

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

Project Board Meeting	
Meeting date / time: 08 January 2025 / 1530hrs	
Venue: via Microsoft Teams	
Attendees:	Julian Gregory ( <b>JG</b> , CEO Eastern IFCA, <i>Chair</i> ), Samantha Hormbrey ( <b>SH</b> , Senior MSO, <i>Project Manager</i> ), Luke Godwin ( <b>LG</b> , ACO Eastern IFCA), Ron Jessop ( <b>RWJ</b> , Senior MSO Eastern IFCA), Ellie Collishaw ( <b>EC</b> , Project Officer Eastern IFCA), Jenifer Lover ( <b>JL</b> , Natural England), Inge Smith ( <b>IS</b> , Eastern IFCA Member), John Davies ( <b>JD</b> , Eastern IFCA Member).
Apologies:	

Meeting notes
<p><u>ARM Plan progress (SH)</u></p> <p>SH gave a brief update on ARM plan progress:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Anticipated milestone targets have been missed for determining baseline fishing activity and value of rugged chalk (this refers to economic value not social - social value study on track). Milestone achieved for determining rugged chalk extent.</li> <li>• Management workstreams are on track, research workstreams are delayed as previously - no further delays.</li> <li>• Focus for next quarter <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ Interim report</li> <li>◦ Seek confirmation of byelaw</li> <li>◦ 2nd phase permit conditions</li> <li>◦ Identify solutions for determining baseline fishing activity</li> <li>◦ Planning for AGT and Data analysis for NDS</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p>Members discussed the rationale for putting the value of rugged chalk study on hold. Some members felt this should be considered a higher priority and could contribute towards informing management measures. It was explained to members that the study is intended to determine the impacts of management and cannot inform specific management measures. Members</p>

discussed a number of reasons for the delay in this project and why it has been paused for now. These reasons largely included difficulty in determining appropriate metrics and then establishing values for these metrics, an example discussed was defining and gathering data on taste. However, despite these difficulties it was agreed by members that this workstream cannot continue to remain in the red and considerations should be made on how to progress this project forward.

An action was created below to address this.

A brief discussion followed this regarding the project to determine baseline fishing activity. Members discussed a tracker requirement written into the permit conditions of the Cromer Shoal Chalk Beds Byelaw 2023. This was followed by discussion on the progress on iVMS which will also go towards aiding this project once it has been implemented, currently anticipated around April 2025.

#### Risk review (SH)

SH gave a brief update on risk review which included project risks and MCZ risks. SH highlighted the high risks and the rationale behind the score they were given and what action is being taken:

- Non-compliance with voluntary management measures (fishing industry) (high risk):

Members agreed with the risk rating for this adding that it sits at very high risk; if the Natural Disturbance Study doesn't get completed it will put a number of other aspects in a difficult position. Members discussed that mostly everyone is onboard with this project however as the incursions indicate it only takes a small amount who are not compliant to disrupt the study, reflected by the high-risk rating.

- Failure to implement management measures which are proportionate to the risk posed and adequately precautionary (medium risk):

During discussion there was some disagreement from members about the risk rating for this risk, currently standing at a medium risk some members felt this should be a high risk. Some members felt that the winter closure management measure agreed at the authority meetings do not go far enough to meet the conservation objectives. Most members felt there needed to be more work done in presenting the risks to members and also better clarification of the definitions within this management area should be discussed as there seemed to be some conflicting opinions on the appropriate areas. Finally, it was discussed that the management measures are intended to be an adaptive process where risk and subsequent advice might change, and that phase 2 permit conditions are intended to further reduce risk to the chalk.

- Unable to deliver research projects (high risk):

Members agreed that many of the reasons for the delays in research workstreams are due to reasons out of Eastern IFCA's control (poor weather, lack of resource availability and vessel breakdowns) however by building flexibility into research work wherever possible and careful planning will contribute to reducing this risk.

