Cromer Shoal Chalk Beds MCZ
Project Board
Meeting 22

Date: 9th October 2024

Time: 15:30

Venue: Online via Teams video conferencing

Agenda:

1. Apologies
2. Notes of last meeting
3. Actions and Decisions
4. Progress against ARM plan (SH)
5. Risk review (SH)
6. Matters arising
    a) Natural Disturbance Study Design (SH)
    b) Evidence sub-group Terms of Reference (LG)
7. Research Task & Finish Group update (RWJ)
8. Management Task & Finish Group update (LG)
9. Stakeholder Group update (EC)
10. Communications update (EC)
11. Date of next meeting (SH)
12. AOB

Supplementary Material

Item 4: Progress against ARM plan

Please see Appendix 1.

Item 5: Risk review

Please see Appendix 2.

Item 6a: Natural Disturbance Study Design - Addendum 1

Report by: Samantha Hormbrey, SMSO

Purpose of Report
This report provides an update to Item 3a of the 21st Project Board Meeting as a consequence of the following action:

- Seek multibeam data expert advice

Recommendations
It is recommended that members:

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

Report
Please see Addendum to Item 3a of the 20th June 2024 Project Board attached separately for full report. A summary is provided below:

- Data cannot be gridded to a 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 an underwater position system is sourced to included positional 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 these with the effects of natural impacts/erosion. 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 multibeam data as achieved is considered sufficient to be able to detect such change and it is recommended that dive surveys are not required.
- Natural England have provided advice on this which specifies that we can't be certain of this until we have started to collect data. We are seeking further review from Cefas who have expertise in this area.

Item 6b: Evidence sub-group Terms of Reference

Report by: Luke Godwin, ACO

Purpose of Report
This report is intended to summarise a recommendation to formally establish an Evidence Sub-Group of the Research Task and Finish Group and to seek agreement on Terms of Reference for the Group.

Recommendations
It is recommended that members:

- **Note** the contents of the report
- **Agree** to formally establish the evidence sub-group as part of the ARM Project
- **Agree** to the draft Terms of Reference for the group
- **Direct** the ACO to report back at subsequent meetings to update on outcomes of the meetings

Report

The 'Evidence Review Group' was established in early 2022 as a sub-group of the Stakeholder Group chaired by the Chair of the Research Task and Finish Group. Its aim initially was to review data gathered from divers (specifically that generated by members of MCNAG) and identifying ways to incorporate it into the evidence base used to inform the ARM project.

At its first meeting, wider datasets including beach clean litter data and buoy counts by bird watchers were also considered. However, following the initial meeting, subsequent meetings became informal, *ad hoc* and, with one exception, no meeting notes were written.

It is noteworthy that the group did not have an associated Terms of Reference (ToR) and updates were only provided to the project board via the 'research Task and Finish Group' updates, rather than having their own part in the meeting. It is suggested that this has led to the group potentially lacking identity and structure, diminishing its potential to contribute to the ARM project.

These factors, combined with the need to focus resource on other matters related to the ARM project (not least the continued development of the Natural Disturbance Study and continuation of the Stakeholder Group in the absence of support from MCS) have contributed to the group not meeting for a significant amount of time.

