

## Closed Areas Byelaw 2020

### Proposed change to Humber Estuary restricted area

#### Informal Consultation



Eastern Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority (Eastern IFCA) is considering **reducing the size of the restricted area** on the south bank of the Humber estuary. We are seeking to understand what impact this could have on sea users in the area. This is an opportunity for you to feed into Eastern IFCA's decision-making process.

**If you think the change to this closure could impact you or your work, we would like to hear from you.** Please read through the information below and submit your comments to us.

**The deadline for responses is 12pm on the 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2020.**

#### What is the current closed area?

The current size of the closed area is 170.8ha. It contains a very small patch (< 1m<sup>2</sup>) of seagrass. Seagrass beds are a protected sub-feature of the Humber Estuary Special Area of Conservation (SAC). Eastern IFCA introduced the Protected Areas byelaw in 2014 which prohibits fishing using bottom-towed gear, hand working and crab tiling in the current closure area (as well as other closures in The Wash and on the North Norfolk Coast). The extent of seagrass is less than 0.0001% of the closure area. Eastern IFCA proposes to replace the existing closure with a more proportionate one that will continue to protect seagrass from these fishing activities but enable them to resume in the surrounding area where seagrass does not occur.

#### What is being proposed?

Eastern IFCA propose that the closure is amended using a replacement byelaw to be called the Closed Area Byelaw 2020. The restricted area would be reduced to incorporate only the known patch of intertidal seagrass with a 100m buffer (Figure 1; Table 1). The revised size of the closed area is 3.9ha. It is not proposed that there will be a change to the type of restriction, only the area that it covers.

#### Why is this change being proposed?

Eastern IFCA are committed to meeting statutory duties for the conservation of designated habitats and species within marine protected areas (MPAs). Annual monitoring by Eastern IFCA has identified the small patch of intertidal seagrass in the restricted area but has not identified seagrass outside of this single patch. There is no evidence that the size or density of the patch has increased since it was afforded protection in 2014. This is in contrast to seagrass beds at Spurn Point on the north bank of the Humber where the habitat is much more extensive and is expanding.

The small size of the intertidal seagrass patch on the south bank of the Humber means it is unlikely to act as a supporting habitat of any significance or play an important role in the ecosystem. Despite this, Eastern IFCA recognise that the presence of even small amounts of seagrass can be conducive to seagrass restoration. Eastern IFCA therefore propose replacing the current restricted area with a smaller restricted area. This will ensure fishing does not hamper the potential for future restorative measures close to the existing patch of seagrass while also ensuring that the extent of the closure is underpinned by sound and transparent science.

Eastern IFCA are committed to balancing socio-economic considerations with environmental protection. We are aware of increasing pressure on fishers and recent declines in opportunities for fishing resulting from the increasing number of spatial restrictions for conservation, fisheries sustainability and offshore development purposes. Eastern IFCA are keen to ensure that management is evidence-based, proportionate and fit-for-purpose.

### **When will it take effect?**

It is intended to seek Authority approval for the proposed change in June 2020. If approved, the amended closure would take effect after a formal consultation period and once the Byelaw is signed off by the Secretary of State. We anticipate that this would be in 2021.

### **Where will it apply?**

The restricted area in question is known locally as Horse Shoe Point, an area of saltmarsh and intertidal sandbanks on the southern bank of the Humber estuary (See chart below: Figure 1). It lies within the [Humber Estuary SAC](#). The current closure includes saltmarsh and intertidal sandbanks; the proposed new closure would affect a much smaller area of intertidal sandbanks (where the seagrass is found) but no saltmarsh.

### **How will it affect my activity or work?**

#### Fishing activity

We do not anticipate any major change to the level of fishing activity at the site. There is the potential that low levels of fishing and bait digging may resume in the area outside the boundary of the new closure, as a result of the amendment.

Historically, the area has supported a cockle fishery, but this has been closed since 2002 because of a lack of viable quantities of stock, the absence of water classification and access issues. Any cockle fishery in the area would require a permit under Eastern IFCA Byelaw XXIV: Humber Estuary Cockles Fishery Byelaw and a Habitats Regulations assessment would be required before any permit would be granted.

### Conservation activity

Eastern IFCA recognise and support the national drive for seagrass restoration because of the value of the ecosystem services that seagrass habitats provide. Under the amended closure, the small patch of seagrass present at Horse Shoe Point as well as a buffer zone will remain protected from fishing activity, and Eastern IFCA will continue to monitor the area. Eastern IFCA will remain supportive of seagrass conservation efforts and will maintain and enforce the spatial closures in place for seagrass meadows on the North Norfolk Coast. Conservation advice for the Humber Estuary SAC refers to seagrass at Spurn Point (on the north bank of the Humber) but not the patch at Horse Shoe Point. Spurn Point is outside of the Eastern IFCA district and is characterised by very low kinetic energy due to sheltering from the Spurn Point spit. North-Eastern IFCA introduced a spatial closure at Spurn Point in 2016 that has seen the protection of substantial intertidal seagrass beds (45,600 m<sup>2</sup>).

### **Will the measures be reviewed?**

All byelaws introduced are reviewed every six years. Monitoring and control plans will outline Eastern IFCA's approach to monitoring fishing activity levels and the effectiveness of closed areas.

### **Where can I find more information?**

Should you have any questions about the proposed changes, please do not hesitate to get in touch with Eastern IFCA.

