Cromer Shoal MCZ Project Board Meeting Notes

Meeting Time/Date:	15 15 hrs 3 October 2023	**Venue:**	Via Microsoft Teams
Attendees:	Julian Gregory, Eastern IFCA Samantha Hormbrey, Eastern IFCA Judith Stoutt, Eastern IFCA Ron Jessop, Eastern IFCA James Teasdale, Eastern IFCA Jon Butler, Eastern IFCA Luke Godwin, Eastern IFCA Inge Smith, Eastern IFCA member John Davies Shannon McCloskey, Natural England Sue Ranger, Agents of Change	**Apologies:**	Jennifer Love, Natural England

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

New Actions Arising and Ongoing Actions		
Actions	**Owner**	**Update**
New Actions Arising		

LG to discuss with SH to lay out exact parameters and desired outcomes for the Stakeholder group, with intent for a mid-November meeting		LG/SH	
Ongoing Actions			
07/07/2023	Look at project planner to help narrow down dates for permit conditions consultation etc. to enable the planning of the next SG meeting.	LG	10/03/2023 **Ongoing.** T&F Group on 04/12 to discuss and confirm dates for consultation.
07/07/2023	Put together a straightforward protocol for amateur divers and/or possibly include this as an agenda item at the next SG meeting.	SH/RJ/SR	10/03/2023 **Ongoing.** Plan to share protocol for evidence gathering at the next stakeholder group meeting.
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 each year (milestones) to answer research questions, and long term financial projections.	SH/RJ	10/03/2023 **Ongoing.** Project plan is nearly ready, just needs to be finalised. Quotes and costings have been shared.
27/3/2023	Societal Value Study	JL/SR/JS	10/03/2023 **Ongoing**. No update.

Completed Actions			
22/5/2023	Collaborate on a strategy to encourage uptake of trackers.	LG/SH	10/03/2023 **Complete**. Significant engagement drive, use of trackers increased, 18 out, 16 in use, 2 issues. Data is now being collected. Resource heavy workstream as many reminders are needed to maintain usage, workstream needs to be built into day to day. IVMS also involved. 5 fishers using IVMS, with others willing to turn them on. Approximately 2/3 of vessels are tracked at 21, with some of the remaining happy to be included. Likely to be a greater proportion of the fleet active within the rugged chalk area.
22/5/2023	MCNAG Conference - Eastern IFCA will prepare a short, recorded presentation on the key updates and highlights from the recent months.	JL	10/03/2023 **Complete.** Email has been received from [redacted] saying it was well received.

Progress updates and new actions and decisions	
Natural Disturbance Study: Marking closed areas	<u>Update</u> **Natural Disturbance Study** • Marine licence application (to place 6 buoys in the MCZ to mark the northern corners of the potting closed areas) - Public consultation has closed and MMO are drafting the licence. NE response to the licence was that hindering the conservation objectives could not be ruled out but the activity is needed as part of the management of the site. We are now liaising with the suppliers and contractors to organise sourcing the materials and deploying the anchors and buoys.

	• The question has been raised as to when is best to deploy the buoys. Now that the potting season is coming to an end, it has been proposed to wait until early next year to minimise any potential environmental impact over the first winter but open this for discussion. • We had initially hoped to get the buoys in the water before we closed the areas to potting and completed baseline surveys but due to delays in the marine licence process this has not been possible. In the interim, as an alternative, we have engaged heavily with potters to ensure that they are aware of the locations of the closed areas and have a way of identifying the areas. The majority of potters can identify them areas using plotters they have on their vessels but for some who don't have a plotter on board we are working to provide them with handheld plotters which they can use for the duration of the study. The funding for this has come out of the Blue Marine Foundation fund. We have engaged with all commercial and recreational fishermen known to pot in the area and have generally received really positive feedback showing support and understanding of the research work and agreement to abide by the voluntary closures. • We closed the areas to potting on the 14th September and have been heavily monitoring the areas to ensure that they remain clear of gear. So far monitoring has shown general compliance with the voluntary closures with the majority of gear being moved before this date. Officers contacted fishermen who still had gear in the areas and subsequently the gear has now been moved. Officers will continue monitoring the areas regularly and liaising with fishermen until the marker buoys are in place to ensure continued compliance. <u>Discussion</u>: • JG highlighted internal discussion regarding time of deployment, with the proposal that by the time this comes into place, given low level of fishing & risk of weather, spring may be preferable. • JD & SM would prefer buoys in sooner rather than later as area is heavily fished and will be fished even in winter, specifically for lobster. Single handed boats make reliance on plotter very difficult, so visual markers would be important. SM highlighted the long discussion the on need for visual markers which did conclude that they were necessary. Response to MMO accepted some level of risk from buoys, main reason keen to push forward was the condition of monitoring being more intensive at first, which gives the best chance to identify impacts if placed at winter when worst weather occurs, and gives a chance to make changes at start of study rather than 1/3 of the way in.

