Cromer Shoal Chalk Beds Marine Conservation Zone: Adaptive Risk Management Project

Project Board Meeting		
Meeting date / time: 20 June 2024 / 1530hrs		**Venue**: via Microsoft Teams
Attendees:	Julian Gregory (**JG**, CEO Eastern IFCA, *Chair*), Samantha Hormbrey (**SH**, Senior MSO, *Project* Manager), Luke Godwin (**LG**, ACO Eastern IFCA), Ron Jessop (**RWJ**, Senior MSO Eastern IFCA), Ellie Collishaw (**EC**, Project Officer Eastern IFCA), Jenifer Lover (**JL**, Natural England), Inge Smith (**IS**, Eastern IFCA Member)	
Apologies:	John Davies (**JD**, Eastern IFCA Member)	

Meeting notes

Natural Disturbance Study (NDS)

- SH presented a report prepared for members outlining development of the NDS's methodology which in summary set out:
    - The sample replicates required to enable a scientifically robust biodiversity surveys were insurmountable and that the outputs were not necessary for the study to achieve its aims. It was recommended and agreed that this part of the study was discontinued;
    - The logistical and funding difficulties associated with dive surveys (3D photogrammetry) and that the need for this part of the study was dependent on the resolution provided by multibeam surveys (i.e. if the resolution was sufficient to meet the aims of the project, the dive surveys would not be needed); and
    - The resolution of the multibeam study appeared to be sufficient to meet the aims of the NDS.
- The outputs from the baseline multibeam survey and their ability to detect change to rugged chalk over the course of the study were discussed in detail. In summary, it was acknowledged that, in the absence of further expert advice, the board could not determine if the outputs provided sufficient resolution to meet the aims of the study in the absence of the dive surveys.
- An ACTION item was added to address this.

Marking of voluntary closures

- LG updated the board on the issues arising from attempting to deploy marker buoys within the MCZ to demark the voluntary closure required for the NDS. In summary:
    - Deployment on the 'rugged chalk' is necessary to demark the area and cannot be avoided.
    - There is an argument that damage commensurate with the low-level incidences of damage caused by ongoing fishing activity would be acceptable in the context of ARM of the fishery.
    - The original buoys and anchoring systems were now judged to be too large with the consequential risk of damage that would be in excess of and disproportionate to any damage caused by fishing activity.
    - It is proposed that 'sand-bag anchors' are used in combination with much smaller buoys and that such will pose little to no risk to the rugged chalk features of the site
- On discussion a number of uncertainties were identified including the potential for the anchors to perish or cause unknown types of damage including during deployment. LG explained how the design of the buoys mitigated the risk of loss and risks associated with damage to the rugged chalk including: sandbags having a protective outer layer, floating lines being used to connect the anchor to the buoy and the low likelihood of movement as a function of the small floatation force exerted by the small buoy.
- JL acknowledged that concerns remained from Natural England's perspective given the uncertainties and that they intended to consider the matter in more detail before providing advice.
- Given the importance of effective demarcation of the voluntary closures, and the delay in having deployed markers (originally planned to be deployed in September 2023), an ACTION item was created to continue development of the buoys ready for deployment pending Natural England advice.

Engagement Strategy

- EC summarised the review and revisions to the Engagement Strategy (as per updates following the previous project board meeting).
- The engagement strategy was discussed, and its content was agreed.

November Stakeholder Group Meeting

- EC presented a report on the feasibility of holding a November stakeholder group meeting, a proposed agenda and that the meeting should be hosted online.
- The matter was discussed, and members agreed to the agenda and hosting the meeting online.

