

NORTH EASTERN INSHORE FISHERIES AND CONSERVATION AUTHORITY

SCIENCE ADVISORY GROUP

06 September 2018

Present

Dr Stephen Axford (Chair)
Emma Brown
Mr Bob Houghton
Councillor Chris Matthews
Mr Michael Montgomerie
Christian Proud
Mr John Whitton

Representing

MMO Appointee
Natural England Appointee
MMO Appointee
East Riding of Yorkshire Council
MMO Appointee
MMO Representative
MMO Appointee

Chief Officer David McCandless, Tim Smith, Senior Scientific & Environmental Officer, Helen Devlin, Natural England and Bex Lynam, Yorkshire Wildlife Trust also attended the meeting.

The group met at the Authority's offices in the Green Lane Centre, Whitby. The meeting started at 12:30.

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Marine Management Organisation appointees Mrs Kirsten Carter, Prof Mike Elliot, Mr Phillip Macmullen, and Environment Agency representative, Mr Paul Slater.

2. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON THE 23 MAY 2018

The Chief Officer circulated a written update on the Wheatcroft Outfall and the National Salmon and Sea Trout Protection Byelaws provided by Environment Agency representative Paul Slater as he was unable to attend the meeting. The Chief Officer informed members that the Executive Committee had requested that the Environment Agency provide an update presentation at the next full Authority meeting in December. Whilst members considered it beneficial to continue to highlight the ongoing concerns to the Environment Agency, the Authority needed to be mindful that the responsibility for resolving the issues fell outside the Authority's remit, and perhaps an alternative forum to discuss the issues should be explored.

Resolved - That the minutes of the Science and Governance Working Group Meeting held on the 23 May 2018 be confirmed and signed as a correct record by the Chair.

3. NEIFCA 5 YEAR RESEARCH & STRATEGIC PLAN

Senior Environmental Officer Tim Smith presented a report, which provided members with a draft NEIFCA strategic Research, and Evidence Plan for review and comment. The aim of the Strategic Research and Evidence Plan was to identify long-term approaches, research themes and core, on-going priorities for the organisation as well as setting out organisational research resources and capabilities. The strategy would communicate organisational priorities to stakeholders and partner agencies and form the basis for the Annual Research and Evidence Plans developed over the lifespan of the plan. Members were asked to provide feedback and comments including any further recommendations electronically.

Resolved – Members noted the report.

4. NEIFCA ANNUAL RESEARCH PROGRAMME 2018/2019

The Senior Environmental Officer Tim Smith presented a report providing members with a draft copy of the scientific and environmental work programme for the 2018/19 season. The Authority's environmental and scientific work is supported by a detailed offshore and land-based programme of survey work linking to the delivery of the overarching annual plan. The Research and Evidence Annual Plan is the key to planning and operational document where actions and priorities can be agreed in context. The aim of the document is to identify continuing and new priorities for the organisation during the 2018-2019 period. Members discussed the report and suggested it would be useful to include the frequency of planned progress updates in relation to the ongoing delivery of the plan.

Resolved – Members noted the report.

5. SCALLOP SURVEY PLAN

The Senior Environmental Officer Tim Smith provided a presentation updating on the planned monitoring and assessment work in relation to the scallop dredge fishery over the 2018/19 season and subsequent years. The presentation included information on the current scallop stock data, underwater video camera stills, proposed potting stations and comparisons from the 2016, 2017 and 2018 season. Members were supportive of the proposed sampling regime and recommended the inclusion of some comparative data and camera work on grounds both inside and outside the 6 nautical mile boundary.

Resolved – Members noted the report and supported the amended proposed sampling regime for 2018 – 2021.

6. COCKLE STOCK ASSESSMENT REVIEW

The Senior Environmental Officer Tim Smith presented a report to update Members on the results of the 2018 cockle stock assessment surveys and to provide an overview of previous years sampling. The main cockle beds located within the Humber and the Tees estuaries have been subject to annual surveys since 2013. The beds in the Tees are located in two small areas at Bran Sands and Middleton Basin and in the Humber, across a wider area of foreshore known as Wonderland, on the main bathing beach at Cleethorpes in North East Lincolnshire. Officers do not consider these areas capable of sustaining any manageable long-term commercial exploitation. Further to considerations surrounding stock levels, neither the Tees nor the Humber are currently classified by the Food Standards Agency as bivalve production areas and cannot therefore support any legal commercial exploitation at this time. Given these factors, in accordance with the supporting byelaw regulation, officers had notified stakeholders of the intention to maintain existing closures until at least the end of the closed season in August 2019 and no permits would be issued during the 2018/2019 'open' season. Members discussed the stock assessment survey programme, and agreed that surveys should be carried out every other year as it is unlikely the cockle beds would support any legal commercial exploitation for the foreseeable future.

Resolved – Members noted the report and supported the recommendation that future cockle stock assessment surveys should be carried out every other year.

7. LICENSING AND CONSENTS UPDATE

The Senior Environmental Officer Tim Smith updated members on marine licensing and consent applications reviewed by officers since the last meeting on the 8 March 2018. Most of the applications were for relatively routine activities or would have limited interaction/impact on marine fisheries. An EIA scoping report for a new long sea outfall at Withernsea had been notified and a consent summary would be circulated to members when the full application was received.

Resolved – Members noted the report.

8. NEIFCA PROJECTS UPDATES

The Senior Environmental Officer Tim Smith updated members on the progress of all active externally funded project initiatives, currently officers were supporting two externally funded projects which included a Defra funded bait collection project which commenced in September 2017 and an EMFF funded lobster marketing project which commenced in December 2017.

Resolved – Members noted the report.

9.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The Chief Officer informed members that the Executive Committee had endorsed a proposal to establish a Yorkshire coast Marine Protected Area Management Partnership, this would ensure a much more coordinated approach to MPA management across the Yorkshire region involving a much wider range of organisations including both statutory and non-governmental. Such a partnership would be unique nationally, demonstrate a strong and innovative vision. The Executive Committee had requested that the matter also be considered by the Science Advisory Group for endorsement.

Resolved – Members endorsed the Yorkshire Coast Marine Protected Area Proposal.

The meeting closed at 14.35