

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

Project Board Meeting	
Meeting date / time: 22 January 2026 / 1530hrs	
Venue: via Microsoft Teams	
Attendees:	Luke Godwin (LG , ACO, Eastern IFCA, Chair) Samantha Hornbrey (SH , Senior MSO, <i>Project Manager</i>), Ron Jessop (RWJ , Senior MSO Eastern IFCA), Ellie Collishaw (EC , Project Officer Eastern IFCA), Jack Digman (JD , Natural England), Inge Smith (IS , Eastern IFCA Member),
Apologies:	Julian Gregory (JG , CEO Eastern IFCA), John Davies (JD , Eastern IFCA Member).

Meeting notes
<p><u>Progress against ARM plan (SH)</u></p> <p>SH gave a brief update on ARM plan progress:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There was agreement to revise the reporting period for the interim report from up to 31 March 2025 to up to December 2025. This was agreed to enable the report to reflect significant developments in the project relating to the 'rates of damage' assessment and the revised management plan.. The format of the report is being reviewed to ensure it best informs assessments of risk in the absence of updating potting assessment. • Confirmation of the Byelaw is delayed, however it is considered likely that the byelaw will be submitted to the Secretary of State for confirmation in the near future . • The Natural Disturbance Study whilst initially delayed due to challenges in completing baseline surveys, is back on track. • The Mapping fishing activities project, whilst previously significantly delayed, is now progressing as a result of the interim measures and the requirement for IVMS now in place. Whilst challenges remain with accessing some of the IVMS data a solution has been proposed to address this. • 'Trailing alternative fishing practices' (also known as 'the adaptive gear trial') remains on hold pending further consideration.

- The ‘determining the value of the rugged chalk’ project was previously on hold due to a lack of resources and staff turnover (having been adjudged to be the lowest priority research project) but has now been restarted and a data collection method is in development.
- The delays described above have meant that four key milestones have been missed and new target dates have been set.

Risk Review (SH)

Project Risk

- For risks identified there has been no changes in risks since the last review.
- Risks associated with securing funding and delivering research remain moderate. There is the potential for delays in the delivery of several external contracts to risk the loss of secured funding if not completed by the end of the financial year. Careful project management and engagement with contractors and funders is ongoing to mitigate these risks.

MCZ risk

- The ARM plan included a commitment to review risk quarterly and publish a biannual interim report in lieu of repeatedly updating the potting assessment.
- The last interim report was published in 2023 and the 2025 interim report is currently being finalised.
- Quarterly risk reviews were ongoing but delayed in 2025 to enable the outputs of the rates of damage assessment inform them.
- The approach taken to assessing the rate of damage was discussed at the 61st Authority meeting where concerns were raised regarding low confidence associated with some of the data used.
- Members agreed that Eastern IFCA should 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.
- Since then a gap analysis has been completed to identify where research should be focused and further feedback on the assessment has been sought from members and NE.
- A management plan has been drafted by the MT&FG and the existing risk assessment is currently being reviewed and updated.
- Approach to assessing risk
 - Previously risk was assessed using a matrix that considered the severity and likelihood of the risk of active and lost gear causing penetration and abrasion pressures in the short and long term.

- However, now that more information is available it is considered appropriate to review how the risk is being assessed. Further, in the absence of having outputs from the rates of damage assessment, assessing the likelihood of risk occurring over different timescales is impossible to do with any certainty.
- To address this we have set out a few key principles which provide a starting point for assessing risk:
 - The sites was in designated in 2016 and so this should be the starting point for considered habitat deterioration
 - Once the byelaw is in place, permit conditions can be implemented within 3-6 months so immediate risk should be considered in terms of that within the next year and whether it will hinder conservation objectives.
 - The risk assessment should include consideration as to what could cause risk to increase within the next year, and therefore what mitigation may be required to reduce risk.
 - Risk should be considered in terms of habitat deterioration rather than risk of pressures occurring as it is this that has the potential to hinder achievement of conservation objectives.
 - Finally, a 1% threshold of 'habitat deterioration' as a proportion of the site is proposed on a precautionary basis..
- The intention is to take these principals and the information now available (listed below) to us to inform an updated risk assessment which will continue to be reviewed on a quarterly basis.
 - Interaction footprint
 - Rugged chalk extent
 - Fishing activity levels
 - Declining fleet

Discussion

It was explained that interaction footprint discussed in the new approach includes the whole interaction with gear rather than just that where impact occurs and applies data from studies conducted in the south coast (Gall *et al.*, 2020).

