

# NORTH EASTERN INSHORE FISHERIES AND CONSERVATION AUTHORITY

## SCIENCE ADVISORY GROUP

06 September 2019

### Present

Dr Stephen Axford (Chair)  
Prof Mike Elliot  
Councillor Chris Matthews  
Mr Michael Montgomerie  
Mr Paul Slater  
Mr John Whitton

### Representing

MMO Appointee  
MMO Appointee  
East Riding of Yorkshire Council  
MMO Apointee  
EA Representative  
MMO Appointee

Senior Environmental & Scientific Officer Tim Smith and Mr Gary Redshaw, MMO Appointee also attended the meeting.

The group met at the Bridlington Business Centre, Enterprise Way, Bessingby Industrial Estate, Bridlington. The meeting started at 10:30.

<b>1.</b>	<b>APOLOGIES</b>
	Apologies for absence were received from Marine Management Organisation appointees Kirsten Carter, Bob Houghton and Nigel Proctor, Natural England Appointee Emma Brown and Chief Officer David McCandless.
<b>2.</b>	<b>MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON THE 14 MARCH 2019</b>
	<b>Resolved</b> - That the minutes of the Science and Governance Working Group Meeting held on the 14 March 2019 be confirmed and signed as a correct record by the Chair.
<b>3.</b>	<b>ANNUAL RESEARCH PLAN 2020-21</b>
	Senior Environmental & Scientific Officer Tim Smith presented a report, which provided members with a copy of the Annual Research and Evidence Plan 2020/21 for members endorsement. 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 strategic plan. The Research and Evidence Annual Plan is the core planning and operational document where actions and priorities can be agreed in context. The aim of the document is to identify new and continuing priorities for the organisation during the 2020-2021 period. Members were informed that following the apparent loss of the blue mussel ( <i>Mytilus edulis</i> ) bed in the Flamborough No Take Zone (NTZ) observed during the 2019 survey, it was proposed that the survey be removed from the annual plan. Discussions had also been held with the Flamborough Head EMS Project Officer (PO) regarding the continuation of potting surveys in the NTZ which have been supported by NEIFCA in the past. It was proposed that NEIFCA and the Flamborough PO will discuss wider partner and academic institution involvement in developing projects to better monitor the Flamborough Head EMS outside of statutory responsibilities at the next meeting of the Yorkshire Marine and Coastal Biodiversity Group meeting.
	<b>Resolved</b> – Members noted the report and endorsed the Annual Research Plan 2020/21.
<b>4.</b>	<b>LOBSTER &amp; EDDIBLE CRAB STOCK STATUS</b>

	<p>The Senior Environmental &amp; Scientific Officer Tim Smith presented a report to update members on preliminary results of the 2018 lobster and edible crab monitoring programme and provide copies of the lobster and edible crab stock status reports. Stock monitoring of the lobster and edible crab stocks includes both quayside sampling and offshore surveys. Monthly sampling is undertaken at three key ports (Bridlington, Scarborough and Whitby) with supplemental sampling from other ports when possible. Dedicated fishery independent surveys are undertaken from North Eastern Guardian III between May and October each year. The stock summary reports present initial results for the previous years monitoring. The full stock status report will be included in the annual research report. Members were informed that the status of lobster stocks in the NEIFCA district is considered to be low, with both male and female fishing mortality rates above the maximum reference point. A significant increase in spawning stock biomass and/or reduction in fishing mortality would be required to achieve MSY. The status of the crab stock within the NEIFCA district is considered fairly low. Mortality rates are above the level needed to achieve MSY but are below the maximum reference point. Members recommended that the report should focus on trends that are statistically significant, and the language used within the report should be less complex. Members also supported the suggestion to reinstate a regional management group.</p>
	<b>Resolved</b> – Members noted the report.
<b>5.</b>	<b>STATE OF THE FISHERIES REPORT</b>
	<p>The Senior Environmental &amp; Scientific Officer Tim Smith presented a report to members which included a copy of the 2019 State of the Fisheries report and presented a powerpoint presentation which summarised the key findings of the research carried out. At the last meeting of the Science Advisory Group on 14 March 2019, Officers were asked to evidence the status of fish stocks found within the district, their sustainability and socio-economic importance in order to justify current strategic research priorities and to present the results to the full Authority during the June 2019 meeting. As it was not possible to present the report at the full Authority meeting due to time constraints, the report was presented to the Science Advisory Group at this meeting instead.</p>
	<b>Resolved</b> – Members noted the report.
<b>6.</b>	<b>SCALLOP DREDGE FISHERY VIDEO ASSESSMENT</b>
	<p>The Senior Environmental &amp; Scientific Officer Tim Smith presented a report to provide members with the initial results of the dredge area video assessment work for discussion. Due to concerns regarding potential habitat impacts arising from the permitted dredge fishery, a comparison between video footage captured in 2016 and 2019 is being carried out. Example video footage was presented to members at the meeting. Video footage was broken down into 4 minute segments and the abundance of species or species groups present was recorded. Data was assessed for three treatment areas, 1) within the northern permitted area, 2) outside the 6NM limit, and 3) within the 6NM limit but outside the permitted dredge areas. Data was standardised to relative abundance per 100m of video tow. Total species diversity and abundance of <i>Alyonium digitatum</i> was assessed. Members discussed the value of increasing the number of permitted vessels to 5. Members suggested that a comparison of grounds within the 3NM, similar to that of the permitted dredge fishery grounds should be carried out, and that a special meeting in May 2020 should be arranged to discuss the findings and enable a recommendation from the group to be taken to the full Authority meeting in June 2020.</p>
	<b>Resolved</b> – Members noted the report.
<b>7.</b>	<b>HUMBER EELGRASS SURVEY AND MANAGEMENT</b>
	<p>The Senior Environmental &amp; Scientific Officer Tim Smith provided a report to members which presented the results of the 2019 eelgrass monitoring survey within the Humber Estuary European Marine Site. As</p>

