



**Boston Advisory Group meeting:** 1900-2100 Thursday 9<sup>th</sup> November 2017

Boston Witham Sailing Club, 8 Witham Bank W, Boston PE21 8PP

- Welcomes/introductions

- Apologies

- Previous minutes/matters arising

**1. Managing Fisheries in Marine Protected Areas**

- Development of fisheries management in Marine Protected Areas
- Community Voice Method project update
- Marine Protection update

**2. Marine Management Organisation:** introduction to the BAG

**3. Natural England**

- English Coastal Path
- Conservation Advice Package
- Offshore windfarms
- Wildfowling consents

**4. Environment Agency updates**

**5. Coastal Site Manager's updates**

**6. WNNMP updates**

- a. Communications, Promotion and Outreach
- b. Recreational Disturbance: dog walking
- c. Research and education: the broader values of Marine Protected Areas
- d. Relevant Authority support

**7. Date of the next meeting(s)**

**8. AOB**

## **Managing Fisheries in Marine Protected Areas: Eastern IFCA**

### **Development of fisheries management in Marine Protected Areas**

#### The Wash and North Norfolk Coast

Eastern IFCA is progressing its assessment of the brown shrimp fishery in the Wash and remains in the process of developing management measures for this fishery. This work has presented considerable difficulties, primarily because of the low level of evidence available to inform the assessment, however remains a high priority for the marine science team. Eastern IFCA officers are continuing to maintain close dialogue with Natural England as the assessment is progressed; further engagement with stakeholders will be undertaken in the development of revised management measures.

#### **Community Voice Method (CVM) Project Update**

The Marine Conservation Society have produced the final CVM report. This is due to be published on the Eastern IFCA website shortly. The next stage in the process will be producing an Action Plan, which will communicate how we will address the 253 actions and issues highlighted in the CVM process and will detail how Eastern IFCA intend to embed the lessons learnt into everyday work

Student Eleanor Kowalska O'Neil is still working on her project on what young sea users think of Marine Protected Areas, if anyone is interested in participating at the last minute (it would still be great to hear from young fishers, recreational anglers, RNLI, NGOs, people involved in tourism, etc.) please contact Sandra Cowper from Eastern IFCA at [sandracowper@eastern-ifca.gov.uk](mailto:sandracowper@eastern-ifca.gov.uk) or by telephone at 01553 775321.

#### **Eastern IFCA Marine Protection Update**

##### Wash Fishery Order Licence Fees

Eastern IFCA commits a significant resource to undertake research, management and enforcement to enable a cockle fishery within The Wash, one of the most heavily designated sites in the UK. Eastern IFCA currently recoups circa 7% of the cost to the public purse in licence fees. As a consequence of austerity and as a reflection of the use of public money to effectively subsidise this fishery, Eastern IFCA is increasing licence fees to achieve 50% cost recovery by 2020. To achieve this, the increase would be from £330 (current licence fee) to £1375. Impacts on the industry are considered in an Impact Assessment and indicate that impacts on the industry will be small in the context of average earnings from the annual cockle fishery. Eastern IFCA undertook a formal consultation regarding the increase in licence fees, which closed on the 18th October 2017 and the results will be used to refine the associated impact assessment.

The current impact assessment and rationale for the increase are available on the Eastern IFCA website (<http://www.eastern-ifca.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/website-info.pdf> and <http://www.eastern-ifca.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/Impact-Assessment.pdf>).

##### Wash Fishery Order Review – Regulations, fisheries management plan and policies

Eastern IFCA is reviewing the current regulations, management plan and policies associated with the WFO. The intention is to update these to reflect contemporary practices and provide more clarity to fishers. Further dialogue with the industry will be undertaken to inform this work but consultation is pending further dialogue with Natural England regarding the associated Habitat Regulations Assessment.

## Crab and Lobster Measures

Eastern IFCA has been assessing the crab and lobster fisheries within the district for several years. These assessments have indicated that both fisheries are operating at or above maximum sustainable yield. In addition, the industry has raised concerns regarding the level of effort, the small size of crabs and the need for escape gaps in pots. The Authority has agreed that management is required to protect stock sustainability in the long-term and Eastern IFCA will be informally seeking the views of the industry to inform what measures will be most effective. This will also include discussions regarding the outcomes of the Cromer Shoal MCZ assessment which is currently underway.

## Permitting schemes (response to concerns raised regarding enabling young fishers to enter fisheries)

The management of fisheries often require an ability to manage the levels of effort and permit schemes (and licences) are an effective means of doing this. However, where the number of permits are limited this can often make it difficult for new fishers to enter a fishery, particularly when considering track record.

Eastern IFCA seeks to balance the needs of all within the fishery and looks to support different business models. One particularly difficult aspect of this is balancing the protection of current businesses against the ability for new/young fishers to join. This has been a key consideration with regards to whelk and shrimp management. Whelk permits are not currently limited but could be if needed. Similarly, initial proposals for shrimp management included an unlimited permit system where effort was controlled through closures during the year in accordance with a 'threshold model'. We also understand that there are parts of the industry in favour of limiting the number of permits and that this is based on track record. All views will be considered when developing future management measures.

