

Recreational Angling Sector Group Meeting – 28/08/2019 – 17:00

Southern IFCA Office – Unit 3, Holes Bay Park, Sterte Avenue West, Poole, Dorset, BH15 2AA.

Attendees:

Chris Holloway (CH)
 Phil Higgins (PH)
 Rayner Piper (RP)
 Tim Ferrero (TF)
 Kim Gibbs (KG)
 Alan Deeming (AD)
 Robert Clark (RC)
 Patrick Cooper (PC)
 Richard Stride (SCFC)
 Gavin Black (GB)
 Randolph Velstrop (RV)
 Richard Morgan (RM)

Apologies:

- Steve Porter, Sam Cummings, Paul Tomlinson, Brian Bleese, Charlie Annear

The chairman welcomed members of the group and introduced Richard Stride, observing the meeting from South Coast Fisherman's Council, as well as Gavin Black, Randolph Velstrop and Richard Morgan from Natural England.

1. Minutes of the previous meetings

- AD requested that the headings of group minutes etc should revert to the approved group title i.e. without the inclusion of the word "working" which had been inadvertently included in possibly the past couple of meetings documents
- The minutes were signed off by the chairman.
- o CH requested that the SIFCA web site be updated to include all current minutes of the RASG (Action PC)

2. Marine Conservation Zones:

i. IFCA's responsibility to towards MCZs – IFCA

RC provided an update on Marine Conservation zones explaining that on the 30th May 2019 the third tranche of MCZs were announced and designated. Of this third tranche 6 new sites were designated within the Southern IFCA district:

- Bembridge, Yarmouth to Cowes, Southborne Rough, Studland Bay, Portland Deep and Purbeck Coast.
- Additional Features were also added to Chesil and Stennis Ledges and Poole Rocks.

RC provided further information on the process of identification of suitable sites highlighting where new sites were not included in the original stakeholder led process. RC took the members through the IFCA's responsibilities towards MCZs under the MaCAA Sc154, particularly where IFCA's must seek to ensure that the conservation objectives of any MCZ in the district are furthered. AD highlighted a point from previous meetings, where IFCA's could only look to manage fisheries within MCZs. RC confirmed this, stating that other activities, such as anchoring, would be managed by the relevant authority.

RC then provided an overview of the process the IFCA would take to manage activities, starting with a screening process where the authority would identify activities which do (and or have the potential to) and don't occur. Activities would then be assessed through two forms of assessment, a part A assessment, which is akin to a test of likely significant effect, used to assess activities within European Marine Sites. Where the part A assessment indicates that there is potential to impact the conservation objectives of a site, a more detailed part B assessment would be undertaken. If the part B indicated that the conservation objectives would not be met without appropriate management, the Authority would consider appropriate management to ensure features were adequately protected. AD enquired if the two year time frame still applied, RC stated that the two year time frame did not apply anymore, but the responsibilities of the IFCA, and others, towards the protection of MCZs occur from designation.

The assessment, screening and management process would take into account both formal and informal advice from Natural England in order to inform the process. RC stated that although management decisions are taken by the authority and not Natural England, ensuring the Authority meets the conservation objectives of the site is very much dependent of Conservation Advice from Natural England. The Authority has to ensure that the it meets its legal responsibility towards conservation objectives, but still was required to have regard for socio-economics, with part of the assessment process balancing proportionate management with potentially precautionary advice. PC stated the officers had worked with Natural England advisors early on to discuss the requirements and evidence gaps, and in order to prioritise and identify the key risks officers had grouped the assessments into four categories:

- Bottom Towed Fishing Gear
- Hand Gathering
- Bream
- Static Gear

This has allowed officers and advisors from Natural England to identify gaps in evidence and flag up where advice may be required sooner rather than later.

ii. Natural England's conservation advice – Natural England

The group welcomed Gavin Black, Richard Morgan and Randolph Velterop from Natural England. RV explained that he had been invited to provide a presentation on Natural England's Conservation advice regarding nesting black seabream, particularly with respect to recreational angling. PH enquired as to why just recreational anglers, GB stated that the presentation was focused on the conservation advice regarding recreational angling pressures due to the makeup of the group, but Natural England would be producing advice for both commercial and recreational fishing.

RV provided the group with information regarding the formation of conservation advice from Natural England [copy of presentation to follow]. The information included the development of an understanding black seabream biology based on early work from tank-based study to more recent work with underwater cameras. Populations were discussed and it was highlighted by RV that there was no formal ICES stock assessment for bream, and that limited management occurs for the species. Mapping bream nesting sites using techniques such as the side-scan sonar or back scatter to determine densities and extents of nesting areas has occurred. RV also discussed some of the recent direct observational work from divers and deployed cameras, particularly including the work undertaken by Matt Dogget. The behaviours observed have included arrival, courtship, nest guarding and nest predation. Footage has contributed to the knowledge base around disturbance linked with predation rates.

RV discussed previous case studies involving Kingmere and the development of the MCZ, the stakeholder led process involved in development management. RC raised that although similar, Southern IFCA analysis of landings data indicated that Kingmere, on designation, was subject to a higher level of commercial activity than the sites designated in Dorset. Management for the site was developed in conjunction with the site users, and were provided advice from Natural England. The advice was included in the IA and recommended that all activities that have an impact on black seabream were removed from the site during breeding and spawning season.

