

Cromer Shoal MCZ Project Board Meeting Notes

Meeting Time/Date:	1515hrs 27 th March 2023	Venue:	Via Microsoft Teams
Attendees:	Jennifer Love, Natural England Alice Tebb, Agents of Change Inge Smith, Eastern IFCA member Julian Gregory, Eastern IFCA Samantha Hormbrey, Eastern IFCA Judith Stoutt, Eastern IFCA Ron Jessop, Eastern IFCA Kristina Gurova, Eastern IFCA Luke Godwin Jon Butler	Apologies:	John Davies

The notes from the previous meeting were accepted as true record.

New Actions Arising and Ongoing Actions			
Actions		Owner	Update
<i>New Actions Arising</i>			
27/3/2023	Societal Value Study: JL to liaise with Sam Parker to seek an update on Cefas work relating to the societal value of the Cromer fishery.	JL	

27/3/2023	Societal Value Study: SR to put feelers out within her network to gauge potential interest in a Master's research project.	SR	
27/3/2023	Natural Disturbance Study: SH to share the project proposal summary chart with JL.	SH	
27/3/2023	SH and KG to put together an update on research and management for circulation with the SG prior to the next meeting. KG to include an update for the SG to capture more clearly how SG feedback during phase 2 of the informal consultation has been considered.	SH/KG	
27/3/2023	JB and JL to liaise offline about collaborative participation in the Crab & Lobster Festival.	JB/JL	
Ongoing Actions			
23/5/2022	Research & Development T&F Group to update the precautionary rugged chalk area by incorporating the additional data (from ROV and Cefas multibeam study).	SH/RJ	27/3/2023 Ongoing Review taking into account additional evidence from 2021 done earlier this year and shared with both Research and Evidence Groups for feedback. Feedback needs finalising, general agreement of the area which will be finalised and shared online. .

Completed Actions from Previous Meetings			
Actions		Owner	Update
2/2/2023	Circulate comms strategy review and recommendations with Project Board	KG	27/3/2023 Complete. For discussion during SG item.

Progress updates and new actions and decisions	
Societal Value Study	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Unfortunately MCS lost Ally Fraser earlier than planned so she is unable to undertake the study as discussed during the last meeting (2/2/23). MCS is still keen to take this work forward (not yet commenced) but there is question on capacity. Project Board members discussed the benefits and feasibility of the study being progressed as a Master's or PhD research project. The general consensus was that a Master's thesis was more aligned with the Project's timescales. SR offered to put feelers out within her network to gauge whether there would be any interest. Potential universities that were named were UEA, Hull, Essex and Newcastle. ACTION: SR to put feelers out within her network to gauge potential interest in a Master's research project. JL questioned whether JSt had heard back from Cefas regarding their work in this area and offered to liaise with a Natural England colleague on secondment with Defra to chase up the query on behalf of the Project Board. The intention is to avoid a duplication of work. ACTION: JL to liaise with Sam Parker to seek an update on Cefas work relating to the societal value of the Cromer fishery. JG questioned the timescales we would be looking at if the study were progressed as planned. SR responded that we would be looking at late Spring/early June. The Project Board agreed to proceed with piece of work as planned, with indicative timescales for late Spring/early June.

