

Cromer Shoal MCZ Project Board Meeting Notes

Meeting Time/Date:	15 15 hrs 22 nd May 2023	Venue:	Via Microsoft Teams
Attendees:	Jennifer Love, Natural England Sue Ranger, 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 John Davies	Apologies:	Jon Butler, Eastern IFCA

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>			
22/5/2023	Compile a project plan for the natural disturbance study to include: clarification on roles and responsibilities, the core minimum that needs to be undertaken	SH/RJ	

	each year (milestones) to answer research questions, and long term financial projections.		
22/5/2023	Organise a call and go through Natural England's key feedback on the ARM plan.	SH/JL	
22/5/2023	Collaborate on a strategy to encourage uptake of trackers.	LG/SH	
22/5/2023	MCNAG Conference - JL to discuss internally whether resource is available to inform a consideration for a joint presence between Eastern IFCA and Natural England.	JL	
Ongoing Actions			
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	22/5/2023 Ongoing . Original reluctance by Cefas to share the study prior to publication. Sam Parker has asked for bullet point summary and awaiting response.
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	22/5/2023 Ongoing . Sue has spoken with several contacts. It's likely that the opportunity for a Master's project has been missed for this year. Interest has been expressed in exploring the issue from a broader lens as a PhD project across other IFCA's but Sue has also collected the names for people in university's along the east coast that could be approached for a Master's project.

Completed Actions from Previous Meetings			
Actions		Owner	Update
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	22/5/2023 Complete. SG newsletter is now published online, and hard copies have been distributed to fishing industry during formal byelaw consultation drop-in sessions. KG has sent AT a document to supplement the informal consultation outcome, signposting more clearly how SG feedback has been taken into account.
27/3/2023	JB and JL to liaise offline about collaborative participation in the Crab & Lobster Festival.	JB/JL	22/5/2023 Complete.
27/3/2023	Natural Disturbance Study: SH to share the project proposal summary chart with JL.	SH	22/5/2023 Complete.
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	22/5/2023 Complete. The review has been finalised and shared online alongside interactive maps showcasing the evidence used to inform the review.

Progress updates and new actions and decisions
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<p>Natural Disturbance Study</p>	<p><u>Update:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We have been sourcing quotes for high resolution multibeam surveys for experimental areas. So far 4 companies have been contacted and we have received two quotes, both just shy of £10,000. One company does not have availability this year and so we are just waiting for the final quote, expected in the next week or two. • Blue Marine Foundation have confirmed £25,000 funding towards collecting baseline surveys. We are currently pulling together a contract with them. This money will be prioritised towards marking closed areas and multibeam surveys as these are essential. NE have applied for a further £25,000 funding. • A Project Delivery Group meeting was held in April to discuss options for marking closed areas. Three options were considered: fishermen's anchors, helical screws and concrete blocks. There was general agreement within the Group that concrete blocks were the favoured option as they are unlikely to move on the seabed. Helical screws were preferred by some but concerns over their effectiveness in chalk and their cost appear to make them an unviable option. • Since the meeting, discussions with Cromer lifeboat station and others have raised concerns around using concrete blocks as it seems they can be buoyant. Marker buoys used by the RNLI are now anchored using 3 anchors, previously concrete blocks were used but were found to move. Robert Smith (Wells Harbour Master) and Neil (Boat Yard owner at Wells) recommend using a train wheel/heavy weight and chain with a special buoy marker, this is what we use to mark our sonde buoy in the Wash. Currently awaiting quotes from both parties for this. This is the option we are leaning towards. We have also been looking at Advance Mooring Systems and plan to incorporate these into the anchor system. These include use of buoys floats to lift excess rope of the ground and elastic rope to prevent slack rope interacting with features. • We have completed a Crown Estate and MMO Marine Licence application for deploying the buoys, we won't be able to deploy anchors until we have received these licences. The timeframe for this is between approximately 6-12 weeks although dependent on the size of the project. The cost is also dependent on how much work is involved in processing the application. We have drafted an MCZ assessment, it just needs updating with the new proposed method before it is shared with Natural England. • We completed a side scan survey last week to collect up-to-date habitat data of the proposed experimental areas to make sure they contain rugged chalk. This will be used to narrow down the 6 experimental areas from the 15 we currently have. Once we have identified these final areas, these
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along with a few back up stations areas will be ground truthed with the ROV to make sure suitable features are present. Once final areas have been determined, it is likely we will then have another industry meeting to share these and get agreement.