The MCZ risk review is due this month but has not been completed yet. Rather than just reviewing the risks against the current matrix we plan to complete a more detailed review of the initial matrix to update some of the wording to bring it more in line with advice (for example where we have referred to long term and short-term risk) and look at the risks in more detail to identify suitable mitigation to reduce risk .

#### Incursion report (SH)

SH gave a brief update on the Incursion report:

- Since August when we identified several incursions in the voluntary closed areas, we have increased the monitoring of the sites and engaged significantly with industry.
- We have also deployed two marker buoys using shingle bag anchor which have proven robust enough to withstand the winter weather conditions - they were removed just before Christmas having not moved whilst withstanding some substantial storms.
- We have identified one incursion in the West Closed area at the end of October - identified as potting activity based on tracker data. Actions including immediately contacting the associated skipper, the area was then patrolled the following afternoon, and the area was clear of gear. Full compliance has been observed since.
- This adds one more incursion to the total reported in August. This incursion occurred prior to the second multibeam survey and so whilst it will be considered with the others there it will not affect any change we see after this survey. It does however raise further concern about the support from industry, though compliance is generally very high.
- Re-deployment of marker buoys in early 2025, will further mitigate this risk by providing a visual aid to fishermen and will also assist with monitoring. Whilst it has previously been agreed that northern corners will be marked, we are considering marking all four corners now that the method has proven successful.
- The incursion report will be updated and shared as soon as possible.

Members discussed that following the October incursion there have since been no incursions and East Runton has been identified as having had no incursions at all, going forward another survey is planned for March 2025.

#### ARM Budget and Funding (SH)

SH gave a brief summary of the project costs and funding streams:

- For the **fishing activity mapping project**, costs are largely associated with trackers and subscriptions. Whilst no funding has been secured for this work it is being covered by the Authority's research budget and so no shortfall is estimated.
- For the **tagging project**, £15,000 funding was secured from the WWF for 2024. This funding has largely gone towards the costs of tags/equipment and participant fees, it has been agreed that remaining funding can be used to cover staff costs. As these costs are already covered by the Authority budget this creates what we are calling a 'surplus' which if agreed by the Authority could be allocated to future project related costs.
- The **Natural Disturbance Study** is a multi-year project and funding has so far been sourced on an annual basis and this year has come from NE and FASS. Project funding is complex as the two funding bodies have different levels of flexibility when it comes to allocating funding. E.g. for FASS, funding can only be claimed once spent. As with the Tagging project FASS funding can also be used to cover some staff and vessel fuel costs, again creating what we are calling a 'surplus' which if agreed by the Authority can be allocated to future work. Funding has not been secured for future years, however we have submitted an application to the Hornsea Three Community fund for 2025/2026.
- **Adaptive Gear Trials** are planned to commence next year. No funding has yet been secured, however, the North Sea Wildlife Trusts have put in an Expression of Interest for funding from Esme Fairburn Foundation to cover data analysis and reporting costs and some of the equipment costs. If this funding is not secured and the project goes ahead there will be a substantial shortfall.

#### February Stakeholder Group meeting proposal (EC)

EC proposed to the group an agenda for the February Stakeholder Group Meeting which focuses on the development of phase two permit conditions, with discussions and feedback contributing to the related consultation planned for early 2025 and explained the costings of the meeting.

Members agreed the agenda. Members also noted the cost of the meeting.

#### Research Task & Finish Group update (RWJ)

- Natural Disturbance Study - whilst initially delayed the study is now ongoing. Focus overwinter is on data processing, analysis and reporting and securing funding for next year. Multibeam surveys are planned for March. Increased monitoring and marker buoys deployed is intended to mitigate any future incursions.
- Final rugged chalk extent determined. Extent of peat and clay exposures also determined but sensitivity of feature to be reviewed in 2025.