<p>Stakeholder Group Update</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AT noted that there have been requests from some stakeholders for more regular meetings with clearer aims and objectives and opportunities for technical involvement. The majority of the group's members just want to receive updates, to know what's going on and have an opportunity to ask questions. • Technical involvement and input into research discussions is more suited to the Evidence Group which sits under the SG. • The questions is then, where does that leave us in terms of the regularity of meetings in the wider context of resource and capacity. AT will be taking maternity leave from mid-May. SR will be taking over Agents of Change work while AT is off (this will be a reduced capacity period). • AT, SR and SH have discussed options and thing that the next meeting should be an online Q&A in response to Eastern IFCA's upcoming interim report and ARM plan and ongoing formal byelaw consultation. This is different from what was proposed at the last meeting and included in the comms review. The new proposal is for in-person meetings to be more strategic as these meetings cost more in money and time to be successful and effective. • LG agreed that a strategic approach to meetings and aligning the next one to the interim report and ARM plan is a sensible approach. It's important that meetings are not just for the sake of it but have real purpose. • There was some discussion that the balance is often difficult to strike – abstaining from holding meetings can lead to some stakeholders feeling disengaged, but the same effect is achieved from holding meetings when there is no meaningful content to cover. SR noted that if the expectation that stakeholders have of meetings is going to change, it would be useful to make it really clear what people can expect at the next meeting – it's really important to communicate this clearly and set expectations. • In terms of timescales, SH noted that we would be looking at mid-May for the Q&A meeting. • IS noted that leaving it too long between meetings is not a good idea. The proposal for May would make it almost 6 months in between the last meeting (in-person in Northrepps in December). Monthly communication is needed. • AT, JG and SH put forward a proposal for short updates to be publicised once a month or once in two months.
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ACTION: SH and KG to put together an update on research and management for circulation with the SG as soon as possible, prior to the next meeting planned for mid-May. This is in recognition of the gap between the last in-person meeting in December and the next meeting (online Q&A) planned for mid-May. • DECISION: Short updates on ongoing work to be shared with greater regularity. • There was some discussion about the format of the last consultation outcome report (phase 2 of the informal consultation). It was observed that the format does not capture very clearly how SG feedback specifically has been considered. • ACTION: KG to include an update for the SG to capture more clearly how SG feedback during phase 2 of the informal consultation has been considered. • The Project Board thanked AT for all the work she has done for the project to date. • SR left the call.
Natural Disturbance Study Proposal	<p><u>Update:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Current proposal: 6 experimental areas (3 open and 3 closed to potting) 150m x 150m in size which are exposed to similar environmental conditions, contain substantial rugged chalk features, similar in relief and complexity, and experience fishing pressures typical of the area. Annual surveying will involve 3D photogrammetry of features using divers, seabed video transects using the ROV to assess damage and high resolution multibeam across the whole site and is proposed for a three year period. • SH shared a chart summarising the proposal. JL requested a copy. • ACTION: SH to share the project proposal summary chart with JL. • An industry meeting was held 14th February - this was very positive, received a good turnout from industry with over 20 fishermen attending and providing virtually unanimous support for the project. Main feedback from industry was that the three closed areas should be spread out to lessen the impact on individual fishermen and it was suggested that buoys (as well as positional coordinates) will be the best way to mark the closed areas. • Proposed experimental areas have also been shared with MCNAG to seek their feedback. They raised concerns that a 30m buffer is not sufficient in accounting for pot drift. Currently try to identify existing literature to support this but we may need to conduct a small study to inform buffer size. • Further concerns have also been raised around using marker buoys on the rugged chalk. To overcome this an alternative proposal was suggested where experimental closed areas are located

next to each other in one large, closed area rather than three small ones and the closure expanded so that the outermost limit was off the rugged chalk and the innermost limit reached the shore. This way only two marker buoys would be required, and they would be placed in boulder/cobble dominated seabed.

- This idea was shared at the Research and Development Task and Finish Group and discussed: whilst this would still provide a robust experimental design, there is a risk of losing industry support and some individual fishermen may be heavily impacted. Displacement of potting activities from the closed area may also artificially inflate potting levels in the open experimental areas if they are adjacent to closed areas.
- Some other solutions were discussed: these include only marking closed areas during summer months (period when recreational use most likely and risk of impact and movement less likely), seeking some grant funding to provide potting vessels that don't have plotters with handheld units or access to charts on their smart phones and providing fishermen with positions and bearings from known reference points on land.

Discussion:

- Project Board members discussed that it is important to have fishing effort mapped in these areas to enable conclusions to be drawn from the study. If the study shows that there is an impact from natural disturbance, this will not tell us anything as we need to be able to compare with damage attributable to fishing which can only be done if we know the level of fishing activity. We need to know confidently how much fishing activity is going on – this requires further thought.
- I-VMS would be the only effective way of tracking fishing activity, however delays in the national roll-out continue to be a problem. Timescales for I-VMS becoming a legal requirement continue to be unknown.
- LG noted that “open areas” were marked on the summary chart – all areas are open apart from the closed area. Control areas should not be shared externally as this could alter behaviours and skew the results of the study. AT observed that once surveys began, everyone would find out where these areas are due to the high community interest in this work.
- In the context of the discussion between the two experimental designs (scattered closed areas versus one larger area), JL noted that both have been reviewed by NE's evidence specialists who have concluded that both would work. In relation to the 30m buffer zone, the feedback was that this would probably be sufficient but the question is put back to the IFCA to confirm. JL also warned of the potential impacts of changing the experimental design – potential backlash from fishers would

