

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

Project Board Meeting	
Meeting date / time: 6 th May 2026 / 1530hrs Venue: via Microsoft Teams	
Attendees:	Julian Gregory (JG , CEO Eastern IFCA, Chair), Samantha Hormbrey (SH , Senior MSO, <i>Project Manager</i>), Ron Jessop (RWJ , Senior MSO Eastern IFCA), Ellie Collishaw (EC , Project Officer, Eastern IFCA), John Davies (JD , Eastern IFCA Member), Shannon Mcloskey (SM , Natural England), Inge Smith (IS , Eastern IFCA Member),
Apologies:	Luke Godwin (LG , ACO, Eastern IFCA)

Meeting notes
<u>Progress against ARM plan (SH)</u> SH gave a brief update on ARM plan progress: • The Interim report is delayed but has been drafted and is awaiting sign off. There is no significant risk associated with this delay. • Confirmation of the byelaw has been delayed and is discussed further below. • Some of the research projects remain delayed but with no new delays identified: ○ Mapping fishing activities continues to be delayed due to issues in obtaining IVMS data ○ 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. • Two key milestones still not achieved, however associated risk to the project is considered relatively low. <u>Discussion</u> For mapping fishing activity, a question whether the existing tracker data provides enough data and whether the use of iVMS is needed to avoid delays was raised. It was advised that although the current trackers already offer good quality valuable data, iVMS would provide a more comprehensive view by filling in gaps.

Risk Review (SH)

Project Risk

- For risks identified there have been no changes in risk since the last review.
- Previously there were some concerns about contracts not being completed by the end of financial year - these issues have now been resolved.

Discussion

Current drilling for a cable route from Hornsea 3 is generating large chalk plumes, seen from various photos. It was identified that there was a potential risk to ARM regarding stakeholder buy-in. While it's thought that fishing behaviour has not changed, there is evident dissatisfaction among fishermen, which could escalate if concerns continue to be discounted. It was agreed that this should be reflected in the ARM risk review.

SM said that Natural England had provided advice in the marine licensing process that chalk was present at the site, but the developer said that their assessments indicated that chalk was not present. NE had raised strong objections, but these had not been accepted by the MMO.

Previous similar activity was also observed to have created large plumes and with members suggesting that studies conducted at the time of the plumes showed some impact on catch and so questions remain about chalk smothering effects on crab and lobsters, although evidence is limited. Reports of fishing gear snagging on cables from other infrastructure projects suggest they are exposed despite claims that the pipes are buried; which creates a feeling of distrust from the offshore infrastructure projects.

MCZ risk

- The Risk Register has been revised as part of the latest interim report and is currently under review.

ARM budgets and Funding (SH)

SH gave a brief update on funding:

- FaSS funding claim for 2024/25 has been approved.
- FaSS funding 2025/26 claim is currently being processed ready to submit before the end of June.
- FaSS has reopened recently this year under the Fishing and Coastal Growth Fund, an application is being drafted for the remainder of the Natural Disturbance Study.

- They key difference with the fund this year is that applications can be made for more than one year (up to 3 years) which will help towards fulfilling the remainder of the study.

Discussion

- Reliance on external funding streams such as FaSS combined with the way in which they operated being challenging meant that some degree of uncertainty was a feature of the project. However, Eastern IFCA was, in effect, underwriting activity so the project could continue but this relied upon the continuing support of the Authority. Costs remain largely the same to previous years with some likely to have increased slightly due to inflation.

Research Task & Finish Group update (RWJ)

- Natural Disturbance Study: Spring acoustic surveys have been completed. Data analysis contracts are ongoing, marker buoys are deployed, and the Cefas report has been received.
- Rates of Damage Assessment: At the last meeting, discussion focused on appropriate sample sizes to ensure confidence in results. Discussion that a qualified statistician would be beneficial.
- Chalk Value Study: A questionnaire has been circulated to fishermen, but responses remain limited. Officers are liaising with Nicola Webster, who expressed willingness to support at the last Stakeholder Group meeting. Recent planned sampling surveys were cancelled due to strong winds.

Management Task & Finish Group update (SH)

SH gave an update on the Management Task & Finish Group on LG's behalf:

- The Management plan agreed by the Authority has had some further comments from NE which are currently being considered.
- A date for the next MT&F group meeting was sought, although limited availability from members was making it difficult.
- The next workstream will be looking at improving reporting rates for lost / stored gear following discussions at the last stakeholder group meeting
- Confirmation of Byelaw is also delayed because of the QA process rather than issues with the Byelaw itself. It was noted that the target date itself was set as the earliest timeframe that the byelaw could come into effect, however, experience has shown that it can take several years to be approved, which is much longer than set out in the ARM plan.
- MMO have provided additional comments on the Cromer Shoal Chalk Beds Byelaw 2023 which Eastern IFCA are considering a meeting with the MMO is being organised to address these comments.

Stakeholder Group Meeting (EC)

EC gave a brief discussion on the Stakeholder Group:

- Since the last PB meeting, the Feb meeting was held in person.
- Meeting notes for this meeting are available on the website.
- The next meeting is planned for November due to be online

Evidence subgroup (LG)

SH gave a brief discussion on the Evidence Sub-Group on LG's behalf:

- Evidence sub-group work is ongoing with several workstreams allocated to officers, however, limited capacity in recent months has meant these projects have not progressed.

Communications update (EC)

EC gave a brief discussion on communications:

- A Management update went out recently to provide a reminder of what management has been agreed, is currently in place and is set to come in the future following discussion at the stakeholder group meeting that this would be useful.
- Eastern IFCA to consider putting comms out to fishermen about the recent Hornsea 3 chalk plumes.

Date of next meeting

Provisionally agreed to push back to mid-August unless a meeting is required sooner due to everyone's limited availability over the summer period.

Next meeting - Tuesday 18th August

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	<u>ACTION</u> to contact the evidence sub-group before the next stakeholder group meeting regarding the projects to progress.	SH/LG	25 th Feb	COMPLETE – update on Evidence Sub-group given above
26/03/2025	<u>ACTION</u> Pursue additional sources of funding for the project as a priority	SH	Next meeting	COMPLETE - Standing agenda item
09/10/2024	<u>ACTION:</u> EIFCA to continue looking into obtaining existing partial datasets such as available iVMS data and MMO data. <u>ACTION:</u> EIFCA to consider alternative ways of obtaining fishing data in the absence of full data sets.	SH/LG SH/LG	Next meeting	ONGOING – Eastern IFCA have a letter to issue the fishermen in draft. This is intended to give us access to the iVMS data officers haven't been able to access from SuccorFish.