

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

<b>Project Board Meeting</b>	
<b>Meeting date / time:</b> 23 September 2025 / 1530hrs	<b>Venue:</b> via Microsoft Teams
<b>Attendees:</b>	Julian Gregory ( <b>JG</b> , CEO Eastern IFCA, <i>Chair</i> ), Samantha Hormbrey ( <b>SH</b> , Senior MSO, <i>Project Manager</i> ), Ron Jessop ( <b>RWJ</b> , Senior MSO Eastern IFCA), Ellie Collishaw ( <b>EC</b> , Project Officer Eastern IFCA), William Wade (Marine Science 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).
<b>Apologies:</b>	Luke Godwin ( <b>LG</b> , ACO, Eastern IFCA)

## Meeting notes

### Progress against ARM plan (SH)

SH gave a brief update on ARM plan progress:

- Interim report is delayed due to competing priorities.
- Confirmation of Byelaw is also delayed. However, whilst the byelaw has not come into effect by the target date significant delays are not anticipated. Delays are a result of the QA process rather than issues with the byelaw itself. It should also be noted that the target date itself was set as the earliest timeframe that the byelaw could come into effect, however, experience has shown that byelaws can take much longer than set out in the ARM plan, sometimes in excess of two years
- Evaluation and adaptation of permit conditions has also been delayed. The associated risk, however, is limited as the byelaw is not yet in force and is unlikely to be in the next 6 months. Additionally, fishing effort will start to decline as winter approaches, which further mitigates any risk.
- Natural Disturbance Study - whilst initially delayed, progress is now back on track.
- Mapping fishing activities, whilst previously significantly delayed is now progressing as a result of the interim measures which require vessel positional data and the requirement for IVMS now in place.
- Trialing alternative fishing practice is delayed and likely to be suspended - to be discussed during the meeting.

- Determining the value of the rugged chalk is delayed as was previously on hold but has now been picked up and data collection is ongoing.
- The delays described above have meant that five key milestones remain outstanding

#### Risk Review (SH)

##### **Project Risk**

- For risks identified the majority have stayed the same since the last review.
- Non-compliance with voluntary/mandatory measures - likelihood has reduced due to high compliance observed and measures in place.
- Inability to secure funding - likelihood has reduced further due to securing MBIEG funding and submitting FASS application.
- The risk associated with the requirement for IVMS not coming into effect was previously terminated, however, since then we have not been getting data from one of the suppliers (Succorfish) due to a contract issue between them and the MMO - data is still being collected so we should get it in the future. Consequently, a new risk has been identified - vessel position data not available to monitor fishing activities. Associated risk, has already been mitigated through provision of trackers to those who fish on the rugged chalk and requirement for positional data under Byelaw 11.

##### Discussion

A brief discussion followed regarding another potential risk recently identified following 8 of the closed area marker buoys coming loose due to a period of bad weather. Most were washed up on the beach and a few were lost. The intention is for Eastern IFCA to get them back out as quickly as possible to minimise any risk of incursions. While the hope is to redeploy as quickly as possible, the number of them means that it will take longer to remake them, which is compounded by limited resources. The importance of the closed areas should be stressed to industry, a notify message has already been sent out informing fishers. JD intends to further circulate message about the loss of the buoys and importance of the fishers keeping clear of the areas.

It was discussed whether these buoys coming loose posed any risk of damage to the chalk particularly with so many being washed ashore, but due to the type of materials used (hessian sack containing gravel) there is not considered to be any risk to the chalk. Although using anchors has been suggested as a more durable anchor in poor weather, these are unlikely to be used in the short-term given the lengthy process involved getting a license for them and the risk they may pose to the chalk.

Another brief discussion followed regarding the risk associated with not getting data from one of the iVMS suppliers (Succorfish) and the reasons for this. It was explained that the Succorfish data is not available to all parties. Succorish are in dispute and are

therefore refusing to provide data to the national hub. As Eastern IFCA understand it, data is still being collected by Succorfish but not currently available to view. But as above, Eastern IFCA should still get it in the future when resolved.

### **MCZ risk**

- It was intended that Version 2 of the rates of damage assessment would inform a review of risk and the development of permit conditions
- The approach to the rates of damage assessment was taken to the 61st Authority meeting to seek endorsement from members
- Concern was raised by some members around the confidence in the data used to inform impact rate per pot
- Consequently, members resolved to continue developing the approach and the data available in conjunction with Natural England and, in parallel, to consider and develop the approach and options for the development of permit conditions.
- Gaps in the rates of damages assessment have been identified and will be discussed at the next R&D TFG meeting (Thursday 25th September)
- Developing permit conditions remains a priority for the R&D TFG

### Discussion

It was added that Eastern IFCA may seek advice with the Kings Council to investigate the use of case law within the rates of damage assessment. It was also highlighted to members that an authority member had notable concern about the math's used in the assessment, which has led to subsequent constructive meetings during which the concerns raised were addressed. With the rates of damage assessment being a direction of travel more work is being put into to increase confidence including a review by a Natural England specialist, which was confirmed by JL. It is intended that the specialist will look at the raw data to begin with.