Members were in agreement with the revised risk assessment approach.

Next steps are to develop an updated risk assessment using the principles/information outlined above to share at the next PB meeting.

ARM budgets and Funding (SH)

SH gave a brief update on funding:

- MBIEG funding has been secured (£12,000) and we are awaiting the outcome of the FASS application. Whilst, there has been no formal confirmation of the funding, it has been indicated the funding will be received.
- Funding has been secured (£7,200) for work relating to increasing confidence in the rates of damage assessment. Envision mapping have provided a quote for this work and hope to start in March.

Research Task & Finish Group update (RWJ)

NDS

- Buoys have been removed for winter and monitoring is ongoing with high compliance.
- The next multibeam surveys are planned for February/March.
- Data analysis contracts are ongoing for multibeam and ROV analysis which are due at the end of March.
- An independent review has been completed for the methodology and the feedback from this was that in general the study is fit for purpose but some recommendations have been made to enhance the project which are currently being explored.

Rates of damage assessment

- Additional Natural England funding has been confirmed for in situ gear analysis.
- The gap analysis has been completed to identify where to focus research and from this, actions are being developed to address these areas.

Fishing activity assessment

- To address the missing IVMS data a plan has been developed to submit subject access requests in order to gain the missing data.

Crab value study

- A questionnaire is being developed for the fishing industry which will support this workstream
- The surveys for this work stream will pick up as the fishery starts again and the weather improves.

Discussion

The report detailing initial analysis of multibeam data (NDS) is still expected, with Cefas currently working on the multibeam data due in March.

Management Task & Finish Group update (LG)

Permit conditions

- The Authority have agreed the plan going forward and this will be finalised at the next MT&FG.

CSCB MCZ Byelaw

- The CSCB MCZ Byelaw has been submitted back to the MMO. There is not expected to be any major changes and is anticipated to be in the final stages of sign off.
- The Code of Best Practice Monitoring is ongoing. Lost Gear reporting is intended to be discussed at the stakeholder meeting to ensure industry have the mechanisms to report their lost gear when the fishery picks back up.

Stakeholder Group Meeting (EC)

EC gave a brief discussion on the Stakeholder Group:

- Since the last PB meeting, the November meeting was held online with 19 attendees. The online meetings are generally less well attended than in-person meeting.
- The meeting primarily focussed on updating stakeholders on workstreams.
- Meeting notes for this meeting are available on the website.
- Planning is underway for the in-person February Stakeholder Group meeting.
- The meeting will take place on 25th Feb at Northrepps Village Hall and will follow a format similar to previous meetings.
- An email to stakeholders has been sent to notify stakeholders of the meeting
- An agenda is being drafted and will be shared with the group in advance of the meeting.
- Whilst the agenda is still being finalised the focus of the meeting will be around:
 - The rates of damage assessment; with a focus on the gap analysis, including (what data do we still need and how do we intend to get it) and leading into a facilitated discussion on gear specifications and fishing practices.
 - Second part will include stakeholder initiatives and stakeholder involvement.

Evidence subgroup (LG)

LG gave a brief discussion on the Evidence Sub-Group:

Three projects were agreed to progress:

- Faunal recovery review
- Use of dive data to inform pot impact rate
- Use of IVMS/tracker data to assess activity levels immediately outside closed areas

These projects are planned to be discussed at the next stakeholder group meeting, a discussion with the Evidence Sub-Group about these projects is needed to inform the group. An action was created below to address this.

Communications update (EC)

EC gave a brief discussion on communications:

- The next CSCB MCZ Newsletter is due to be published in Feb, with the intention to send out Stakeholders before the next Stakeholder Group Meeting.

Date of next meeting
25th March 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
22/01/2026	ACTION to contact the evidence sub-group before the next stakeholder group meeting regarding the projects to progress.	SH/LG	25 th Feb	
23/09/2025	ACTION to recirculate updated ToR with stakeholder group members	EC/SH	6 th Nov	COMPLETE - ToR was circulated prior to the November Stakeholder Group meeting.
26/03/2025	ACTION 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	ACTION: EIFCA to continue looking into obtaining existing partial datasets such as available iVMS data and MMO data. ACTION: 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.
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