	• JB updated that equipment was available, and that the rationale for the spring start was to give a chance to identify issues that may be more severe if subjected directly to rough weather. • JD responded that if they can't handle a winter then it's going to require a new solution anyway and having them in now keeps the issue fresh in the minds of industry. • RJ added that models have been run by Buoy-layers, with appropriate buffers in place. This modelling shows that the proposed anchoring should be sufficient. With this degree of testing, worth getting them into the water ASAP. • JS highlighted importance of the study being validated and robust, and if the buoys in earlier facilitates this, then should be ASAP. • JD requested reasonable notification before laying buoys due to gear at the edge of the areas and potential aggravation of large laying vessel. Reasonably short notice was not acceptable. JG suggested a couple of weeks. JB added sweeps have shown very little gear in the area. • ***Decision: deploy buoys as soon as possible***
Societal value study	<u>Update:</u> • JS wanted to add to agenda to pick this issue up again, in association with the ARM work. Project wasn't up and running in spring, so there is a desire to see if this is still a desired project. • SR updated that thinking on the issue hasn't really progressed. Proposed as an option at a PhD group, but was rejected on basis of not being interdisciplinary enough. Potential capacity within SR's team, which may give a chance to put time into the project in Q1 2024. Still definitely interested in this, both locally and more broadly. • JS added timescales are flexible because no workstreams depend on this. <u>Discussion:</u> • LG mentioned that a social scientist ([redacted]) will be visiting EIFCA in November. SR recognised [redacted] as a good option, someone to discuss the issue with. JG added she was doing work for AIFCA. • IS queried whether anyone had contacted [redacted] at Human Nature. SR agreed that she had been involved in other workstreams, and may be useful for this one. JS added that [redacted] also runs an excellent course on a similar subject.
Research T&FG Update	**Research Task & Finish Group update (SH)** • **Natural disturbance study**

	Update: ○ In addition to monitoring the closed areas, we have had a huge engagement drive to encourage the uptake and use of trackers or IVMS units so that we can further monitor closed areas and collect information on activity levels in the open experimental areas. This has so far been successful with the majority of fishers understanding the importance of this data and now using units and providing us with the data. We will continue to work with fishermen to fill these gaps. ○ We had hoped to complete our dive surveys in September but unfortunately we were weathered off for most of the days we had planned. We were able to get out and complete two dives on of the days but the visibility was very poor which meant the data we were able to collect was very limited. We were, however, able to trial each of the proposed methods and trial the use of Sebastian as a dive platform and found the day extremely useful and learnt a lot of what may and may not be achievable. It is now very unlikely we will get the baseline dive surveys completed this Autumn as planned but if we do get any more opportunities to do some diving this year we will. Whilst this is disappointing, we always knew that getting the dive surveys completed this year would be one of the most challenging aspects of the work and so had planned ROV and multibeam surveys as the biggest priority. ○ We have completed all planned ROV September over two days, however, as Jon was unable to attend one of these days we weren't able to complete the 3D photogrammetry surveys 3 of the sites. ○ Multibeam surveys are planned for this week, subject to weather. ○ NE have drafted a MOA for the funding they are contributing - an MOA will allow for a bit more flexibility and will streamline the process for future years Discussion ○ JG queried whether baseline surveys were necessary for closed areas survey. SH responded that only diving was impacted, so the multibeam and ROV surveys would have 3 years of data, while dive surveys would only have 2 years, but that dives were always expected to be difficult. ○ JD queried whether actions were taking place that week, and SH confirmed multibeam survey would take place Thursday/Friday. JD wanted to know vessel details, and whether a fishery