a result of the revised approach to commercial fisheries in European Marine Sites, management was introduced in January 2014 to protect eelgrass (*Zostera* sp.) beds at Spurn Point in the Humber Estuary from potentially damaging activities. Annual surveys are carried out in partnership with the Yorkshire Wildlife Trust to map the extent and distribution of eelgrass in order to ensure that appropriate management is in place. Members were informed that survey results for 2019 showed a 350% increase in extent since surveys began in 2013. The core eelgrass bed in the south of the management area was considered stable, while cover in the north and central areas was subject to more significant annual variation. If the extent of the eelgrass is observed to persist outside the management area during the 2020 survey the byelaw may have to be revised.

**Resolved** – Members noted the report.

**8. BYELAWS UPDATE**

The Senior Environmental & Scientific Officer Tim Smith provided a report to update members on all current fisheries byelaw work streams.

**Byelaw XXVIII Crustacea Conservation Byelaw 2018**

This new byelaw regulation was made by the Authority at its meeting on 14 June 2018 (minute record 52 refers). It retains, updates and rationalises existing management regulations covering the exploitation of lobster, edible crab, velvet crab and *Nephrops* within the Authority’s district and includes the following key revisions:

- Incorporates existing protections for ‘V’ notched lobsters which are currently provided for in a separate byelaw regulation.
- Incorporates existing protections for egg bearing lobsters which are currently provided for in an emergency byelaw regulation which will expire on 17 October 2018. This includes new protection for lobsters displaying mutilated pleopods.
- Specifies a new vessel length size for shell fishing of 10 m overall length within 3 nautical miles with additional protections for all existing vessel operators who currently operate within the 3 mile limit under a ‘sunset’ provision.
- Specifies a new protection for ‘soft’ lobsters
- Specifies a new maximum pot frame size of 50 cm H x 60 cm W x 110 cm L.

The byelaw was confirmed by Defra and came into force on 8 August 2019.

**Byelaw XXIX Humber Estuary Fishing Byelaw 2016**

The byelaw, which was formally made by the Authority on 27 April 2016 as a result of the revised approach to commercial fisheries in European Marine Sites, establishes trawling management within the Humber Estuary EMS. Trawling will be prohibited with the exception of a ‘sunset’ list of current permit holders that can demonstrate a track record of fishing within the Estuary.

The byelaw was confirmed by Defra and came into force on 15 August 2019 and all affected permit holders have now been contacted.

**EMERGENCY BYELAW ‘Fish, Mollusc and Crustacea Minimum Size byelaw 2019’**

Until recently, IFCA’s were empowered to enforce minimum sizes in relation to commercial and recreational fisheries imposed by Council Regulation (EC) No 85/98. On 14 August 2019, the European Council adopted new technical conservation regulations, replacing EC 85/98, which in turn resulted in IFCA’s losing both their powers to enforce the new regulations and ability to apply them to non-commercial fisheries.

	<p>In conjunction with Northumberland, Eastern and Kent &amp; Essex IFCAs and in full consultation with Authority members, NEIFCA made an emergency byelaw which re-established minimum conservation reference sizes for certain marine organisms across it's district, replicating the provisions of EC 850/98.</p> <p>By working in partnership with neighbouring IFCAs, we were able to maintain the protective effect provided by the minimum size rules along the East coast of England and the Eastern channel. The byelaw also ensured consistent application of the regulations to recreational fishers as well as the prohibition on the transport, sale and storage of undersize marine organisms.</p> <p>Members were informed that Officers were not seeking to introduce further species minimum sizes or technical regulations, but merely progress the elements within the emergency byelaw during the statutory time period. Copies of the byelaw and the supporting RIA were attached for members information.</p> <p><b>AIS, Catch Returns and Fixed Netting Byelaw Regulations</b></p> <p>The above three byelaw regulations, made during April 2016, remain outstanding having been sent to Defra during February 2019 for final confirmation. Officers continue to work with NEIFCA legal to actively lobby and press Defra for their final confirmation.</p>
	<b>Resolved</b> – Members noted the report.
<b>9.</b>	<b>LICENSING AND CONSENTS UPDATE</b>
	<p>The Senior Environmental &amp; Scientific Officer Tim Smith provided a report to update members on marine licensing and consent applications reviewed by officers since the last meeting on the 14 March 2019.</p> <p>Copies of an external report on the impact of the Westernmost Rough Offshore Wind Farm were circulated for members information. A consultation response letter on potential data sources that could be incorporated into the analysis was also circulated.</p> <p>Members were informed that preliminary consultation had begun regarding Hornsea 4 Offshore Wind Farm.</p>
	<b>Resolved</b> – Members noted the report.
<b>10.</b>	<b>PROJECT UPDATES</b>
	The Senior Environmental & Scientific Officer Tim Smith updated members on the progress of all active externally funded project initiatives.
	<b>Resolved</b> – Members noted the report.
<b>11.</b>	<b>ANY OTHER BUSINESS</b>
	Nothing to report
	The meeting closed at 13:10