RV stated that on consideration of up to date information, NE position was consistent and that the potential for disturbance, removal of nest guarding bream and the vulnerability of the bream whilst they are nesting, meant that the advice regarding the removal of disturbance from nesting sites during the nest season would likely apply to all activities that could potentially disturb black seabream whilst nesting, including catch and release angling.

PH and CH raised concerns regarding a figure from a previous meeting where NE advisors had quoted a 100% mortality rate for black seabream caught and returned. None of the Natural England advisors was aware of that figure being used or could attribute that to the data they were using to inform their conservation advice.

PH raised concerns about the information from the Pinder et al bream paper, particularly around the estimations of catch and release for black seabream, using a 65% retention rate. Phil stated that on his vessel the retention rate for black bream was far less, recent estimates suggested around 8%. RV stated that this was the estimated retention rate and that the 65% figure referenced was from the 2013 Armstrong et al paper.

CH queried the attribution of 25% of the total catch to anglers mentioned in Pinder et al. CH was not sure whether was total landed and whether this was based on the same 65% retention rate. RV stated he would attempt to clarify – ACTION.

RS enquired about aggregate extraction around MCZs, particularly the licence granted near Kingmere. RV stated that the MMO led on the licencing of those activities and ongoing monitoring. Any activities within or around MPAs would be subject to assessment prior to a licence being granted. RM and GB stated that they would follow up and enquire as to the conditions of the license – ACTION.

CH raised the issue regarding the lack of understanding of the stock and queried how you could require management without evidence of any decline/overfishing. RV and GB stated that the designation as a feature of an MCZ meant that management of the species was not at a fishery level but as a feature, nesting seabream. The feature had been identified; the identification of nesting seabream as a mobile species, that returns to a particular area and is exploited at a time in its life cycle when its particularly vulnerable. It was not a concern over angling, or other impacts, on bream, but the potential impacts on bream when they are nesting and vulnerable. RC highlighted that the issue was not a fisheries management issue, in the traditional sense of a stock management approach, but one of conservation management, drawing lessons from work on essential fish habitats, but agreed further work on stock assessment and more holistic management was desirable and necessary, if the effect or benefits of the MCZ (s) are to be known.

RS raised concerns over the recover object for the site, particularly as to how you would know when you have reached 'recovered' state. GB explained that recover referenced the outcome of a basic vulnerability assessment. The simplified process is an assessment as to whether the feature is under a pressure and whether they are sensitive to that pressure? With nesting bream, as that is the case for both, the assessment concludes that the feature is vulnerable

and therefore the CO is set to recover. AD stated that this would also include anchoring, RC agreed and that other activities which could disturb were also in the 'disturbance' umbrella.

The group agreed that there was still evidence required to be undertaken before management could be agreed. CH stated that the ability to enforce measures would be limited due to the available resources. Any proposed management would need stakeholder management and that should be considered before any management is proposed. GB reminded the group that NE would produce the conservation advice and that it would be up to the IFCA to develop management.

3. Minimum Conservation Reference Sizes update – EU2019/1241

Members of the group were provided information from RC regarding the revocation and replacement of EC 850/98 with EU 1241/19. EC 850/98 provided the technical conservation measures for fishers within member states, but, having been in place for 20 years needed replacing, especially in light of its compatibility with the landing obligation. The landing obligation sets out the general principle that discarding fish should cease, and that the catching of small fish would be reduced as any landed would be removed from a vessel's quota, encouraging fishers to change their practices to adapt. There are still instances where minimum sizes would apply, and as such these are still included in the regulation, however, the new regulation states that it refers to Union Vessels, and as such, does not apply to recreational anglers. RC reminded the group of the Authorities stance relating to 850/98 that the minimum sizes applied to recreational fishers. AD highlighted to the group the angling trusts press release regarding this. All members of the group agreed that not only should sizes apply to anglers, but in many cases the sizes were too small and anglers should be encouraged to fish to the AT recommended minimum sizes.

CH enquired about the existing fish minimum size byelaw. RC stated that the IFCA did have an existing byelaw which provided a minimum size for a number of species, which would still apply to recreational fishers, however there were a number of gaps left by the revocation of 850/98. RC stated that it was the Authorities intention to develop a new fish minimum size byelaw for those species affected, allowing for the authority to apply the measures across the board (except where the landing obligation applies).

4. IFCA student project update

PC provided an update from the IFCA student project over the summer. An intern had been working with the IFCA over the summer and had spent time collating information from a number of sources, including members of the group, to bring together information regarding fish handling. Owen Jackson (the intern involved) had spent time with PH and had worked with SP on gathering information. The next steps would be to check the information back with those who have contributed to ensure they are happy, then the information can be shared with the group.

Following this, it was suggested that Dorset Wildlife Trust are consulted in more detail, having worked on a similar project, to see whether there is anything that can be produced together.

5. Any other business

AD raised the upcoming HPMA review. RC stated that the review aimed to consider whether and how HPMA's could be introduced within the sea area of the UK. Further details on the review may be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/highly-protected-marine-areas-hpmas-review-2019/highly-protected-marine-areas-review-terms-of-reference>

AD stated that he had requested an update at the Solent Forum as the chair, Peter Barham, had been appointed to the panel.

CH enquired as to updates on the netting review. RS as a member of the working group provided an update stating that the netting working group meet would meet before an authority meeting in December, they will look at measures proposed by members before recommendations are made to the committee. AD asked if RASG members could be provided with a copy of the minutes of the netting working group once these are available to the main SIFCA committee.

Reports:

- Minute of the previous meeting

DRAFT