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

| **Project Board Meeting** | | |
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| **Meeting date / time**: 09 October 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), John Davies (**JD**, Eastern IFCA Member). | |
| **Apologies**: | | |

**Meeting notes**

ARM Plan progress (SH)

SH gave a brief update on ARM plan progress:

- Management – The Code of Best Practice voluntary measures are continuing to be monitored, and the Byelaw permit conditions are on track with progress for seeking confirmation and agreeing conditions (full update below).
- Research – There have been some delays with natural disturbance study and adaptive gear trials which have hindered progress. The rugged chalk value study continues to be on hold and remains lowest priority.

Key milestones:

- Determining the rugged chalk extent is on track
- Determining the baseline fishing activity has been delayed

Members discussed the reasons for the delay in the baseline fishing activity. EIFCA initially set the deadline in accordance with the byelaw timescale, with the expectation that iVMS and the voluntary tagging project would provide an indication of activity and the number of pots. However, progress in determining the baseline fishing activity data has been delayed due to setbacks with the iVMS, delays in funding for the tagging project, and issues with the accessibility and completeness of MMO returns data. Although exact figures won't now be established before the byelaw is confirmed, the relatively low level of participation in the

voluntary measures has influenced the development of the Cromer Shoal Permit Byelaw 2023 and associated permit conditions e.g. the inclusion of the requirement to notify the Authority if gear is lost which was previously only a voluntary measure. With the low uptake of the voluntary trackers specifically, combined with the other factors referred to earlier has created a scarcity of data. Members agreed it would be beneficial to look at all data options.

An ACTION item was added to address the absence of full datasets (see table below).

A degree of non-compliance with voluntary measures has led to delays in the progress of ARM. Specifically, the non-compliance with within the voluntary closed areas has postponed the natural disturbance study research. Although only a small number of individuals have not complied with the voluntary closed areas, members agreed that the issue needs to be addressed. EIFCA has established a plan to monitor the situation more frequently and communication with industry members appears to have been beneficial.

The slow progress of ARM research, caused by various factors, has raised concerns about potentially increasing risks to the designated features and hindering conservation objectives. Members agreed that this delay and the associated risks should be highlighted in future reports.

An ACTION item was added to ensure that the rationale for the delay and the associated risks are documented in future.
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NOTE – Non-compliance causing delays may create a higher risk

Risk review (SH)
Assessment completed in July and for October, no change to risk and remains Medium.

The current risk review only addresses environmental risks. However, since the project board oversees the entire project, the risk review matrix should also include all project risks. Members felt that it would be beneficial to see the project risks when making informed decisions about the project.

An ACTION item was added to address this.

Natural Disturbance Study Design (SH)
SH presented an update for members outlining development of the NDS's methodology which in summary set out:

- Data cannot be gridded to lower resolution without resulting in a loss of data. Resolution is limited by conditions on the day and the level of noise that requires processing out of the data.
- Depth values for each grid cell are an average of all soundings received in that grid cell. This means that whilst data is gridded to 10 and 25 cm, if replica surveys were complicated across a time series, changes smaller that this in width would still be detected if they are deeper than 15mm (the vertical resolution) as they will result in an overall change to the average calculated.
- 3d models can be extracted from the data and overlayed over time to create volume difference maps or used to assess and compare structural complexity metrics
- Backscatter data does not provide additional information on the structure of the seabed, but it can provide information on the hardness of the seafloor which can be used to differentiate between different types of substrates and provide context to any changes identified
- Ground truthing is required to confirm habitat type and relate multibeam and backscatter data to real features. It is recommended that a underwater position system is sourced to include position accuracy of ground truth ROV data.
- The aim of the study is to determine the cumulative effects of repeated potting impacts on the degradation of chalk features and compare it with the effect of natural impacts. Thus, we are not seeking to detect and quantify every single impact in each area but monitor this larger scale degradation of features and compare between the two treatments. On this basis, this multi beam data is considered sufficient.
- Based on this it is recommended that dive surveys are removed from the proposal.
- Natural England provided advice on this which specifies that we won't know if this is the case until we have started to collect data. We are seeking further review from Cefas who have expertise in this area.

During the discussion, members agreed that the backscatter data, based on the provided evidence, will offer valuable insights into the study. SH is continuing to gather quotes for the analysis of backscatter data, equipment hire, and other survey costs. The discussion also covered funding opportunities and the situation with project funding and budget management. Members felt that having greater insight in this respect would be beneficial to decision making and project management.

