Cromer Shoal MCZ Project Board Meeting Notes

Meeting Time/Date:	15 30 hrs 8 February 2024	**Venue:**	Via Microsoft Teams
Attendees:	Samantha Hormbrey, Eastern IFCA James Teasdale, Eastern IFCA Ellie Collishaw, Eastern IFCA Luke Godwin, Eastern IFCA John Davies, Eastern IFCA member Sue Ranger, Agents of Change Jennifer Love, Natural England	**Apologies:**	Julian Gregory, Eastern IFCA Jon Butler, Eastern IFCA Ron Jessop, Eastern IFCA Inge Smith, Eastern IFCA member

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

New Actions Arising and Ongoing Actions			
Actions		**Owner**	**Update**
New Actions Arising			
Ongoing Actions			
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	SH/RJ	08/02/2024 – **Ongoing.** Project plan is nearly finalised, comments have been received and document is being QA'd for publication

	research questions, and long term financial projections.		
27/3/2023	Societal Value Study	JL/SR	08/02/2024 – **Ongoing.** Conversations held with [redacted] from Newcastle. MSC student has been found to take the project on and will be bringing a proposal for the study. AoC willing to share any relevant data.
Completed Actions			
03/10/2023	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	08/02/2023 – **Complete.** Meeting was delayed but has now been held.
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	08/02/2023 – **Complete.** Consultation launched, closes at end of February.
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	08/02/2023 – **Complete.** On the agenda for next stakeholder group meeting to highlight what data and evidence can be used, and what is needed for an evidence submission to be considered. JD raised a point regarding the validity of evidence – possibility of staged evidence and the importance of considering sources and ensuring evidence is submitted in good faith.

Matters Arising
Agree: ARM plan – to be agreed SH gave a presentation in relation to the materials circulated to members on 24/01/2024 regarding the ARM process spanning 2020-2023, highlighting ARM's participatory, flexible, and informed approach, and then laid out a timeline of the ARM process from 2021-2027, with completed workstreams, projected workstream dates, and key milestones. Discussion: JL commented that the plan is good, comprehensive and Natural England comments had clearly been integrated into the plan. She added further comments were available but there was no objection to signing it off today. Further added that other groups not as involved as Project Board members may want wider information, particularly as regards the natural disturbance study with some possibility to improve clarity in the plan. SH replied that more detail on the disturbance study will be made available, and that any further comments were welcome, but the desire was to get the plan shared by the end of the week. JL agreed to share the comments and clarified they were minor. JD added he liked the plan but highlighted that the timeline may be ambitious and questioned whether enough leeway for unforeseen circumstances and delays had been built into the plan, raising the possibility of criticism in the event of delay. SH agreed that some elements were certainly out of our control, and that some elements of the plan are gated behind progress in other areas, but that the plan does stress the possibility of delays. LG commented that a plan is a double-edged sword, with the risk of missing timescales being reputationally damaging, but on the other hand, the plan helps with time management, provides a driver to deliver milestones in time and builds transparency with the process. JL agreed with the transparency element and suggested that the plan could build confidence even with delays, as the process will be transparent. SH added that the plan will be used to provide updates with the wider public, helping to document progression in the process. SR queried whether risks being considered in risk management were purely environmental, or whether other risks are also being considered. LG replied that the MCZ designation requires specific consideration of the site integrity, but that the Eastern IFCA approach is to attempt to minimise impact on other areas, and added that a wider view on risk could be taken in future in terms of monitoring. JL added that the statutory duties of NE were very much focussed on the environmental risks, but that other bodies may take a wider view and acknowledged environmental risks are not the only risks involved.

JD added that no economic assessment was undertaken with the designation of the MCZ as potting was not considered to be impactful, and this should be taken into account retrospectively.

SH replied to SR that the ARM plan is informed by the potting assessment that only takes environmental risks into account, but highlighted the chalk value and societal value studies as wider-viewed workstreams.

Decision: ARM Plan Approved.