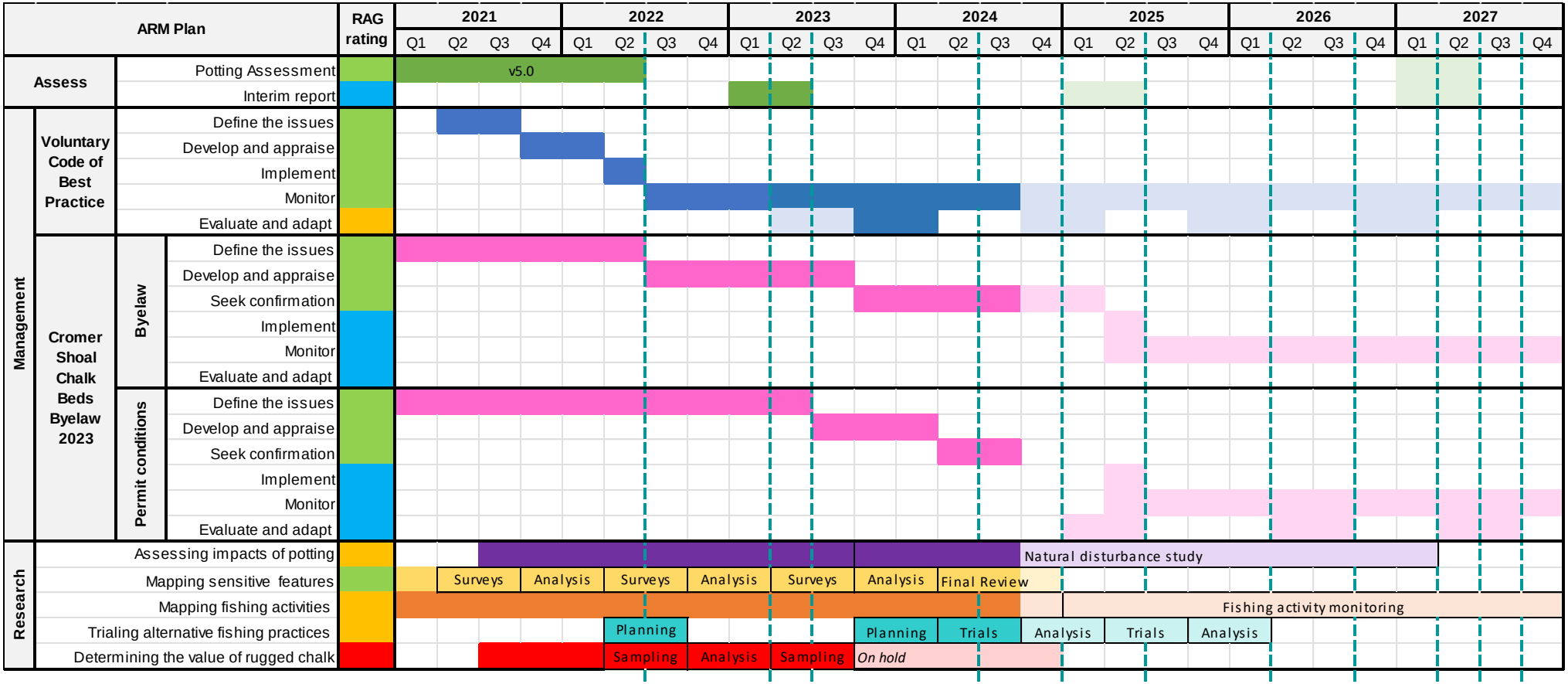
It is suggested that the group will potentially benefit from additional structure in the form of a ToR, a draft of which is at Appendix 3 for consideration.

The ToR includes a requirement for regular (quarterly) meetings and the production of meeting notes, with updates provided at Project Board Meetings. This is intended to ensure that the work of the group is reported and recognised, including by the Project Board and the Research Task and Finish Group. It will also be a means of identifying if the group is delivering its intended aims.

It is further proposed that that group is chaired by the Chair of the Management Task and Finish Group, rather than the Chair of the Research Task and Finish Group, who, it is proposed, would be appointed as the Vice-Chair. The Management T&F Group meets less regularly than the Research T&F Group and the associated chair has more capacity to hold Evidence sub-group meetings. It is anticipated that the Chair of the Research T&F Group is in attendance at the meetings however to ensure that research needs are considered.

It is noteworthy that stakeholders involved in the Evidence sub-group have voiced dissatisfaction with how the group functioned previously. In particular, there appears that the groups attendees were of the view that Eastern IFCA evidence would be provided to the group for scrutiny however, this was not the intention of the group. The draft ToR have been developed in consultation with those who had attended the previous Evidence sub-group meetings with a view to ensure that there are clear expectations on that the group is seeking to achieve.