Discussion:

- There was discussion around appropriate anchoring system for marking out the closed areas. It was felt within the PB that the drilling option could offer a more targeted approach, giving greater control as the dive team could micro-site. SH is awaiting a quote from Wells Harbour.
- Costings and a viability assessment for each option is needed with a view to making a final decision. The multibeam surveys are the first priority as they are needed to establish a baseline. IS offered to share the contacts for freelance multibeam surveyors.
- There was some discussion around funding and the need to ensure that finances are available for the duration of the study. JL clarified, in this regard, that the £25,000 funding bid she has placed is a multi-year bid. Eastern IFCA meanwhile is due to receive Defra funding in relation to 3 workstreams and will explore whether there is wriggle room to use some of it to support this project.
- There was discussion around roles and responsibilities, and specifically in relation to Blue Marine Foundations' (BMF) involvement. SH explained that BMF's involvement is primarily in relation to the provision of funds to support the work, input into the development of the experimental design, and stakeholder engagement. Eastern IFCA is leading on delivery and the overall coordination of the project as BMF does not have the capacity to undertake this. IS questioned whether there was still an intention for the work to be undertaken in the context of PhD research. SH confirmed that this is the case but that the baseline surveys would be conducted outside of the scope of the PhD due to timescales. JD observed that it was communicated to industry at meetings that the study would be led by BMF. If this is not the case, follow up meetings are needed to provide clarity and ensure continued buy-in. JL questioned whether BMF could be involved in the analysis, write-up and conclusions to provide surety to stakeholders about the outcome.
- JG noted that it was originally anticipated that BMF would be in charge of project delivery. If this is not the case, there is a need to ensure robust project planning in relation to delivery, financing and timescales, with clearly defined roles and responsibilities and a projected annual budget. JG emphasised that this is one of the most important pieces of work under ARM.
- **ACTION: RJ/SH to compile a project plan for the natural disturbance study to include: clarification on roles and responsibilities, the core minimum that needs to be undertaken each year (milestones) to answer research questions, and long term financial projections.**

