

## MARINE CONSERVATION ZONE (MCZ) PROJECT BOARD

<b>Meeting 8</b>	<b>10th December 2021</b>	<b>2:30pm</b>
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### MEETING NOTES

<b>Present</b>		
Julian Gregory	JG	Eastern IFCA
Jon Butler	JB	Eastern IFCA
John Davies	JD	Fisherman
Alice Tebb	AT	Agents of Change, Marine Conservation Society
Luke Godwin	LG	Eastern IFCA
Stephen Thompson	ST	Eastern IFCA
Ron Jessop	RJ	Eastern IFCA
Judith Stoutt	JSt	Eastern IFCA
Georgina Roberts	GR	Natural England
Kristina Gurova	KG	Eastern IFCA
<b>Apologies</b>		

Agenda Item	Key points of discussion; decisions and actions
1. Introductions/ Apologies	None.
2. Notes and actions from previous meeting	<p>Notes of the previous meeting were <b>agreed</b>.</p> <p><b>ACTION 17 and ACTION 22 were merged:</b> Development and review of an updated Communications Strategy, with a view to formally adopt it at the next PB meeting. <b>Carried forward</b> to allow members more time for review and feedback: KG to circulate a further revised version and PB members to review and provide feedback by Friday 17<sup>th</sup> December 2021. Once agreed by PB, KG to share the final Strategy with University of Essex partners.</p> <p><b>ACTION 18:</b> EIFCA to draft timeline for research and management. <b>Complete:</b> Timeline has been circulated to PB members. Members have provided feedback and <b>agreed</b> a final version. <b>Updated action:</b> KG to upload to the website.</p> <p><b>ACTION 24:</b> EIFCA to upload all relevant documents onto MCZ page. <b>Ongoing:</b> KG has uploaded the meetings notes from Project Board Meetings. These can be accessed through the MCZ page on EIFCA website and through Publications Section on EIFCA website. KG to upload both Task and Finish Group Notes ASAP.</p> <p><b>ACTION 25:</b> PB to sign off Code of Best Practice after Management Task &amp; Finish Group have finalised it using the wider feedback. <b>Ongoing:</b> Final consultation draft completed at Management T&amp;F level. KG and LG developed comms for industry (with help of JD and NW) and</p>

	<p>for wider stakeholders. Informal consultation with all stakeholders ongoing.</p> <p><b>ACTION 26:</b> RJ/LG to identify location of gear seen in video, involve JD to check whether the gear is lost, and speak to divers about possible opportunity to recover the gear. <b>Complete:</b> Position has been shared with JD. JD has been unable to go to the area identified due to weather conditions. Unlikely to be in the same location following recent storms.</p> <p><b>ACTION 27:</b> JSt to liaise with NE on the need for coordinated approach to comms and the need to be mindful of varying stakeholders. <b>Complete.</b> To be reflected in Communications Strategy.</p> <p><b>ACTION 28:</b> EIFCA to organise a meeting with industry in the week commencing 15<sup>th</sup> November to 1) Update on research activities (mapping and trackers); 2) Get feedback on Code of Best Practice; 3) Promote the Stakeholder Group. <b>Complete.</b> EIFCA held an online meeting with NNFS. <b>Updated action:</b> EIFCA to explore organising more meetings with all fishermen in the new year (the other two main associations have been contacted) and to continue to consider the possibility of these being face-to-face, while carefully monitoring the Covid context which may prevent this.</p> <p><b>ACTION 29:</b> RJ to provide AT with Cefas contacts so that she can potentially invite them to present at the next Stakeholder Group on provisional topic, 'understanding chalk'. <b>Complete.</b></p>
<p>3. Terms of Reference – Stakeholder Group</p>	<p>Stakeholder Group members were given 2 weeks to submit comments and feedback on the Terms of Reference (ToR). Most of the feedback received was surrounding 1) Questions about EIFCA's commitment to attend Stakeholder Group meetings 2) Questions about what 'relevant' information from the Stakeholder Group is. ToR have now been finalised. A small amendment was made to the Stakeholder Group's Code of Conduct.</p> <p>PB members <b>agreed</b> the Stakeholder Group's ToR in principle, pending AT's circulation of final version.</p> <p><b>ACTION 30: AT to share final Stakeholder Group ToR and Code of Conduct for KG to upload on MCZ page.</b></p>
<p>4. Research update (RJ, Research Task &amp; Finish Group Co-ordinator)</p>	<p><b>4a:</b> Update on research workstreams (RJ). EIFCA have not managed to conduct more ROV surveys since the last meeting. Although these were rostered, bad weather and visibility conditions prevented surveys from taking place. The winter period will be used to analyse and review the video footage collected thus far. Weather and visibility conditions will be closely monitored with a view to conducting winter surveys if possible. EIFCA has ordered a second BlueROV 2 for resilience – if anything goes wrong with one ROV, a second will be available to allow surveys to</p>