	<p>risk the study as a whole. JL took the view that a change in approach should only be considered/pursued if it is scientifically needed.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SH noted that accelerometers could be used to track how much pots move. We could ask a fisher to put some on their pots and this should in theory show the level of movement throughout the whole soak period. JL agreed that this would be valuable evidence to support the appropriateness of the 30m buffer if this is the one ultimately agreed. • SH also observed that Jon Chamberlain (University of Essex partner who proposed the alternative experimental design of one larger closed area) noted that both experimental designs could work. The main benefit of this alternative approach would be in relation to removing the need for marker buoys on the rugged chalk marking and simplifying survey logistics. • In relation to concerns around marker buoys causing damage to the rugged chalk, AT pointed the Board to a marine conservation project called ReMEDIES in the Southwest, carried out in partnership by Natural England and MCS, which is trialling the use of Advanced Mooring Systems (AMS) to reduce seabed damage that can occur from anchoring and mooring of recreational boats (https://saveourseabed.co.uk/protecting-our-seabed/recreational-boating/mooring/). This could be considered as an option to reduce impacts. JSt questioned whether NE would be concerned about needing 12 anchor points instead of two. JL responded that two would be preferable but there is a need to balance the various pros and cons. The main priority is achieving scientific robustness. NE's team think that either way will work. Any way to lessen the damage should be considered. • IS questioned whether most of Eastern IFCA's voluntary trackers were used by fishers who are members of the North Norfolk Fishermen's Society; noting that this would skew the data slightly in favour of where this association fishes. • IS expressed a preference for the alternative experimental design (one large, closed area) as this experimental design represents three areas of rugosity in order. IS noted that it's important to look at all features to identify a level of rugosity where it is safe to fish. This cannot be determined without an assessment of impacts in relation to different levels of rugosity. Moreover, taking the closed area down to the beach will capture damage from other activities such as angling (IS has personal observations of this and has shared captured images with SH). • RJ observed that the video analysis to date suggests that in a majority of sites of lower rugosity, there is no evidence of fishery damage. The intention is to map these areas as being scoped out of the study due to the lack of evidence of damage, and to focus on higher rugosity areas where some damaged is observed. In relation to closed areas extending down to the shoreline, the MCZ only
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	<p>starts 200 months. SH also reminded that including different rugosity areas had previously considered but decided against as this approach would require doubling the project in size and cost and rendering it unfeasible in terms of what is achievable.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • JL observed that her understanding (in relation to discussion around different rugosity levels) is that the outcome of the study will be conclusive i.e. either there will be clear and significant differences in how rugosity changes between areas fished and areas not fished which will require stricter, more precautionary measures, or we will see no significant differences in which case we would be happy with the effort management already in place. JL's view is that if the study shows significant damage then the whole area would require management. JL was supportive of the scattered closed areas approach but open-minded to the fact that adjustments may need to be made if things are not working (e.g. changes to buffer size etc.). It's also crucial that fishers feel that they can report if any gear comes into closed areas by mistake so that we can be aware of it. Otherwise, there is a risk of invalidating the whole study. RJ agreed that comms to industry need to be very clear about this. • SH suggested that ideally, industry would be involved in placing markers, conducting monitoring and keeping an eye on closures. AT agreed that this would be really welcome. • Project Board members acknowledged that Natural England and University of Essex partners have both confirmed that both experimental designs could work. Each design has pros and cons but the thing that stands out is industry engagement and the risk of losing support for the study. On this basis, there was agreement to go ahead with the scattered closed areas approach on the understanding that anchoring, marking and monitoring issues may need to be re-examined in more detail and that option 2 (one large closed area) would be considered if any insurmountable barriers present in relation to achieving scientific robustness through option 1 (scattered approach). • DECISION: To proceed with the scattered closed areas experimental design (natural disturbance study), on the understanding that option 2 (one large closed area) will remain available if any insurmountable barriers present in relation to achieving scientific robustness through option 1. AT abstained from this decision as the natural disturbance study has not been discussed at the SG whose views AT represents.
Research & Development Task & Finish Group Update	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potting Assessment: Provided NE with our formal response to their response, awaiting NE comment on this. In the process of developing a joint statement and press release with Natural England, which we can share on our website to summarise the advice received, our position and how we plan to respond to it. A meeting has been arranged for Greg and Natural England to meet with Duncan Baker to discuss concerns raised by MACNAG on the advice and ARM.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Survey work: No survey work completed or planned for the next couple of weeks. Onboard bio sampling set to start in April and planning for the 2023 summer season will commence soon. Focus will be on survey work required for the natural disturbance study and habitat surveys. • Natural disturbance study - discussed as a separate agenda item (above). • Gear impact study: progressing slowly but other workstreams are taking higher priority. • Chalk mapping: Envision mapping have finished analysing the ROV footage collected during 2022 and are now focusing on the mapping side of things. We have been talking to swathe service about the collection of multibeam data to fill in gaps using an autonomous vessel. They have provided us with some rough costings (£10,000/day for data collection and £500/day for data processing) and are going to provide us with a quote for the area Northeast of Cromer. • Fishing activity mapping: We now have 15 trackers distributed across the fleet and are continuing to collect spatial data on activities from these. We are also exploring ways that pot buoy counts can be used to provide information on potting densities, either through using drones or conduction counts from shore or a vessel, but also to provide a mechanism for monitoring activity levels and the uptake of the code of best practice. • Adaptive gear trials: no update, project has taken a lower priority so focus can be on developing the natural disturbance study. • Chalk value study: Hoping to start onboard biosampling in April, currently developing a method to incorporate meat yields into the assessment. • Social value study: discussed as a separate agenda item. • Interim report 2023: we are currently compiling an interim report which summarises the research work that has been developed by the group, the progress made so far and key areas of focus for the next couple of years. A draft has been circulated for internal review. Hoping to have a final draft to share in April.
Management Task & Finish Group update	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Byelaw: Cromer Shoal Chalk Beds Byelaw 2023 was made at the 51st statutory meeting of the Authority on 8th March 2023 and Authority members have agreed to proceed with a formal consultation on the draft byelaw and impact assessment. The formal consultation launches 30th March and will close on 8th May. Comms have been produced including 2 public notices in Fishing News, website news items, letters, infographics and mailshots. • Recovery Initiative: We are awaiting a response from Ghost Fishing UK who have put a call out to their divers for expressions of interest in recovering gear from the area.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Voluntary tagging initiative: We are progressing a bid to WWF through East of England Plastics Coalition for funding to support a voluntary tagging scheme trial in advance of the byelaw coming into force.
Communications Strategy review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of communications plan: will need to update frequency of stakeholder group meetings based on discussion today (Stakeholder Group item) • Newsletter update: plan to circulate a newsletter to provide a summary of the last 6 months work to stakeholder along with the interim report in April ahead of the next stakeholder group meeting. Likely this meeting will be more of an online Q&A session as opposed to an in person meeting where we are seeking input from stakeholders. • Crab and Lobster festival: festival is now in the calendar for the 19th - 21st May, need to make a decision on whether we take part. Suggestion that this would be to talk about the fishery and the work we are doing in the MCZ (ARM) and that this would be a collaborative effort involving Eastern IFCA, industry, other stakeholders, TFG members and potentially Blue Marine. Open to discussion for a decision to be made by the Board. • There was some discussion about the capacity to participate in the Crab & Lobster festival. JL noted that a joint approach could be taken. NE and Jon Chamberlain participated in the Norwich Science Festival and have a lot of materials from that even that could be repurposed for the Crab & Lobster Festival. This could be a good opportunity to interest members of the community in our work, update them on what's going on, and dispel any rumors (an informal in-person SG meeting of sorts). • ACTION: JB and JL to liaise offline about collaborative participation in the Crab & Lobster Festival.
Evidence Review Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No update was given during the meeting.
Highlights and exceptions – project progress	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Natural disturbance study: had hoped to have a final proposal developed by the end of March, still ironing out a few issues but this does not change the overall experimental design and survey work required and so costings can start to be pulled together and we can start applying for funding • Cromer Shoal Chalk Beds Byelaw 2023: agreed at the March Authority meeting, a key milestone, and set to go out for formal consultation imminently. Experience has shown us that it will likely take a minimum of two years for the byelaw to be in force. • ARM and Interim report: both on track for drafts to be shared by the end of the week for internal review and for final drafts to be shared in April.