Appendix 1 – Progress against ARM plan



Q1: Jan - Mar
Q2: Apr - Jun
Q3: Jul - Sep
Q4: Oct - Dec

RAG rating:

- On track/complete
- Delayed
- Not started/ significant delay
- Scheduled

Key Milestones:

- Potting Assessment updated
- Code of Best Practice launched
- Byelaw agreed by the Authority
- Interim report 2023 published
- Permit conditions confirmed
- Final rugged chalk extent defined
- Baseline fishing activity determined
- Value of rugged chalk determined
- Interim report 2025 published
- Byelaw comes into effect
- First review of permit conditions
- Findings from adaptive gear trials
- Second review of permit conditions
- Findings from disturbance study
- Potting Assessment updated
- Third review of permit conditions

Appendix 2: Risk review

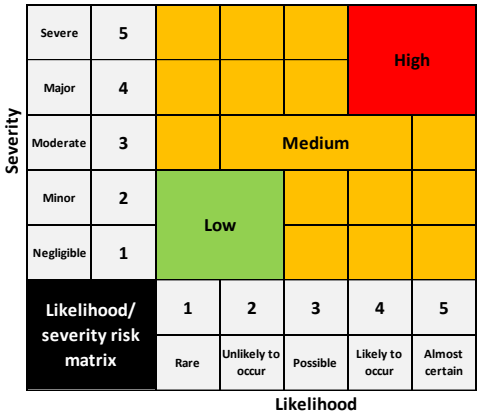
Cromer Shoal Chalk Beds MCZ Risk Matrix

This risk assessment sets out Eastern IFCA's evaluation of the current risk to Cromer Shoal Chalk Beds MCZ from potting activities and relates to the risk of hindering the achievement of the sites Conservation Objectives for features identified as sensitive in Eastern IFCA's Potting Assessment (April 2022): *Subtidal chalk* and *Peat and Clay Exposures* (Peat and Clay exposures have been considered together with subtidal chalk feature in line with advice proivded by Natural England in November 2018 and January 2023). This document does not replace the full MCZ assessment document but provides a risk summary that will be regularly updated to reflect changes to evidence relating to the protected features, potting activities, and interactions between them.

Risk is informed using the risk matrix on the right. The matrix sets out the severity of each identfiied risk and the likelihood of it occurring, both ranked on an arbitrary scale from 1 (negligible effect / rare occurrence) through to 5 (severe impact to feature; certainty of occurrence). Subsequent risk is ranked according to the multiplied scores for severity and likelihood from low (coloured green) to high risk (coloured red). A precautionary approach is applied to the risk assessment and assumes a higher risk where there is uncertainty. The document also describes mitigation (some already in place, or to be introduced) to reduce the identified risk to features from potting activity of which further details are provided in n Eastern IFCA's ARM Plan.

Risk will be reviewed on a quarterly basis and documented in this spreadsheet, but because of the relatively extended timescales for the development and implementation of management, and for research outcomes to emerge, we are not anticipating frequent changes to the risk scores. This page provides a summary of the overall risk of the identified impacts ('risks') to the site as assessed over time.

For the purpose of this assessment short term is defined as within the next 5 years and long term is defined as anything over 5 years. These timescales have been used as they are consistent with the timescales being worked to for ARM.



Severity		Likelihood	
1	Negligible	1	Rare/will not happen
2	Minor (surface level effects)	2	Unlikely to occur
3	Moderate (small scale changes to the structure of a feature)	3	Possible
4	Major (large scale changes to the structure of a feature)	4	Likely to occur
5	Severe (features removed)	5	Almost certain

High	Take positive action to mitigate risk
Medium	Work towards reducing risk and uncertainty
Low	Risk no longer considered to be material

Overall Risk (likelihood x severity) :				Apr-23	Jul-23	Oct-23	Jan-24	Apr-24	Jul-24	Oct-24	Jan-25	Apr-25	Jul-25	Oct-25	Jan-26	Apr-26	Jul-26	Oct-26	Jan-27	Apr-27	Jul-27	Oct-27	Jan-28	Apr-28	Jul-28	Oct-28	Jan-29	Apr-29	Jul-29	Oct-29
Impacts	Cumulative effects of repeated *Abrasion* impacts	Active gear	Short term	6	6	6	6	6	6	6																			
			Long term	8	8	8	8	8	8	8																			
		Lost/stored gear	Short term	6	6	6	6	6	6	6																			
			Long term	9	9	9	9	9	9	9																			
	Cumulative effects of repeated *Penetration* impacts	Active gear	Short term	9	9	9	9	9	9	9																			
			Long term	12	12	12	12	12	12	12																			
		Lost gear/stored	Short term	8	8	8	8	8	8	8																			
			Long term	12	12	12	12	12	12	12																			