continue. An EIFCA/NE/Cefas/University of Essex workshop was held on 10/12/2021 to define criteria for determining what sensitive rugged chalk features are and the metrics that will be used to analyse video footage. A further workshop is planned for the week beginning 13/12/2021 on the subject of assessing damage. NE is commissioning contractors to analyse some of the video data (video analysis project). NE has also contracted Cefas to complete a time series of multibeam data previously collecting in the MCZ to get an idea of dynamics of the site over time. Samantha Hornbrey (Marine Science Officer) has conducted a literature review on the ecological features of the site, and this is part of the ongoing assessment. Trackers are continuing to collect data on fishing activity. A Fishing News Award for achievements, innovations, and successes of the commercial fishing industries is available. It was suggested that fishermen participating in the tracker project might be proposed as candidates for the award.

**ACTION 31: ST to investigate criteria and timelines for Fishing News award.**

**4b:** Consideration of identifying and obtaining funding for research required in 2022 (GR). A lot of research and design in the R&DT&F Group is resource intensive. Funding availability needs to be considered to ensure that a lack of resources does not limit the work that the Group would like to do, particularly in terms of gear modification and design. It was recognised that trialling gear design and ultimately implementing changes through management measures across the whole fishery would likely take longer than 2 years. JD noted that the longer the ARM project goes on, the less fishermen there will be, in view of the average age of most potting fishermen. GR noted that NE has an external funding team that could assist with suggestions for appropriate funding based on the work needing to be done. It is also worth considering enlisting a PhD or master's student to carry out some of the necessary research. It was generally recognised that a PhD student would be more appropriate as they can devote more time to research and in-depth analysis.

A connection at Blue Marine Foundation who worked on the Lyme Bay project has a lot of interesting information to share about collaborative action and collaboratively designed research/management measures (though it is recognised that the seabed in Lyme Bay is different). Blue Marine may have funding available to support our work.

**ACTION 32: GR to check in with Blue Marine Foundation about their interest and possible support for this project. ST to be kept informed of any opportunities.**

	<p>PB members reiterated the need to be as flexible and creative as possible towards approaches for achieving the work that needs to be done, while also being mindful of the limitations of the various approaches under consideration. For example, the engagement of commercial divers to collect further data would, much like the use of the ROV, be limited by weather and visibility conditions.</p>
<p>5. Management update (LG, Management Task &amp; Finish Group co-ordinator)</p>	<p>LG provided an update on the Management T&amp;F Group. <u>Code of Best Practice</u>: An informal consultation on the draft Code of Best Practice has been launched, open to all stakeholders. Dialogue with fishermen is ongoing. An online meeting has been held with the North Norfolk Fishermen's Society. Although attendance was limited, the meeting went well, and officers received valuable feedback. Officers have also reached out to the other two local associations offering to hold similar online meetings to provide an update on ongoing research work, and to discuss the Code. IFCOs have been engaging on the ground, circulating copies of the draft Code and getting feedback on lost and stored gear, and wider issues. Fishermen from all associations have expressed a preference for face-to-face meetings. This will be considered, taking the rapidly changing Covid context into account. We need to see what the government advice will be in order to plan the approach to engagement. A small impromptu in-person meeting was held between fishermen from Chambers association, JB and Charlotte Siely (IFCO) to discuss their concerns.</p> <p>In general, the informal consultation has highlighted that there are wider issues that stakeholders would like to see tackled. However, we have been clear that lost and stored gear is the focus in the first instance, and there has been a broad acceptance of this. Initially, the intention was to close the informal consultation on 17/12/2021, however, in light of current response levels and the feedback received, it would be beneficial to keep it going into the new year.</p> <p><u>Gentlemen's Agreement on Lost Gear</u>: At the last meeting, the broad principles of an agreement between fishermen, divers, NE, the MMO, and the NNDC were considered. The agreement should focus on commitments from all parties. Things are moving forward but there are a lot of intricacies. The idea is to establish a working group to coordinate the actions of all those involved under the agreement, once it has been agreed and is in place. Engagement with divers is ongoing about their own Code of Conduct. This and the fishermen's Code of Best Practice will be important elements under the overall agreement. The current plan is to 1) mature the Code of Best Practice, 2) agree on a diving Code of Conduct, and 3) agree on the agreement and 4) establish a working group for coordinated actions.</p>