A0B	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> None.
Date of next meeting	Monday 22nd May at 15.15.

Decision Log		
Date	Decision	Update
27/3/2023	Short updates on ongoing work to be shared with greater regularity.	
27/3/2023	Natural Disturbance Study: To proceed with the scattered closed areas experimental design (natural disturbance study), on the understanding that option 2 (one large closed area) will remain available if any insurmountable barriers present in relation to achieving scientific robustness through option 1.	
2/2/2022	PB meeting notes will be succinct and will show key updates and actions and decisions to support the business-like nature of PB meetings.	N/A
2/2/2022	The Chairs of the two Task and Finish Groups will provide bullet point updates at each SG meeting.	N/A
4/4/2022	Based on Management T&F Group's formal recommendation, a decision to begin the byelaw drafting process was formally taken by the Project Board.	23/5/2022 Informal consultation comms are in development
4/4/2022	A 'decision log' will be added to the meeting notes to keep track of decisions taken, as distinct from updates on actions from previous meetings.	NA
23/5/2022	The amended Stakeholder Group ToRs and Code of Conduct are to go back to the Stakeholder Group for deliberation and agreement.	
23/5/22	Moving forward, tracker data will be cross-referenced against ROV footage to enable impacts to be assessed.	N/A
20/9/2022	Progress the societal value study as a partnership arrangement with MCS.	
2/2/2023	SR and AF to formalise proposal and for it to be agreed outside of the formal Project Board meeting structure. All members agree to proceed.	

2/2/2023	Agree to the recommendations in the 2023 comms review report.	
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