Discussion: Communications strategy and plan

EC gave a presentation reviewing the ARM communication strategy. Highlighted the potential for polarised views on the ARM process and Cromer MCZ. Intent of the process is to keep stakeholders informed and foster engagement and collaboration on measures as they evolve. Considered the strategy had been effective in guiding communication approaches, with multi-channel approaches, co-ordinated communication and the deployment of voluntary measures. However, the risk of overcommitment raised the possibility of failing to manage stakeholder expectations. Used an example of AoC funding running its course for the stakeholder group, raising uncertainty on path ahead. Looking forward, she raised a number of proposals:

- Update bulletin
    - Quarterly update
    - Consistent template (no more than 2 sides of A4)
    - Accessible
    - Streamlined (can use multiple channels, such as website, email, lines to take)
- Stakeholder group meeting
    - Two yearly meetings – one in person in November, one online in Q2
- Commitment to consistency
    - Consistent dates, communication streams and formats
- Increasing accessibility
    - Visible updates, with the bulletin, website and social media
    - Increasing opportunity to engage with a multichannel approach

Draft timeline developed following the ARM timeline template to improve clarity on what and when stakeholders can expect regarding comms.

Discussion

JL agreed the benefit of having a plan, and asked to what extent this was a reduction on the previous plan and whether resources were enough even for this plan. LG replied that a key change was the streamlining of updates, rather than having very detailed updates. Added there wasn't much formal commitment to comms previously, so without a framework comms would only go out after milestones, and that regular smaller updates would be more reassuring and less resource intensive, and there had previously been the intention for more stakeholder groups. Added that the resource question was a good one, and that this discussion was important to determining whether this plan is achievable. JL asked if an infographic format was the plan for the updates, LG agreed.

JD added that it is a good plan but suggested whether spring/autumn may be a better choice for the media updates and may align better with seasonal workloads, particularly over the winter period. LG replied that it was a good point but highlighted the importance of regular comms and added that these were meant to be very streamlined. SH asked whether the timing of stakeholder meetings was meant to align with other ARM elements, but LG replied that it was primarily meant to align with lulls in fishing activity when stakeholders would be available. Also added that it gave an opportunity in the November update to highlight success in the year.

SR was very pleased to see the plan. Questioned whether the issues with not meeting expectations was more linked to a lack of understanding what the stakeholder group is for, and asked whether other media may be a good opportunity to fill in the gaps. Suggested there would be criticism regarding a reduction in comms, but this was inevitable. Also mentioned the longstanding issues regarding trust in the area, and that more in-person, deep engagement would be necessary to overcome them – understanding that resource limitations exist. LG replied that people do enjoy in-person meetings but they are very resource intensive. Added that the possibility exists to have further aspirational goals for in person meetings, and that other funding streams could help.

JL asked whether the possibility for piggy-backing on other meetings or conferences existed. SH replied that a crab and lobster festival in Cromer was a possible option and had been attended last year. JD further added that fishing meetings, such as their AGM was also a good option. LG agreed but highlighted that not many opportunities already existed to bring fishermen and conservationists together. JL queried whether the advisory groups at Wells were an option and if anything similar existed closer to Cromer. JD replied that they are good, but that awareness can be an issue especially given the distance. SH added that [redacted],

who leads the groups, may be involved in covering the relevant area. LG highlighted that such events like the advisory groups are very broad and likely to focus on achieving their own aims.

SR said that Alice Tebb was coming back in April and would be co-ordinating all community engagement of AoC, and the opportunity may emerge for more work regarding the MCZ.

There was overall agreement with the proposals to be included in the Engagement Strategy which is to be finalised and sent round to the Project Board for agreement (potentially prior to the next meeting).

Discussion: Wildlife Trust Attendance

SH explained that before Christmas a meeting was held with the Wildlife Trust ([redacted]) regarding a few issues, including concerns about management, timelines, and communications. WT have expressed interest in participating in the management task and finish group or the project board to have more involvement and have expressed interest in helping with communications, with a preference for the MT&F group.

The matter was discussed and on balance, it was decided that the WT would be invited to attend MT&F group meetings on the basis that there would be a benefit to the group, particularly in terms of providing a broader understanding of environmental impacts and benefits of management measures.