Appendix 3 – Draft Terms of Reference for Evidence sub-group

Cromer Shoal MCZ Research and Development Task and Finish Group - Evidence sub-group Terms of Reference

Context

Eastern IFCA is managing fishing activity within the Cromer Shoal Chalk Beds Marine Conservation Zone ('the MCZ') via Adaptive Risk Management (ARM).

Securing and developing relevant evidence is vitally important when adopting an ARM approach. ARM is essentially 'learning by doing' which presents a large evidence burden on the regulator undertaking it.

Eastern IFCA is seeking to obtain the evidence needed to determine the effectiveness of measures which are proposed and implemented. Whilst the research plan and Task and Finish Groups seeks to provide adequate evidence to inform consideration of such, data obtained by others, and particularly local stakeholders, may enhance the evidence base and provide additional context to the ARM projects findings in support of more robust decision making.

Aim

The Evidence sub-group is intended to encourage and facilitate the effective use of evidence and information from stakeholders which is relevant to the MCZ and coordinate its use within the project.

Objectives

To achieve this aim, the group will:

- Provide a means for stakeholders to contribute evidence and to advance evidence gathering mechanisms to inform management of the MCZ
- Examine evidence used within ARM to assess quality, identify shortfalls and areas which can be improved.
- Improve understanding of impacts and natural processes within the MCZ
- Enable transparent decision making on when and how to use evidence provided by stakeholders to inform the ARM project

Membership

The group will comprise members who can constructively and objectively consider evidence needs and relevance to the ARM project and the MCZ generally.
Representation from key evidence gathering stakeholder sectors is sought (e.g. conservation divers, beach cleaners, seal rescue).
Membership of the group will be reviewed periodically but at inception will comprise representatives from:

- Eastern IFCA
- Natural England
- Stakeholder reps of each sector with evidence to contribute (e.g. divers, litter collectors, recreational or commercial fishing)
- Further individuals and organisations with required skills and/or local expertise will be invited to join the group as and when required.

Function
The functions of the group include:

- To produce and maintain a list of existing evidence gathering programmes in and around the MCZ to inform ARM stakeholders what work is currently being undertaken;
- Identify and prioritise the gaps in evidence which would aid management of fishing activity and addressing conservation obligations
- Understand impacts and develop monitoring of their effect on MCZ features
- Develop evidence standards and a framework which sets out what information is needed and how different 'qualities' of data can be used
- Support the development of stakeholder engagement material to encourage participation from stakeholders;
- Make decisions on the use of datasets provided, or proposed to be provided by stakeholders;
- Produce and publish notes from meetings including decision making;
- Consider and report on how data provided by stakeholders has been used and feedback to providers.
- Consideration of Eastern IFCA evidence sets and data gathering techniques with a view to enhance with existing data or further community-based evidence gathering exercises.

Timeframe
The sub-group shall continue until the completion of the MCZ aims and objectives. The sub-group will meet at least quarterly or otherwise on an *ad hoc* basis to consider evidence proposals.

Accountability
Both Natural England and Eastern IFCA have statutory responsibilities and sub-group members will be accountable to their respective organisations if applicable. Eastern IFCA are the relevant regulator and are ultimately responsible for decision making with regard to the implementation or not of any actions.
Notwithstanding the above, the objective is to work collaboratively and wherever possible to achieve consensus.

Administration
Chair and Vice-Chair – the chair of the group will be the Chair of the Management Task and Finish Group and the Vice-Chair will be the Chair of the Research Task and Finish Group
Meeting frequency: Quarterly, or as required
Location: Meetings will ordinarily be undertaken via Microsoft Teams
Deputising: Members may nominate a deputy to attend in their stead. This will usually be an individual with relevant experience
Documentation: Notes to comprise actions and decisions only with draft circulated within 5 working days. Notes to be agreed at each subsequent meeting.