<p>6. Stakeholder Group update</p>	<p>The second meeting of the Stakeholder Group was held on 22/11/2021. It was well attended with 40 participants (including the facilitators). Feedback about the meeting has been positive – stakeholders liked style of the meeting (short, sharp presentations with enough space for wider discussion). The meeting was aimed at providing updates on chalk research, and an overview of varying perspectives on lost gear, and opening up discussions about solutions to lost pots/inputting into the ongoing informal consultation. Stakeholders had many questions, and it was not possible to address them all within the timeframe. A Q&amp;A has been promised to ensure that everyone’s questions receive a response. In terms of the draft Code of Best Practice, stakeholders generally thought that it was a good start, but the feedback was that it needed more specifics e.g. fishermen at the meeting wondered about the meaning of ‘stored’ gear; there were questions from other stakeholders about how the Code will be enforced and concerns that as a voluntary measure, it would not be strong enough.</p> <p><u>Next steps:</u> The notes from the meeting will be a response for the consultation. AT is planning a short meeting in early January that will hopefully lead to a larger face-to-face discussion in February (Covid permitting).</p> <p><u>Additional:</u> The East of England Plastics Coalition (EEPC) has managed to raise funding through their marine debris working group and have expressed an interest in the opportunity to join up. They would like to talk to a lot of the same people involved in MCZ work and plan to workshop some of the questions they have identified with stakeholders. AT is involved and trying to plot how best to coordinate this with existing consultations to minimise consultation fatigue for the stakeholders who are involved. A concern was raised that there is a danger of moving away from the core task of managing chalk/potting gear interactions. However, it was recognised that while the core/principal task is assessing and managing damage to chalk features by potting activity, there are various other interests and it is important to join up with these wherever possible (e.g. when looking at gear design, we need to look for areas where we can join up with others who may be involved in related/relevant work streams).</p>
<p>7. Need for and timing of an MCZ assessment and relationship with the ARM process (GR)</p>	<p>GR instigated a discussion about the timing of work streams and the desirability of being able to trial measures in the next potting season. Although, it’s not possible to conclude/recommend final management measures at this stage (as these need trialing to ensure positive mitigative effects), we have learned a lot since the last assessment that could be drawn into a new assessment about what management measures could be trialed. One of the key requirements under ARM is to be able to demonstrate that</p>

	<p>the risk to the MCZ is being managed and we cannot wait until a Byelaw is in place. JG said that the research work of the last year had effectively been work on both the assessment and management. With regard to the latter, the focus was on addressing stored/lost pots and gathering more information to inform decisions on what appropriate management measures might be. JG and JSt confirmed that the assessment would be complete in the next 1-2 months. NE has offered to publish a NE-EIFCA joint statement as part of the assessment to the effect that although it does look like we cannot rule out that potting is hindering the conservation objectives at this stage, NE advice is that ARM is the appropriate way forward until we know more. A framework byelaw is being considered through which management measures can be implemented and adapted as necessary. Following discussion PB members agreed to develop a high-level plan/timeline that assesses the milestones we need to work towards.</p> <p><b>ACTION 33: RJ, JSt, LG to assist ST in developing a timeline of key milestones that we will work towards.</b></p>
8. Any other business	None.
9. Next meeting	<b>TBC. Wednesday 2<sup>nd</sup> February 3pm.</b>

### Summary of Actions

No.	Action	Owner
17 & 22 (merged)	KG to circulate a further revised version and PB members to review and provide feedback by Friday 17 <sup>th</sup> December 2021. Once agreed by PB, KG to share the final Strategy with University of Essex partners.	KG/All
18	KG to upload research timeline to the website.	KG
24	EIFCA to place all relevant documents onto MCZ webpage	ST/KG
25	Project Board to sign off Code of Best Practice after Management Task & Finish Group have finalised it using the wider feedback from the informal consultation.	PB
28	EIFCA to explore organising more meetings with all fishermen in the new year and to continue to consider the possibility of these being face-to-face, while carefully monitoring the Covid context which may prevent this	LG/KG/JD/NW/JB
30	AT to share final Stakeholder Group ToR and Code of Conduct for KG to upload on MCZ page.	AT/KG
31	ST to investigate criteria and timelines for Fishing News award.	ST

32	GR to check in with Blue Marine Foundation about their interest and possible support for this project.	GR
33	RJ, JSt, LG to assist ST in developing a timeline of key milestones that we will work towards.	ST/RJ/LG/JSt