - suitable management measures will be identified and introduced as a priority to protect those features from that fishing activity or activities.</i>
Amber risk (medium)	<i>Where there is doubt as to whether conservation objectives for a feature (or sub-feature) will be achieved because of its sensitivity to a type of fishing, in all EMSs where that feature occurs, the effect of that activity or activities on such features will need to be assessed in detail at a site specific level. Appropriate management action should then be taken based on that assessment.</i>
Green risk (low)	Where it is clear that the achievement of the conservation objectives for a feature is highly unlikely be affected by a type of fishing activity or activities, in all EMSs where that feature occurs, further action is not likely to be required, unless there is the potential for <i>in combination</i> effects.
Blue risk (no risk)	For gear types where there can be no feasible interaction between the gear types and habitat features, a fourth categorisation of blue is used, and no management action should be necessary.

2. 'Red risk' features and revised management in Inner Dowsing, Race Bank And North Ridge cSAC

During the red risk assessment phase in 2013/14, towed gear interactions with *Sabellaria spinulosa* reef were deemed as 'red risk' and thus required immediate management. The MMO implemented management measures for *S.spinulosa* reef in 2014 within the 0-12 nautical mile (nm) part of Inner Dowsing, Race Bank and North Ridge candidate Special Area of SAC (IDRB&NR cSAC).

Following the release of new feature extent data from Natural England in summer 2015, a greater extent of *S. spinulosa* reef has been identified within the 0-6 nm part of IDRB&NR cSAC. Given that towed gear interactions with *S.spinulosa* reef are prioritised as 'red risk' and the increased feature extent is in EIFCA's district, the Authority is required to implement new towed gear management during 2016, in the form of habitat closures.

3. 'Red risk' features and revised management in The Wash and North Norfolk Coast Special Area of Conservation (W&NNC SAC).

During the 'red risk' assessment phase in 2014, The Authority implemented management measures for 'core' *S.spinulosa* reef within the W&NNC SAC. Management measures are in the form of closed areas stipulated under Regulatory Notice 1 of Eastern IFCA's Protected Areas Byelaw.

Following additional survey work in 2014-2015, an increased extent of 'core' *S. spinulosa* reef has been identified within the W&NNC SAC. As a result, The Authority is required to amend the existing protected areas defined under Regulatory Notice 1 to include the additional 'core' *S. spinulosa* reef.

4. Amber/Green interactions and management of towed fishing gears in The Wash and North Norfolk Coast Special Area of Conservation (W&NNC SAC).

The Authority has completed assessments of commercial fishing activity interactions with the designated features of the Wash and North Norfolk Coast Special Area of Conservation (W&NNC SAC). The interactions have been based on site-specific 'amber risk' and 'green risk' interactions.

The assessments have concluded that there is the potential for adverse effects on site integrity resulting from the interaction of shrimp beam trawling, alone and in-combination, with the following subtidal habitats:

- subtidal coarse sediment
- subtidal mud; and
- subtidal mixed sediment

As a result, Eastern IFCA is developing and implementing management measures, in the form of habitat closures, to protect areas of these 3 subtidal habitats from the impacts of towed fishing gears.

5. Aim

The Authority's vision is aimed at "...securing the right balance between social, environmental and economic benefits to ensure healthy seas, sustainable fisheries and a viable industry". Therefore, new management measures must balance the need for environmental protection with a viable and sustainable fishing industry. In seeking to achieve this balance, the Authority recognises that engagement with stakeholders is vital during the development of new management measures. Providing stakeholders with opportunity to comment on proposals supports the Authority in developing evidence-based, proportionate and appropriate measures, as well as promoting inclusive co-management. The Authority recognises the benefits of sound management through stakeholder participation.

6. Approach

This Engagement Plan details how, why and when Eastern IFCA will engage with stakeholders about:

- New management measures for towed fishing gears in W&NNC SAC for subtidal mixed sediment, mud and coarse sediment habitats (proposal A);
- New management measures for towed fishing gears in IDRBNR cSAC (proposal B) for 'core' *S.spinulosa* reef; and
- Revisions to existing management measures for 'core' *S.spinulosa* reef in the W&NNC SAC (proposal C).

Table 2 summarises the Authority's engagement strategy for management proposals A, B and C.

Table 2. Eastern IFCA’s engagement strategy for new fishery management measures in W&NNC SAC (proposal A) and IDR&NR cSAC (proposal B), and revised management measures in W&NNC SAC for ‘core’ *S.spinulosa* reef (proposal C).

Proposal	Engagement Activity	Reason	Approach	Timing¹
A	Towed gear activity questionnaire	We are seeking Industry input to verify the Authority’s knowledge of towed gear activity in W&NNC SAC and in the process, identify the highest priority fishing grounds.	A questionnaire will be sent to all members of the fishing industry that use towed demersal gears. The questionnaire will ask fishers to identify and prioritise areas where towed demersal gears are used in the site. There will also be opportunities to meet and discuss the questionnaire with Officers, where requested.	January 2016
A & B	Workshop	To provide an update on management measures development. To discuss habitat closures in relation to questionnaire feedback for W&NNC SAC. Also, to discuss trails for innovative gears.	A one day workshop with fishing industry and representatives.	February 2016
A, B & C	Data gathering questionnaire to inform Impact Assessments	To seek data from the fishing industry to inform the production of accurate Impact Assessment for each management measures proposal.	A written letter and questionnaire will be sent to all members of the fishing industry that use towed demersal gears.	March 2016
A, B & C	Formal consultation on draft management measures	To consult stakeholders on the completed Impact Assessments and new/revised regulatory notices for the management proposals.	A written letter and questionnaire will be sent to all members of the fishing industry that use towed demersal gears.	April-May 2016
A, B & C	Notices of management measures implementation	Formal publication of finalised management measures	Published notices in Fishing Focus, local press and on EIFCA’s website.	September 2016.

¹ Timings may be subject to change