Finally, a brief discussion followed regarding the current understanding of potting effort in the MCZ. With most pots now tagged, combined with the requirement for iVMS and tracker data from the entire fleet, compared to the previous ~50% obtained in recent years, Eastern IFCA are in a better position to understand potting activity. However, whilst estimates can be calculated, exact number of pots deployed on the rugged chalk are not known as all pots in the MCZ are required to have tags rather than just those on the rugged chalk. Additionally, it's unclear whether more tags were requested than actually required. It is presumed that the number of pots estimated from this is likely to be an overestimation. One member advised that the catch data submitted by fishermen to the MMO would give data on number of trips and pots hauled. Eastern IFCA intend to use this, but the latest data set didn't include number of pots hauled and it has been difficult to receive data from this because confidence has previously been low. It was acknowledged by the group that this set of data would be beneficial to the rates of damage report in

understanding fishing effort and so JD requested to be kept up to date with this and it to be escalated with the MMO if no data is provided. Additionally, JL also offered support in escalating it with NE and MMO.

#### ARM budgets and Funding (SH)

SH gave a brief update on funding:

- The MBIEG funding (£12,000) has been secured and are awaiting the outcome of our FASS application - both funds are required for the NDS.

#### Discussion

A brief discussion followed regarding the deadline for spending the FASS funding; although the deadline is end of March for spending the funding, previously Eastern IFCA didn't hear whether they were successful until November and FASS then backdated costs until August. Eastern IFCA anticipates a similar timeframe this year.

#### Adaptive Gear Trials (WW)

WW gave a brief update on the Adaptive Gear Trials:

- The original aim of this project was to study two gear adaptations to see if they would reduce the types of damage that had previously been observed associated with potting gear. Failure to secure funding for the project resulted in us exploring alternative approaches to the project. Several ideas were considered, but each option presented its own challenges. The most recent plan was to focus this year's study on the deployment and hauling phases of potting activity. However, due to concerns about how statistically robust the data would be, the project is recommended to be put on hold for this year to review how this workstream can be developed to best inform the "rates of damage" assessment and to prioritise resources to refining the rates of damage assessment.

#### Discussion

Members discussed that there are many factors to this project being put on hold and even if funding was not an issue there are still flaws in the methodology. For a robust method, many repeats would be required. Despite this it was accepted that if money wasn't an object, it could be significantly improved. If it was contracted out there would be other hurdles and again it would likely be the case that money would be a limiting factor, vessel costs are usually kept in house to keep the cost down which would still take up resources away from other projects. Similarly another limiting factor is the expertise in the data processing and specialist equipment. Ultimately, it was agreed that the rates of damage assessment should be prioritised and once complete will potentially better inform the project. It was highlighted that the project is not being stopped completely but simply revisited once a

better understanding of the rates of damage is established. A decision was agreed to suspend the AGT and prioritise the rates of damage assessment and is noted below.

#### Stakeholder Group Meeting proposal (EC)

EC gave a brief update on the Stakeholder Group meeting November proposal:

- An online SG meeting in November was provisionally agreed at the last Meeting with the view that it would be reviewed following the development of the rates of damage assessment
- The previous report considered the cost, resources and the pros and cons of each option
- Based on the fact there is no funding set aside for an in-person meeting, resource requirements would be lower with an online meeting and that holding a meeting could build upon the updates from the Newsletter an online meeting was recommended.
- However with the rates of damage assessment still being developed the timeline for the development of permit conditions, and need for consultation, was unclear.
- Progress on the next iteration of permit conditions are intended to be taken to the 62nd Eastern IFCA meeting in December 2025.
- To inform decision making and the development of permit conditions, stakeholder engagement and consultation has been planned in for September to early November, coinciding with the November stakeholder meeting. Consequently, the meeting provides an opportunity to seek feedback on proposed permit conditions and inform their development.
- It was highlighted at the last meeting that support for online meetings has historically been split with attendance from fishing community members previously poor, whilst these concerns remain given the resource constraints, it is recommended that the format of the November meeting remains online.
- It was also highlighted that to ensure fishery stakeholders who have historically shown poor attendance at online meetings have an opportunity to contribute to the development of permit conditions, other means of engagement should be explored, such as targeted meetings or drop-in sessions.
- In light of the development of the permit conditions the agenda will focus on providing an opportunity for discussion around permit condition development as well as general updates on ARM.