An ACTION item was added to address this.

Members noted the contents of the report
**Agreed** to proceed with multibeam and ROV components of the proposed study and to remove dive surveys from the proposal
**Agreed** to include the collection of multibeam backscatter data
**Agreed** to investigate underwater positioning systems which could be used on the ROV to improve positional accuracy

Evidence sub-group Terms of Reference (LG)
LG presented a report intended to summarise the Evidence Sub-Group of the Research Task and Finish Group and the Terms of Reference for the Group.

On discussion, members agreed that the group would benefit from the structure provided by the Terms of Reference. It was proposed that the group be chaired by the Chair of the Management Task and Finish Group, with the Chair of the Research Task and Finish Group appointed as Vice-Chair, which members also felt would be beneficial. After some members sought clarification, it was explained that the group is intended to be a sub-group of the stakeholder group, providing members with the opportunity to present evidence.

Members agreed and noted the report.

Research Task & Finish Group update (RWJ)

- ROV surveys completed in Summer (to contribute to NDS).
- Rugged chalk extent is being finalised and will be presented and at the Wash and North Norfolk Working Group.
- Adaptive gear trials were completed in August and informed the project proposal which will be presented to the research task and finish group in the next meeting.
- Monitoring of fishing activity was impacted by low compliance with voluntary agreement for fishers to have onboard functioning tracker devices (provided by the Authority). Engagement with fishers to seek has led to increase in compliance. SH completed a report on the impact of the non-compliance.
- The study to determine the economic value of the rugged chalk in the context of catches from pot-based fishing has been paused and intended to be reviewed in next year's business plan.

Management Task & Finish Group update (LG)

- Monitoring the Code of Best Practice (to reduce the risk of gear lost) is ongoing including how weather events influence fishing behaviours.
- The WWF funded tagging trial is underway. Tags have been given out to fishers and agreements been signed.
- The Cromer Shoal Chalk Beds Byelaw 2023 has been received back from the MMO with minor comments, EIFCA are reviewing to send back to MMO.

- Phase 1 permit conditions have been provisionally approved by authority. It is intended that evidence supporting a revised rugged chalk management area will be presented to Fisheries and Conservation Management Working Group for discussion prior to seeking a decision on the matter from members at the 58th Eastern IFCA Meeting.

Stakeholder Group update (EC)

- 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 chairing the group.
- EIFCA continuing to compile the mailing list and engage with stakeholders to continue membership and agree with the new privacy notice.
- Next planned stakeholder meeting is due to be online and in November.

Communications update (EC)

- There were no additional communications updates.

Date of next meeting

- Agreed to be held on the 18th December 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 |
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| 09/10/2024 | **DECISION** (*standing item*) confirmation of notes from last meeting | All | n/a | No edits required. Notes approved. |
| 09/10/2024 | **ACTION:** SH to bring project funding to next meeting | SH LG/JG | Next meeting | |

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| | **ACTION:** LG and JG to review funding and look at finance and HR | | | |
| 09/10/2024 | **ACTION:** to extend risks in the review to project risks as well as environmental risks. | SH | Next meeting | |
| 09/10/2024 | **ACTION:** SH to share the rationale for the risk ratings. | SH | Next meeting | |
| 09/10/2024 | **ACTION:** EIFCA to continue looking into obtaining existing partial datasets such as available iVMS data and MMO data.<br>**ACTION**: EIFCA to consider alternative ways of obtaining fishing data in the absence of full data sets. | SH/LG<br><br>SH/LG | Next meeting<br><br>Next meeting | |
| 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. | | n/a | |
| 20/06/2024 | **ACTION**: Seek multibeam data expert advice<br>• 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'.<br>• 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<br><br>SH | ASAP<br><br>ASAP | Complete – Expert advice concluded dive surveys not needed, SH drafted new proposal with dive surveys removed and included and addendum after going back to contractors.<br>Complete |
| 20/06/2024 | **ACTION**: to procure and make marker buoy systems ahead of receiving Natural England advice. | LG | ASAP | Ongoing – New marker buoy systems were created and tested, unfortunately the trial was hindered due to unexpected rough weather and the buoy being detached. EIFCA to trial new altered buoy systems soon. |

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| 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 |