

Extraordinary Eastern IFCA Meeting

"Eastern IFCA will lead, champion and manage a sustainable marine environment and inshore fisheries, by successfully securing the right balance between social, environmental and economic benefits to ensure healthy seas, sustainable fisheries and a viable industry".



A Meeting of the Eastern IFCA took place at Yours Business Networks, 18 Tuesday Market Place, King's Lynn, PE30 1JW on 21st August 2015 at 1000 hours.

Members Present:

Cllr Tony Goldson	Chair	Suffolk County Council
Shane Bagley		MMO Appointee
Roy Brewster		MMO Appointee
Connor Donnelly		Natural England Representative
Cllr Richard Fairman		Lincolnshire County Council
Paul Garnett		MMO Appointee
Keith Shaul		MMO Appointee
Rob Spray		MMO Appointee
Cllr Tony Turner MBE JP		Lincolnshire County Council
Cllr Margaret Wilkinson		Norfolk County Council
Stephen Worrall		MMO Appointee

Eastern IFCA (EIFCA) Officers Present:

Philip Haslam	Chief Executive Officer (CEO)
Julian Gregory	Deputy Chief Executive Officer (DCEO)
Ron Jessop	Senior Research Officer

Minute Taker:

Jodi Hammond

EIFCA15/63 Item 1: Welcome by Chair

The Chair welcomed members to the meeting and thanked them for turning up at short notice.

EIFCA15/64 Item 2: Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from: Messrs Bolt, Davies, Morgan, Pinborough and Williamson (Defra Appointees), Cllrs Cox (Norfolk CC) and Patience (Suffolk CC) and Mr Stipetic (MMO Representative) and Dr Hirst (EA Representative)

EIFCA15/65 Item 3: Declarations of Members Interest

Messrs Bagley, Brewster and Garnett advised they had an interest in the item for discussion, relating to the Wash cockle fishery.

EIFCA15/66 Item 4: Contingency management measures for the 2015 Wash cockle fishery

The Senior Research Officer reminded members that the Wash cockle fishery had previously been discussed in June when proposed management measures were based on the survey results available at that time.

Members were advised that when considering the management measures for a fishery there was always the need to balance the present fishery with future fisheries, attempting to take into account growth, mortality and

other factors. Inevitably this was a difficult task as there were a lot of variables involved.

Individual beds have differing growth rates which can be seen in trends over previous years, whilst this does not make it possible to predict growth rates it does allow a rotation of beds being exploited in the Wash.

Two main causes of mortality in cockles are the effect of ridging out when juveniles grow to adults and space becomes sparse and the atypical mortality which had been experienced during recent years. Both these scenarios make it difficult to accurately predict for future fisheries.

At the previous meeting in June it had been predicted that the current season would be a poor fishery, however, this had not taken account of the exceptional growth of year 0 stock on the Roger/Toft sand. The growth witnessed this year of a scale that would normally be expected over a two year period had resulted in risk that the stock on this sand was in danger of being lost due to ridging out.

The SRO advised that the annual TAC had been based on 1/3rd of the adult stock at the time of the survey which had resulted in a relatively low TAC. At this point the TAC was almost exhausted but there were still a lot of sizeable cockles available which would be lost if they were not fished. He believed it would be possible to allow further exploitation of the fishery during this season without affecting the sustainability of the stock.

The Authority is not resourced to carry out a further full survey of the beds in the Wash which made it impossible to scientifically calculate what additional level of exploitation could be permitted. The SRO therefore suggested ring fencing the Roger/Toft sand away from the agreed TAC so that anything caught from this bed was not considered part of the TAC. The original 159t of adult stock contributed to the initial TAC from this bed would also be removed leaving the remaining 1920 tonnes to be exploited from other sands. He then advised that the Roger/Toft sand could be sustainably fished down to a level where the density of cockles would make it no longer viable for fishing to take place, which he believed would enhance this bed for future fisheries and prevent a large amount of stock dying off.

Mr Worrall questioned whether there was any known reason for this exceptional growth rate, however, the SRO advised the temperature was not exceptional and food availability had not altered so he could not explain this growth spurt.

Mr Shaul expressed his concern as to how the level of fishing on the Roger/Toft sand would be monitored and how EIFCA would ascertain that stocks had reached a sustainable level. The SRO advised once the fishermen had difficulty gathering their daily quota then it would be considered time to close the bed. Mr Brewster seconded this by advising that once the vessels could not earn enough they would stop fishing.

The CEO reminded members that the statutory duties of the Authority detailed in the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009 are to maintain a sustainable fishery and support the viability of local industry. The exceptional management measures proposed would deliver both these remits. He also advised that NE had been contacted and had indicated they support the proposed option.

The CEO also emphasised that if the decision was taken it would not be altering the agreed TAC at all it would merely accommodate exceptional circumstances. He wanted it recognised that it would not set a precedent to have additional surveys and inflated TACs as a standard option during a cockle season.

The CEO advised that this process had been achieved through co-operation with both the industry and NE, who had been particularly expedient in considering the option, which he felt should be commended.

With regard to enforcing the fishery the CEO advised the officers would be monitoring the sands vessels were fishing and landings in excess of two tonnes per day would not be tolerated.

The DCEO questioned whether members would like to make the decision at this time that no further variation would be made to this fishery regardless of whether any further exceptional growth was identified.

Members Resolved to:

- **Note that there had been exceptional cockle growth on a discrete sand with the Wash.**
- **Note that there was an opportunity to support the viability of the local fishing industry without hazarding the sustainability of the cockle stock.**
- **Agree to Option 2**
- **Agree that previous delegations to the CEO regarding the Wash cockle fishery 2015 remain in force.**
- **Delegate powers to the CEO to close the Roger sand when it was judged that it was no longer offering a viable fishing opportunity.**
- **Direct the CEO to implement Option 2 with immediate effect.**

Proposed: Mr Shaul

Seconded: Mr Worrall

All Agreed

EIFCA15/67 Item 5: Any Other Business

No other items had been raised for discussion

There being no other business the meeting closed at 1027 hours.