Decision: That an officer from the Wildlife Trust will join the Management Task & Finish Group

Progress updates and new actions and decisions	
Research T&FG Update	**SH** **Natural Disturbance Study** • Project plan has been finalised - to be published on website • Multibeam surveys - awaiting weather window • Marking closed areas - awaiting weather window to deploy buoys (marine licence now received), all hand-held GPS plotters have now been issued, monitoring of closed areas has so far shown good compliance with voluntary closures

	• Focus on applying for funding (FASS scheme reopening in February) and planning dive surveys for June 2024 • JC is producing a report summarise methods **Rugged Chalk Extent** • Processing and analysis of 2023 ROV data ongoing to inform final extent of rugged chalk and peat and clay exposures **Adaptive gear trials** • On hold will be picking up in coming months **Mapping fishing activity** • Data collection using tracker is ongoing **Crab value study** • Study is on hold as requires review to determine next steps **Social value study** • Discussions with [redacted] from Newcastle University - she has a MSc student ([redacted]) interested in taking the project. Discussed with [redacted] and [redacted] before Christmas - they have gone away to draft a proposal and hope to catch up with them in the coming weeks.
Management Task & Finish Group Update	**LG** **Code of Best Practice Monitoring:** • EC has picked this up this project and has reviewed and improved the process. **Tag Funding Project:** • Finding has been approved and we are awaiting receipt of funds to purchase tags for a feasibility study and issuing to fishermen.

	Cromer Potting Byelaw • Sent for formal QA. KPI for reply was end of Jan, so have been chased • Consultation open for permit conditions, the deadline for which has been extended to enable further comments, including at the forthcoming Stakeholder meeting.
Stakeholder Group Update	**SR** • Date set for an in-person meeting at Northrepps from 6-9pm on the 21st of Feb • Peter Richardson from MCS will be acting as Lead facilitator supported by Richard Hill (MCS), EIFCA Staff, [redacted] (Industry), [redacted] (MCNAG) • EIFCA have identified funding for venue hire & catering and organised catering • Pre meet was held on the 6th of Feb and draft agenda agreed **Agenda:** **Set up** (4:00 -5:30 Setting up & facilitator briefing) (5:30- 6:00 Stakeholder Group arrivals) **Welcome & updates (50 mins)** 6:00- 6:15 Welcome and ground rules (15 mins) 6:15- 6:30 IFCA update on ARM plan / focus for the year & Q&A (15mins) 6:30-6:50 Update on Natural Disturbance Study + Q&A (20 mins) **Break (30 mins)** 6:50-7:20 Dinner (could include a presentation during dinner) (30mins) **Permit Condition Consultation (50 mins)** 7:20-7:55 Cromer Shoal Chalk Beds Permit Byelaw 2023 Phase 1 Permit Condition Consultation (5 min presentation + 30 min structured discussion) 7:55-8.10 Table feedback and response from EIFCA (15 mins) **Evidence & Future work (50mins)** 8:10 – 8:30 Prioritisation needed as there are options for this slot: **Evidence requirements** – what are the requirements for data that can be used to inform site management, who can provide data, what sort would be helpful; **Entanglement** (possibly too wide a topic for this forum focussed on the MCZ) , **Gear recovery** – How can stakeholders help? **Chalk**

	recession presentation & discussion; **NE priority species in the area** – call out for priority species. 8:30-8:45 **Stakeholder Group review:** Updated comms strategy & terms of reference based on current resource & capacity 8.45-8.55 **Feedback & reflection:** Reflect on previous Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Challenges of ARM (5 mins feedback, then people have a survey to complete with workshop feedback and a 'temperature check' on how they are feeling about the process so far) 8:55-9:00 **Next steps and close** while people complete their feedback survey. • So far RSVPs from around 20-25 people, including 6-10 fishermen. Reminder and agenda to go out before the end of the week, expecting 30-40 attendees. • [redacted] is going to facilitate one of the groups.
Communications	**SH** • No further updates

Highlights and exceptions – project progress	**SH**
	• Voluntary CoBP - evaluate and adapt - delayed but now in progress
	• Byelaw – on track alhtouh MMO QA response is slightly delayed at this point.
	• Byelaw permit conditions - on track to have permit conditions confirmed by end of Q2 (June Authority meeting)
	• Research workstreams
	  ○ Natural Disturbance Study - started in September last year some baseline surveys pushed back to June 2024
	  ○ Habitat mapping - on track
	  ○ Fishing activity mapping - ongoing
	  ○ Adaptive gear trials- delayed in planning for trials but on track to pick up by end of Q2
	  ○ Biosampling - on hold - under review

Risk Review	**SH** • No change
Date of next meeting	**TBC – Provisionally June**

Decision Log		
Date	**Decision**	**Update**
08/02/2024	That an officer from the Wildlife Trust will join the Management Task & Finish Group	
08/02/2024	ARM Plan Approved.	
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 buoys
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.	N/A
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