<p>Research T&FG Update</p>	<p><u>Update:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potting Assessment: ARM plan was shared with NE at the end of April, along with our Interim Research Report and a Risk Assessment. We are awaiting feedback and comment on the ARM plan before it is finalised and shared more widely. • Survey work: Side scan survey completed last week to provide updated habitat data of proposed experimental areas and habitat mapping for the area Northeast of Cromer where we currently have no multibeam. • Natural disturbance study: discussed as a separate agenda item. • Gear impact study: Other workstreams are taking higher priority. • Chalk mapping: We have received a draft report from Envision Mapping who are analysing last year's video footage, have provided comment and are awaiting a final draft. RJ had a call with them last week to discuss outputs and recommendations for future work. Habitat mapping work this year will target any gaps we have in data to inform rugged chalk extent and peat and clay exposures. We have also published our 2022 Rugged Chalk Review online. • 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 continuing to explore ways that pot buoy counts can be used to provide information on potting densities, including through using drones/aerial surveys. • Adaptive gear trials: no update, project has taken a lower priority so focus can be on developing the natural disturbance study. • Chalk value study: First on board bio sampling trip was completed last week, unable to get out in April due to poor weather. • Social value study: no update • Last year's dive data sent to a different consultancy (funded by NE): they have provided a draft report which will provide info on a next tranche to define the rugged chalk area. <p><u>Discussion:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • JL has gone through and made comments on the ARM Plan and questioned whether SH has any preferred format for receiving the feedback. • ACTION: JL and SH to have a call and go through the key feedback on the ARM plan. • JL noticed a note in the SG newsletter that gear trials are not being pursued anymore and took the view that these are still worthwhile (agreed by IS). Observations of Eastern IFCA's adapted shank
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	<p>can be made during ROV surveys and compared with non-adapted shanks. Such information could prove useful down the line. RJ clarified that this work has been postponed, not cancelled, due to limited capacity and the need to target resources on the natural disturbance study which takes priority. There is still an intention to conduct some observations on the adapted shank; in particular, it is planned that the shank will be fitted with an autometer and lobster cam to observe how much it moves under water (complementary data to the natural disturbance study).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adaptive gear was based on early discussions on potential adaptations with minimum impacts on industry. However, it is anticipated that the natural disturbance study will give us a lot more information on what we need to adapt and help us focus our thinking. Thus, it makes sense to start adapting the gear as necessary following that additional information. • JG reminded of the need to keep project discipline and that wider project planning decisions need to be considered and decided on at Project Board level. • IS questioned whether any additional boats had taken up trackers and what the representation was like across the fleet. SH responded that we have a broad representation of a range of fishing boats across the MCZ, but not as many as we would like. More information is available in the 2023 Research Interim Report (to be shared on website imminently). • LG observed that in the wider context of further delays to the national roll-out of i-VMS, the uptake of Eastern IFCA's voluntary trackers is of utmost importance. It is also necessary for monitoring in relation to the natural disturbance study. Under the draft byelaw, Eastern IFCA has an ability to require vessels to be fitted with a form of tracker. It may be necessary to bring in a requirement for carrying an Eastern IFCA tracker until such time as i-VMS comes in. This will be considered in more detail at the Management T&F Group. An engagement plan is needed to encourage uptake as much as possible, taking into account the need to move forward sensitively and be well informed of what is going on nationally with i-VMS. • ACTION: LG and SH to collaborate on a strategy to encourage the uptake of trackers.
Management Task & Finish Group Update	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We are progressing a funding bid to support a feasibility study into appropriate tags for pots in the MCZ with a view to rolling out a voluntary tagging scheme prior to the byelaw coming in. Further details will be provided in due course. • Ghost Fishing UK have secured volunteers for dates in September to remove lost gear reported within the MCZ by local divers.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monitoring the Code of Best Practice: Ongoing work. We have been trialling different ways but it comes around to narrative being best way to achieve monitoring, particularly in the absence of trackers etc. We are still working on a report on effectiveness of the Code; struggled to get information in a quantitative form. Formal Consultation on the draft byelaw: Original deadline of 8th May has been extended to the 31st for two reasons: firstly, limited responses had been received close to the deadline and secondly, to enable discussions from the next SG meeting to be taken into consideration.
Stakeholder Group Update	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The next meeting will be held on Wednesday 31st May, from 6 – 8 m on Zoom. It will be a Q&A session on Eastern IFCA's newsletter and 2023 Research Interim Report, with part of the meeting devoted to discussion on the formal byelaw consultation. AT is going on maternity leave and SR will be taking over.
Communications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The second edition of Eastern IFCA's newsletter has been shared. Eastern IFCA and Natural England attended the Crab & Lobster Festival in Cromer. A request has been received for attendance and contributions at MCNAG's annual conference. The conference being in August presents difficulties for Eastern IFCA as this coincides with survey season and annual leave of key employees. JL will also be on annual leave but will investigate whether someone else from Natural England could attend in her absence. The Board agreed a working aspiration to attend. ACTION: JL to discuss internally whether resource is available to inform a consideration for a joint presence between Eastern IFCA and Natural England.
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"> There are issues with the connection between BLUEROV and the computer (appears to be a software rather than a hardware issue). SH still working on this and next step to contact the suppliers. JL suggested contacting Cefas as they have a BlueROV and might have electrical engineers who might be able to assist.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Natural disturbance study: we working towards having marker buoy in June/July time so that areas can be closed for surveys between July and October. Largely dependent now on receiving licences from the MMO and Crown Estate. Cromer Shoal Chalk Beds Byelaw 2023: the formal consultation deadline has been extended to 31st May, but this is not expected to delay anything further down the line at this stage. Two-year time frame for byelaw to come into forces take into account delays like this. ARM and Interim report shared with NE end of April.
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Date of next meeting	Monday 17th July 2023, 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.	