Research Task & Finish Group update

- Summer survey work will begin with ROV surveys (to contribute to NDS) which are provisionally planned for July dependent on water visibility.
- Analysis of habitat data is almost complete and once finished will inform a recommendation on a finalised extent of rugged chalk.
- Adaptive gear trials are planned to begin in August.
- Monitoring of fishing activity is impacted by low compliance with voluntary agreement for fishers to have onboard functioning tracker devices (provided by the Authority). Resource has been committed to engagement with relevant fishers to seek compliance the tracker agreements to increase the data gathered.
- The study to determine the economic value of the rugged chalk in the context of catches from pot-based fishing has been paused pending a review.
- The Social Value study of the rugged chalk is underway with the MSc student carrying out the study actively gathering data.

Management Task & Finish Group update

- Compliance with the Code of Best Practice (to reduce the risk of gear lost) is ongoing including monitoring how weather events influence fishing behaviours.
- The WWF funded tagging trial is beginning in earnest with trial tags having been ordered and engagement materials drafted to encourage local fishers to volunteer for trailing tags to inform the feasibility study.
- The Cromer Shoal Chalk Beds Byelaw 2023 has undergone one round of QA with the MMO (required prior to seeking confirmation from the SoS) and the commentary provided is being considered with a view to resubmit it in the near future.
- The consultation and recommendations on Phase 1 permit conditions (inshore vessel restriction and winter closure) were discussed ta the last MT&FG meeting and it was anticipated that final permit conditions would be taken to the 56th Eastern IFCA Meeting for a decision however, the Authority was advised that the matter should be deferred to a later meeting to comply with rules on the pre-election period. The outcomes of the consultation and finalised proposals will therefore be taken to the 57th Eastern IFCA meeting (September). Practically speaking, the delay is of no consequence as the associated byelaw is not in effect and is unlikely to be prior to the meeting.

Stakeholder Group Update

- The Marine Conservation Society withdrew from the project the day prior to the February Stakeholder Group meeting and as such, Eastern IFCA has taken over running the group.

- The February meeting was considered to be a helpful and productive event which informed the future organisation of the group meetings and feedback to the consultation on Phase 1 Permit conditions.

Communications

- There were no additional communications updates.

Highlights and exceptions

- Confirmation of the Cromer Shoal Chalk Beds Byelaw 2023 Phase 1 permit conditions is behind schedule for the reasons described above.
- Some research projects have suffered delays, primarily due to poor weather and review of the NDS methodology.

Risk Review

- No change to risk

Date of next meeting

- Agreed to be held on the 3rd October 2024

Actions will be added at the time of the meeting until marked as 'COMPLETE' at which point they will remain meeting notes for one further meeting before being removed.

DECISIONS will be added at the time of the decision and remain on the meeting notes for one further meeting before being removed.

A log of all ACTIONS and DECISIONS will be maintained separately from the meeting notes for future reference.

Date	Actions / Decisions	Owner	Target date	Update
20/06/2024	**DECISION** (*standing item*) confirmation of notes from last meeting	All	n/a	No edits required. Notes approved.
20/06/2024	**DECISION** The sample replicates required to enable a scientifically robust biodiversity surveys were			

	insurmountable and that the outputs were not necessary for the study to achieve its aims.			
20/06/2024	**ACTION**: Seek multibeam data expert advice • to obtain expert advice with regards to the extent that the multibeam data gathered via the NDS could detect change to inform a decision on pursuing 'dive surveys'. • To report back to the Project Board within the next two weeks with the advice to enable a decision outside of the project board meeting timetable.	SH SH	ASAP ASAP	
20/06/2024	**ACTION**: to procure and make marker buoy systems ahead of receiving Natural England advice.	LG	ASAP	
20/06/2024	**DECISION**: provisional agreement of the Engagement Strategy	All	n/a	n/a
20/06/2024	**DECISION**: to hold a Stakeholder Group meeting in November via Teams	All	n/a	n/a
08/02/2024	**DECISION**: that an officer from the Wildlife Trust will join the Management Task & Finish Group	All	n/a	n/a
08/02/2024	**DECISION**: ARM Plan Approved.	All	n/a	n/a