Members discussed availability for dates for the stakeholder group meeting. It was agreed to be held 6<sup>th</sup> Nov 2025. Members noted the contents of the report and agreed to hold an online meeting on the agreed date. This decision is noted below,

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

- One ROV survey was completed and all tows were completed (3 in each experimental area), data is currently being processed, and an updated quote has been requested for analysis from Envision Mapping.
- Multibeam surveys are planned for the first two weeks of October. Cefas have been awarded the contract for analysis of multibeam data that has already been collected. Draft outputs are anticipated by the end of December.
- Fishing activity in open and closed areas is being monitored via a combination of tracker monitoring and vessel and shore-based patrols. No incursions have been detected since those identified last year. Marker buoys are also being monitored and are planned to be removed in the coming months. Some did wash up over the weekend and were retrieved.
- APEM has been awarded the contract to complete an independent review of the study design. Outputs are anticipated in October.
- Value of rugged chalk study had been delayed earlier in the year due to competing resources but has recently been picked back up with 2 members of the team having made 4 trips between them. This project has now got the support from 2 fishermen enabling us to get a better coverage on the rugged chalk than we previously managed. We plan to continue surveying for remainder of this season, then to commence again early next year.

#### Management Task & Finish Group update (JG)

JG gave a summary on the outputs of the Authority meeting and recent Management TFG meeting where it was discussed that we would move away from using the phrase 'phase 2' phrase and it was agreed to take a more incremental approach in line with ARM, while officers better understand what level of activity is taking place on the rugged chalk via the ongoing development of the rates of damage assessment.

#### Evidence subgroup (JG)

JG gave an update on the Evidence Sub-group with a meeting held last week. The meeting was considered very constructive with discussion on available data and information on the rugged chalk provided by members and how this can be used to develop ARM. Expertise was also provided around chalk re-growth and action created to investigate how it can be used going forward to inform research gaps.

#### Communications update (EC)

EC gave a brief discussion on communications:

- CSCB MCZ Newsletter due end of Oct
- Cromer Webpage still underway but the Natural Disturbance Study page has been updated with the most recent ENVISION report.

Date of next meeting

22<sup>nd</sup> January 2026 @ 15:30

*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
23/09/2025	<u>DECISION</u> (standing item) confirmation of notes from last meeting	All	n/a	No edits required. Notes approved.
23/09/2025	<u>ACTION</u> to recirculate updated ToR with stakeholder group members	EC/SH	6 <sup>th</sup> Nov	
23/09/2025	<u>DECISION</u> to suspend the Adaptive Gear Trials project and priorities the natural disturbance project.	WW/RWJ	n/a	
23/09/2025	<u>DECISION</u> agree to an online stakeholder group meeting on the 6th November 2025.	EC/SH	n/a	
26/06/2025	<u>ACTION</u> to complete a risk assessment to assess the risk to the public deploying a short shank in inshore and propose mitigation if applicable.	WW/RWJ	Next meeting	COMPLETE – A risk assessment was carried out but after further investigation into the site it was deemed unsuitable for the trial thus the activity is no longer be taking place.
26/06/2025	<u>ACTION</u> to revise the Stakeholder Group Terms of Reference and share with group for comment.	SH/LG	Next meeting	COMPLETE – ToR revised with minor administrative changes and shared with the group prior to the meeting. No comments from

				members. Action to recirculate with SG members created
26/03/2025	<b>DECISION</b> For the chalk value study, combine qualitative data and supporting quantitative information such as tracker/ i-VMS data as a more reasonable way to capture the value of the chalk	RWJ	Next meeting	COMPLETE – Discussed during R&DTG update above.
26/03/2025	<b>ACTION</b> Review project methodologies to bring down costs. Mainly for adaptive gear trials	WW/ RWJ	Next meeting	COMPLETE – Discussed during R&DTG update above.
26/03/2025	<b>ACTION</b> Pursue additional sources of funding for the project as a priority	SH	Next meeting	ONGOING - MBIEG funding secured and awaiting outcome of FASS application.
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	COMPLETE - iVMS now in effect.  ONGOING – To consider the effectiveness of iVMS in replacement for trackers. The coverage of all vessels is valuable but an assessment is being carried out to assess if the low ping rate of iVMS is sufficient for monitoring. Following this an assessment on the requirements and need for turning up the ping rate of iVMS will be made.