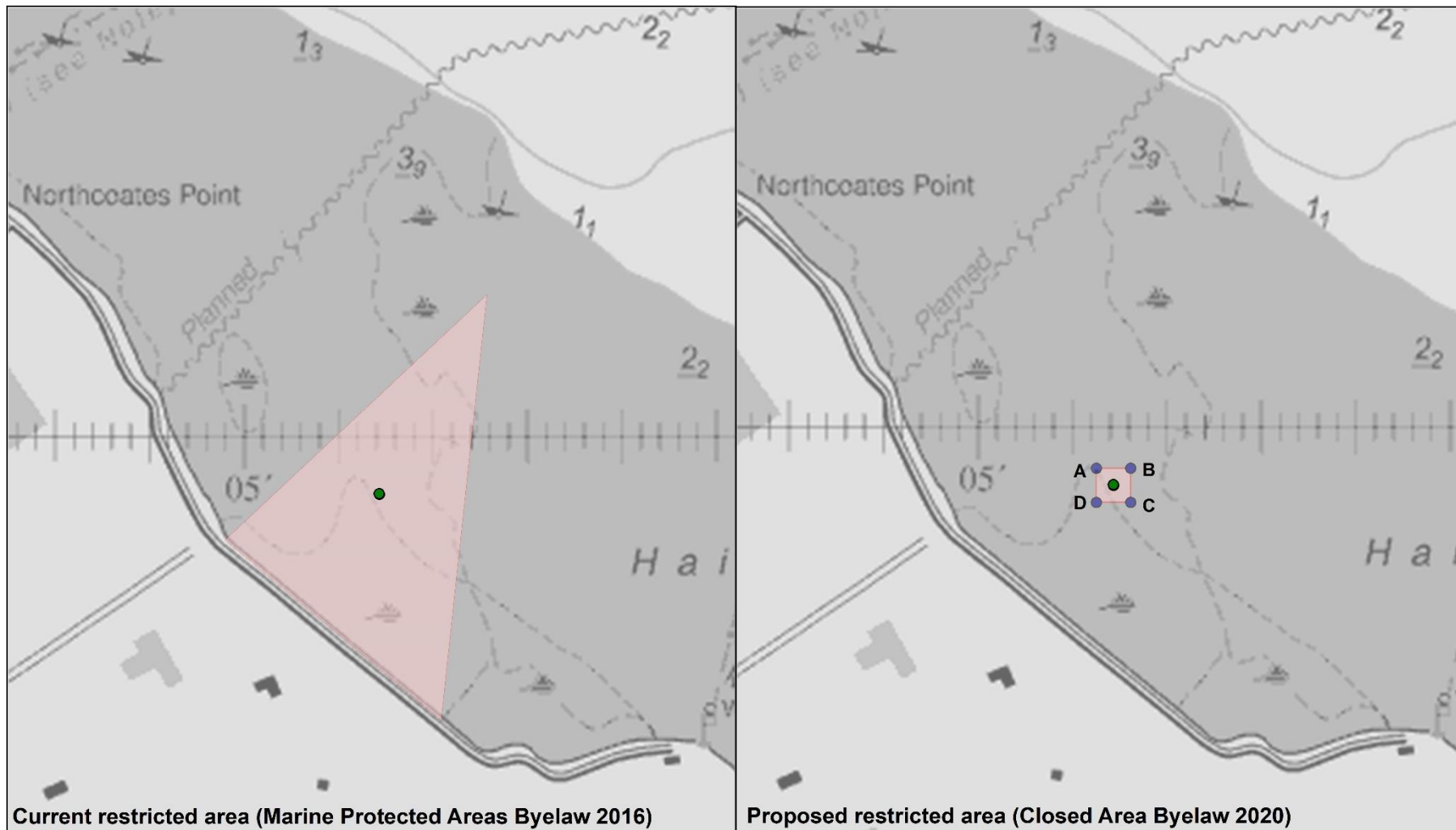
E-mail: [mail@eastern-ifca.gov.uk](mailto:mail@eastern-ifca.gov.uk)

Telephone: **01553 775 321**

Address: **Eastern Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority  
6 North Lynn Business Village  
Bergen Way  
King's Lynn  
Norfolk  
PE30 2JG**

### **How can I comment on the proposal?**

We would very much value your input and comments on the proposed change. You can send these by e-mail or post to the contact details above. Please address the letter/email to the CEO with the subject as Closed Area Byelaw 2020.



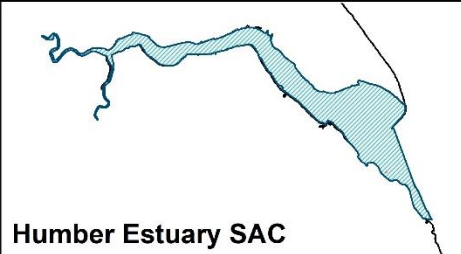
**South Bank of the Humber Estuary**

- Restricted area
- Position of intertidal seagrass (2017 & 2019)

Note on size of restricted areas:  
 Current: 170.8 ha  
 Proposed: 3.9 ha  
 Feature extent (2019): Two patches, each <math>< 0.25\text{m}^2</math> & within 0.5 m of each other

Date: 10th February 2020  
 Drawn by: EQ  
 Projection: Lat Long WSG84

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**Figure 1: Current (left) and proposed (right) restricted area to fishing on the south bank of the Humber. Please see Table 1 for coordinates of the proposed restricted area.**

**Table 1: Positions of the proposed amended restricted area on the south bank of the Humber Estuary SAC (Figure 1)**

	Latitude	Longitude
A	53° 29.86392	0° 5.672740
B	53° 29.86392	0° 5.808714
C	53° 29.75604	0° 5.808714
D	53° 29.75604	0° 5.672740