

# **Cromer Shoal MCZ Management Task and Finish Group**

## **Terms of Reference**

### **Context**

Natural England have advised Eastern IFCA that rugged chalk (raised structures of exposed chalk) is damaged by potting. The pots that are most damaging to the rugged chalk are those left in the water for longer periods (e.g. lost gear). Natural England have also advised that, whilst incidents of damage to rugged chalk by normal potting activity are individually small, they accumulate into a level of impact that hinders the conservation objectives of the site.

Rather than needing to take a precautionary approach, in which any interactions between potting and complex outcropping chalk would need to be stopped with immediate effect, Natural England advised that an Adaptive Risk Management (ARM) approach would be more suitable for this fishery. Under an ARM approach, appropriate management measures would be developed through an iterative process over the coming years whereby management and research inform each other in a feedback loop.

The issue of pots left in the water for long periods, such as lost pots, is required sooner and management to enable fishing effort to be monitored may also be required.

A Project Board has been established to coordinate and oversee the ARM approach. Task and Finish groups are established to progress the various workstreams that will be required to successfully deliver evidence informed adaptive management. These Task and Finish groups will be overseen by and report to the Project Board.

### **Purpose**

The Cromer Shoal MCZ Management Task and Finish Group has been established to provide recommendations for management to the Project Board to fulfil the ARM approach. An aim and objectives are at Appendix 1.

It is intended that the group will develop and propose solutions for mitigating risks to the site through management measures collaboratively. This approach will take into account the perspectives of the regulator (Eastern IFCA), the statutory advisor (Natural England) and the fishery stakeholders within the context of the obligations set out in law<sup>1</sup>. Ultimately, final decisions on management are the responsibility of Eastern IFCA.

### **Membership**

The group will comprise members who can bring relevant knowledge of the conservation of the MCZ and the practicalities of fishing therein.

Membership of the group will be reviewed periodically but at inception will comprise representatives from:

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<sup>1</sup> Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009 (c.23) and the Cromer Shoal Chalk Beds Marine Conservation Zone Designating Order 2016.

- Eastern IFCA
- Natural England
- Fishing industry

Further individuals and organisations with required skills and/or local expertise will be invited to join the group as and when required.

## **Function**

The functions of the group include:

- Development of evidence-based management options to ensure that potting is not hindering the conservation objectives of Cromer Shoal Chalk Beds MCZ
- Development of proposals to implement management measures in the most effective way.
- Establishing and overseeing the workstreams associated with the agreed management projects.
- Reporting feedback of project progress and outcomes to the Project Board.
- Utilise expert knowledge to provide advice to Project Board for delivering the Adaptive Risk management
- Working collaboratively with the R&D Task and Finish Group so that management and research are integrated and with the Stakeholder Group so that the collective knowledge and views of our stakeholders are taken into account.

## **Timeframe**

The task and finish group shall continue until the completion of the aims and objectives. Achieving these is anticipated to take a minimum of two years, with the following caveats:

- a. It may well be that there are workstreams that don't deliver results within that time frame, but which are important and continue beyond the notional "end date". This could include long-term monitoring.
- b. Adaptive management is an iterative and systematic approach for managing risk within the context of scientific uncertainty. Evidence is fed into a structured process that reviews this information and responds, where appropriate, by adjusting the site management measures. Management measures should be introduced as soon as possible after being recognised as necessary in order to ensure that the site's conservation objectives are not hindered.

## **Accountability**

Both Natural England and Eastern IFCA have statutory responsibilities and Task and Finish Group representatives will be accountable to their respective organisations.

Eastern IFCA are the relevant regulator and are ultimately responsible for decision making with regard to the implementation or not of any actions.

Notwithstanding the above, the objective is to work collaboratively and wherever possible to achieve consensus.

## **Administration**

Chair and Vice-Chair – these roles will be undertaken by officers from Eastern IFCA

Meeting frequency: monthly initially, but as required

Location: Meeting locations will be agreed by the group at the preceding meeting but during the pandemic will be via Teams

Deputising: In their absence members may nominate a deputy to attend in their stead. This will usually be an individual with relevant experience and expertise to provide technical support or local knowledge

Documentation: Minutes to comprise actions and decisions only. A draft version will be circulated to members only and approved notes will be published on the Eastern IFCA website.

## **Appendix 1 – Aims and Objectives**

### **Aim**

To develop proposals for management measures and to oversee the implementation of management measures agreed and implemented by Eastern IFCA for pot-based fishing activity within the Cromer Shoal Chalk Beds Marine Conservation Zone through the Adaptive Risk Management process, to protect the site in a manner consistent with the conservation objectives.

### **Objectives**

1. Develop measures and implementation plan for the following:
  - a. Mitigating impacts of lost and 'stored' pots
  - b. Effective fishing effort and location monitoring
  - c. Mitigating impacts as identified via an MCZ assessment
  - d. Adjust measures as appropriate based on the findings of the research T&F group, in line with an ARM approach
2. Develop measures which:
  - a. will be effective at mitigating impacts identified
  - b. are practically achievable and enforceable
  - c. incorporate findings of the research task and finish group
3. Develop implementation plans which:
  - a. enhance compliance through education and engagement
  - b. have timelines which address the level of risk associated with impacts whilst recognising the practicality of fishery stakeholders changing fishing practices
  - c. are clear and transparent