	rep would be on board. SH responded that they would not be towing anything, so there should not be any gear contact, but acknowledged awareness had not been spread. ○ JD noted that floating ropes could be an issue, depending on vessel type. JG agreed a notice to mariners should be circulated but explained that the work had come out very swiftly from a complex situation, and was resolved late last week. JB added that NTM do go out to local organisations, but this was a timing issue. JD replied he may not see a notice to mariners, and direct contact would be preferable. • **ARM plan -** The Natural disturbance study has taken priority over this over the summer months, now these are almost over we will be able to pick up the ARM plan back up. • **Habitat Mapping -** Habitat mapping surveys for the year have been completed, but remain to be processed and analysed. We are exploring opportunities for NE to fund some of this work again or for other ways for this work to be completed externally. • **Adaptive gear trials -** Now have the LobsterCam from NE and have ordered data loggers to be used in trials. This work will be picked up over the Autumn/Winter in preparation for trials next summer. • **Fishing activity mapping -** We currently have 18 trackers distributed across the fleet, and have seen an increase in trackers being used following a significant engagement drive which will continue until the requirement for iVMS becomes compulsory. • **Chalk value study -** We haven't completed any bio sampling trips in August and September due to low capacity amongst the team and this being one of the lower priority workstreams. We are still working to develop a method to look at meat yields and have been talking with Jonas seafoods to try and figure out a way of doing things • **Social value study** - no update, not currently a priority

Management Task & Finish Group Update	**Code of Best Practice Monitoring:** • This has been picked up by JT, monitoring is ongoing. • All about refining what we mean by poor weather which is under discussion with industry. **Tag Funding Project:** • Also picked up by JT. **Ghost Fishing UK – Recovery Planning** • Also picked up by JT. **Cromer Potting Byelaw** - Formal consultation has been discussed, and the Authority has been provided a chance to feed into it. Byelaw is almost ready to go to MMO. - Permit conditions are the next step, with Phase 1 being the inshore restriction and the winter closure. This will be discussed at the next T&F group. <u>Discussion</u> - IS noted MCNAG facebook page showed some gear recovery, with narrative that they were frustrated and feeling left out so had taken matters into their own hands. LG explained that an early investigation to arrange something with divers showed not to be an option on health and safety grounds, MCNAG was entitled to act independently but had to satisfy themselves they were doing it safely and legally. - IS said Whitlingham Adventure Park had been willing to provide training to locals, but silt levels would be prohibitive. Stoney cove next year stands as the plan.
Stakeholder Group Update	• Autumn is being targeted but notice requirements and MSC commitments means it is likely to be mid-November at the earliest before it can be done. Questions exist regarding what input and outputs are desired to ensure consultation is fully informed. • LG replied it doesn't need to be at the beginning or end of consultation, but mid-november works quite well in terms of giving some leeway. The key thing will be to ensure that the desired outcome is

	aligned with the language being used. Highlighted 'beach-launched' as an example, with the legal definition being difficult, and so it is very importance to be exact about what the desired outcome is. • **Action: LG to discuss with SH to lay out exact parameters and desired outcomes for the Stakeholder group, with intent for a mid-November meeting** • SR highlighted meeting was targeted to be face to face, with JD agreeing that was preferable.
Communications	• No major update outside of Stakeholder group meeting • JG highlighted need to keep website updated, adding minutes to website and making them available
Highlights and exceptions – project progress	• There is a plan with a 5-year timeline for ARM delivery with key milestones, moving forward this plan could be shared in these meetings, but often overlaps with discussions already held. • Next keystones are determining the extent of the rugged chalk, the value of the chalk (this is currently behind schedule), potting byelaw permit conditions to be confirmed early 2025, and byelaw coming into effect mid 2025
Risk Review	• This has come out of ARM plan. A potting assessment was competed and shared with NE, with feedback received. Rather than update the assessment constantly, it is proposed to have a quarterly risk review and report back. Expectation for it to be a brief agenda item. • Last review in July, risk level has remained stable: Monitoring ongoing hasn't indicated an increase in effort, but regulatory effort not yet in place. Discussion • IS asked how assessments were made. SH replied that the situation is assessed against conservation objects and pressures identified (abrasion, penetration), with a risk matrix considering likelihood/severity. Risks are scored at time of assessment, and will be reviewed as part of the process, with expectation that the risks should decrease over time. • IS added she was uncertain exactly where the long term/short time distinction comes into play as regards view of risk, and SH agreed it's a tricky question that doesn't have a solid answer yet. JG added that the project being over the next year or two is generally fair to consider short term, and a pragmatic approach is important. In this environment, short term may be considered as medium in another environment.
Date of next meeting	***Thursday 7 December, 15.30***

Decision Log		
Date	**Decision**	**Update**
03/10/2023	Natural Disturbance Study: to deploy marker buoys around the closed areas as soon as practicable.	
27/3/2023	Short updates on ongoing work to be shared with greater regularity.	N/A
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.	03/10/2023 closed areas selected, are being marked off with buos
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.	N/A
23/5/2022	The amended Stakeholder Group ToRs and Code of Conduct are to go back to the Stakeholder Group for deliberation and agreement.	N/A
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.	N/A
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.	N/A
2/2/2023	Agree to the recommendations in the 2023 comms review report.	N/A