- Adaptive gear trials are on track to commence trials this summer. Focus for Q1 is to finalise planning and secure funding.
- 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 led to increase in compliance. Priority for 2025 Q1 is to address data gaps and identify solution to move forward.
- Whilst the social value study has been completed, the economic value study has been on hold due to capacity issues. However, it is intended that this study will be picked up again this year. As these projects having the aim of informing us of the impacts any applied management measures will have rather than address uncertainties around the level of impact, delays in completing the study will not delay the development of management and so are considered lower priority than some of the other workstreams.

#### 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 complete. Eastern IFCA have received the chosen tags from the trial which were ordered late December, engagement will commence shortly, and tags will be delivered to fishermen.
- The Cromer Shoal Chalk Beds Byelaw 2023 is continuing through the formal Quality Assurance process with the Marine Management Organisation prior to submission to the Secretary of State for confirmation.
- Phase 1 permit conditions have been provisionally approved by authority. A revised rugged chalk management area was presented at the 58<sup>th</sup> Eastern IFCA Meeting to seek a decision on the matter from members
- It is intended that the Phase 2 permit conditions consultation will be launched at the February Stakeholder Group

#### Stakeholder Group update (EC)

- Next planned stakeholder meeting is due to be held at Northrepps Village Hall on 20<sup>th</sup> February 2025.
- The meeting Agenda, Newsletter and last meeting notes are all due to be published at the end of this month.

#### Communications update (EC)

- There were no additional communications updates.

#### Date of next meeting

- Agreed to be held on the 25 March 2025

*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
08/01/2025	<b>DECISION</b> ( <i>standing item</i> ) confirmation of notes from last meeting	All	n/a	No edits required. Notes approved.
08/01/2025	<b>DECISION:</b> February Stakeholder Group meeting agenda approved	EC	n/a	
08/01/2025	<b>ACTION:</b> To pick up and review value of rugged chalk study	RWJ	Next meeting	
09/10/2024	<b>ACTION:</b> SH to bring project funding to next meeting <b>ACTION:</b> LG and JG to review funding and look at finance and HR	SH LG/JG	Next meeting	Complete – Discussed as an agenda item
09/10/2024	<b>ACTION:</b> to extend risks in the review to project risks as well as environmental risks.	SH	Next meeting	Complete – Discussed as an agenda item
09/10/2024	<b>ACTION:</b> SH to share the rationale for the risk ratings.	SH	Next meeting	Complete– Discussed as an agenda item
09/10/2024	<b>ACTION:</b> EIFCA to continue looking into obtaining existing partial datasets such as available iVMS data and MMO data. <b>ACTION:</b> EIFCA to consider alternative ways of obtaining fishing data in the absence of full data sets.	SH/LG  SH/LG	Next meeting  Next meeting	Ongoing – Another request has been submitted to the MMO. Trackers are continuing to be monitored. iVMS ongoing, planned for April 2025.
20/06/2024	<b>DECISION</b> The sample replicates required to enable a scientifically robust biodiversity surveys		n/a	

	were insurmountable and that the outputs were not necessary for the study to achieve its aims.			
20/06/2024	<b><u>ACTION:</u></b> Seek multibeam data expert advice <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>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'.</li> <li>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.</li> </ul>	SH	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. Complete
		SH	ASAP	
20/06/2024	<b><u>ACTION:</u></b> to procure and make marker buoy systems ahead of receiving Natural England advice.	LG	ASAP	Ongoing – New marker buoys deployed using shingle bag anchor which have proven robust enough to withstand the winter weather conditions. Eastern IFCA considering marking all four corners now that the method has proven successful.
20/06/2024	<b><u>DECISION:</u></b> provisional agreement of the Engagement Strategy	All	n/a	n/a
20/06/2024	<b><u>DECISION:</u></b> to hold a Stakeholder Group meeting in November via Teams	All	n/a	n/a
08/02/2024	<b><u>DECISION:</u></b> that an officer from the Wildlife Trust will join the Management Task & Finish Group	All	n/a	n/a
08/02/2024	<b><u>DECISION:</u></b> ARM Plan Approved.	All	n/a	n/a