

NORTH EASTERN INSHORE FISHERIES AND CONSERVATION AUTHORITY

SCIENCE ADVISORY GROUP

08 March 2018

Present

Dr Stephen Axford (Chair)
Mr Bob Houghton
Councillor Chris Matthews
Lyndsey Newlyn
Mr John Whitton

Representing

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

Chief Officer David McCandless and Deputy Chief Officer Ian Davies also attended the meeting.

The group met at the Authority's offices in the Green Lane Centre, Whitby. The meeting started at 10:30.

86.	APOLOGIES
	Apologies for absence were received from Marine Management Organisation appointees Mr Nigel Proctor and Mrs Kirsten Carter, Natural England appointee, Miss Emma Brown and Environment Agency representative, Mr Paul Slater.
87.	MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON THE 22 FEBRUARY 2017
	Resolved - That the minutes of the Science and Governance Working Group Meeting held on the 7 September 2017 be confirmed and signed as a correct record by the Chair.
88.	NEIFCA 5 YEAR RESEARCH & STRATEGIC PLAN
	Acting Senior Environmental & Scientific Officer, Tim Smith, provided an overview of the draft plan which would replace the previous plan published in 2012. Officers now had a much clearer understanding of the Authority's role and primary responsibilities, both regional and nationally, which had been incorporated into the new plan. Key strategic areas of focus for the next 5 years included MPA management, EU exit influences, partnership working and new technologies. Core research programmes included crustacean stock assessment work, scallop and cockle stock assessment work, eelgrass surveying, MPA monitoring, juvenile fish sampling and assessing 'new' opportunities such as nephrop and whelk pot fisheries. Members highlighted the need for prioritisation within the plan given the Authority's limited resourcing. Such considerations might include whether there was a need for annual cockle surveys given the current lack of commercial potential within the stock or intertidal juvenile fish surveys, unless a significant nursery area was identified through such work. MMO appointee Mr Bob Houghton highlighted the need for a stronger reporting process so that achievements and lessons from research work could be detailed and documented, perhaps incorporated into the Authority's Annual Report. Members also considered how the Authority's website could be better utilised as a reporting mechanism. Some members raised concerns that the website content appeared dated. Councillor Matthews suggested that either a larger website is maintained and resourced accordingly or the current website is reduced in size and scale and kept accurate and up to date within existing resources. Members supported an officer led review of the current website.
	Resolved – (a) Members endorsed the draft plan and agreed to provide any further comments by the 31 March 2018 with a revised draft to be re-circulated for final review. (b) Officers undertake a review of the Authority's website and report back to members.

89.	NEIFCA ANNUAL RESEARCH PROGRAMME 2018/2019
	<p>Acting Senior Environmental and Scientific Officer, Tim Smith, provided an overview of the draft research programme for the year ahead (2018/2019). Main work priorities for the year ahead included spring survey work monitoring cockle stocks, sea grass areas and bait collection in the Tee's estuary. Progressing three partnership projects including the EMMF lobster marketing project with Hull University, a Defra funded bait collection project again in partnership with Hull University and a Masters student and a sea bass tagging study in partnership with the Yorkshire Wildlife Trust. Dr Stephen Axford suggested that the plan should incorporate some indication of the 'man days' associated with each work stream and project and much of the work appeared to be programmed for the Spring time which might create resourcing issues. Tim Smith provided more detail on the Defra funded bait collection study due to complete sometime in June 2018 with recommendations then taken forward to support any future management considerations. MMO appointee Bob Hoghton suggested that Tim contact Alistair Ward at Hull University where a PhD was due to commence in September focusing on bird disturbance on the Humber. Other discussions considered the investment in time looking at new fisheries such as the NE pot nephrop fishery. Members recommended that officers focus on the prioritisation and resourcing of planned work within the programme.</p>
	<p>Resolved – Members endorsed the draft programme and agreed to provide further comments by 31 March 2018 with a draft to be re-circulated for final review.</p>
90.	SCALLOP DREDGING 2017/2018 – UPDATE PRESENTATION
	<p>Tim Smith provided a detailed update to members covering the 2017/2018 permitted scallop dredge fishery including a summary of activity within the fishery to date and some output from the supporting sampling programme. Throughout the current season Officers were focusing on the offshore sampling programme, going to sea with the three permitted vessels. MMO appointee Mr Jon Whitton suggested that officers could re-examine the potential use of enviro dredges within the fishery through trials. Mr Whitton had seen other similar studies that indicated that such dredges significantly reduced damage to by-catch species. Following wider discussions it was agreed that a special meeting of the Science Advisory Group should be convened sometime during May 2018 to consider future options for the 2018/2019 fishery and recommendations to the full Committee in June 2018.</p>
	<p>Resolved – (a) Members noted the report (b) A special meeting of the group be convened in May 2018 to consider options for the 2018/2019 fishery.</p>
91.	MPA MANAGEMENT REVIEW & UPDATE
	<p>Tim Smith provided a detailed overview of work completed, to date, supporting the management of fishing activities within existing Marine Protected Area sites and associated monitoring plans for those sites. This work had been carried out in full consultation and dialogue with Natural England who had endorsed the review and draft plans to date.</p>
	<p>Resolved – Members noted the report.</p>
92.	NEIFCA BYELAW UPDATE
	<p>The Chief Officer provided a detailed update on all current NEIFCA byelaw work streams including the following four byelaws which had been submitted to Defra for final consideration:</p> <p>XVIII Method and Area of Fishing (Netting) Byelaw 2016 XXIX Humber Estuary Fishing Byelaw 2016 XXX Automatic Identification System (AIS) Byelaw 2016 XXXI Catch Returns Byelaw 2016</p> <p>Internally Officers were also working on changes to the Authority's Crustacea Conservation Byelaw regulation to include new provisions protecting egg bearing lobsters, a maximum pot frame size and incorporating existing measures contained within a separate byelaw regulation protecting 'V' notched</p>

	lobsters. Significant consideration had also been given to the development of measures to strengthen the management of posting effort and the Chief Officer expected to commence informal consultation with the industry on these proposals sometime during the next two to three months.
	Resolved – Members noted the report
93.	LICENSING AND CONSENTS UPDATE
	The Chief Officer updated members on the Authority’s marine licensing and consents work undertaken since the last meeting which included an application to pilot the growing and harvesting of seaweed and mussel in the Scarborough area. The MMO representative Lyndsey Newlyn advised that the application had since been consented.
	Resolved – Members noted the report.
94.	NEIFCA PROJECTS UPDATES
	The Chief Officer updated members on all current Authority projects including the Defra funded bait collection project and the EMFF funded lobster marketing study.
	Resolved – Members noted the report.
95.	ANY OTHER BUSINESS
	Members were informed that the Environment Agency had commenced a formal consultation on the implementation of new byelaw regulations covering the seasonal licensed salmon fishery within the Authority’s district. Dr Stephen Axford outlined some of the proposed measures which included an immediate cessation of the drift net fishery and a shortening of the salmon season which would now run from 31 May rather than 1 April. Dr Axford felt that it would have a significant impact on the affected fishermen and potentially put more pressure on crustacean fisheries. The Chief Officer agreed to draft and circulate an Authority response to the proposals which would then be submitted to the Agency. The Chief Officer updated members on the ‘wash up’ of tonnes on lobster, crab and other marine species along the North East Coast of England during Easterly storms and Spring tides between the 3 and 7 March 2018.
	Resolved – (a) Members noted the report and thanked officers for their efforts during the ‘Wash up’ event. (b) The Chief Officer draft and circulate an Authority response to the Environment Agency’s salmon licensing proposals.
	The meeting closed at 12:45.