## **Natural England update**

### Coast Path - Hunstanton to Sutton Bridge

We have a route to propose for 80% of the length. We are still in discussions with a few landowners about the preferred route and the impact on protected areas. We can't therefore give a publication date but it is unlikely to be for a year.

### Coast Path - Sutton Bridge to Skegness

Proposals for the Sutton Bridge to Skegness stretch are now planned to be published by the end of December 2017. As expected, the proposed route will follow the line of the outer seabank for almost the entire length as the assessment for sensitive features has identified suitable measures that can be incorporated into the trail to avoid any significant disturbance to wildlife.

### Conservation Advice

The conservation advice packages for The Wash and North Norfolk Coast EMS were updated following an invitation to comment. The formal packages were published in September and are now available online at the following page: <http://designatedsites.naturalengland.org.uk/>

### Offshore windfarms

We have undertaken a site visit with the MMO and DONG Energy on 20<sup>th</sup> September. During this site visit it was agreed the Unit 18 Terrington Marshes would be changed to unfavourable condition due to both Lincs and RB cable installation causing damage greater than predicted. In addition to that it was identified that immediate remedial works are required May-July next year to address the pooled water adjacent to the sea

defence at RB cable corridor. This will involve infilling the pools with locally sourced sediment from reclaimed land. There is an issue with macro algae that needs to be addressed under the Water Frame Work directive.

We are working with MMO, DONG Energy on the cable reburial works in The Wash using a mass flow excavator. We believe that this is near conclusion and the works are likely to happen soon. We are supportive of this approach as it will hopefully avoid the need for rock armouring in the future.

We have had two further operation and maintenance marine licence requests for the life time of the RB projects that we are currently considering. Please note that this doesn't included the saltmarsh area, but does include the cockle beds.

## **Minutes from the meeting**

### **Attendees:**

Project Manager	Sam Lew
Chair	Bryan Bowles
Deputy Chair/NFU	Andrew Roughton
Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust	Tammy Smalley
Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust	Kev Wilson
Eastern IFCA	Stephen Thompson
Eastern IFCA	Lisa
MMO	Caley McIntosh
Boston Borough Council	Peter Udy
Boston Belle	Rodney Bowles
Wildfowlers	Tim Bee
	Peter Clayton
	Tom Holland
Secretary	Rachel Marriott

### **Apologies:**

Wildfowler	Tony Ashton
RSPB	John Badley
Natural England	
Boston Witham Sailing Club	Ceri Morgan
RAF Holbeach	Christa Lawrence
Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust	Dave Miller

## **Welcome and apologies:**

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and apologies were given.

## **Minutes of the last meeting agreed:**

The minutes of the last meeting were agreed, with some amendments to the section on RAF Holbeach and wildfowling.

## **1.0 Managing Fisheries in Marine Protected Areas**

### **1.1 Development of fisheries management in Marine Protected Areas**

#### The Wash and North Norfolk Coast

Eastern IFCA is progressing its assessment of the brown shrimp fishery in the Wash and remains in the process of developing management measures for this fishery. This work has presented considerable difficulties, primarily because of the low level of evidence available to inform the assessment, however, it remains a high priority for the marine science team. Eastern IFCA officers are continuing to maintain close dialogue with Natural England as the assessment is progressed; further engagement with stakeholders will be undertaken in the development of revised management measures.

EIFCA have experienced difficulties in getting hold of the right information so that they can deliver the management measures for the priority brown shrimp fishery. Cockle yields have not been as good this year (2017) in comparison to the two previous bumper years, and there has been less meat in the shell. Anecdotally, the water this year has been remarkably clear, which may suggest that reduced plankton has caused the reduced yield. Bryan asked about the license fees. Stephen commented that license fees are increasing to cover increased management costs. The Authority decides how the money is spent. They need to have very good scientific evidence to support allowing the fishing to go ahead in such a heavily designated and protected area. The enforcement aspect also needs funding support (discussed in more detail later).

### **1.2 Community Voice Method (CVM) Project update**

The Marine Conservation Society have produced the final CVM report. This is due to be published on the Eastern IFCA and WNNMP [website](#) shortly. The next stage in the process will be producing an Action Plan, which will communicate how we will address the 253 actions and issues highlighted in the CVM process and will detail how Eastern IFCA intend to embed the lessons learnt into everyday work and into future management techniques.

Student Eleanor Kowalska O'Neil is still working on her project on what young sea users (aged 18-30) think of Marine Protected Areas, if anyone is interested in participating at the last minute (it would

still be great to hear from young fishers, recreational anglers, RNLI, NGOs, people involved in tourism etc.) please contact Sandra Cowper from Eastern IFCA at [sandracowper@eastern-ifca.gov.uk](mailto:sandracowper@eastern-ifca.gov.uk) or by telephone on 01553 775321.

### **1.3 Eastern IFCA Marine Protection update**

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### Permitting schemes (response to concerns raised regarding enabling young fishers to enter fisheries)

The management of fisheries often require an ability to manage the levels of effort and permit schemes (and licenses) are an effective means of doing this. However, where the number of permits are limited this can often make it difficult for new fishers to enter a fishery, particularly when considering track record.

Eastern IFCA seeks to balance the needs of all within the fishery and looks to support different business models. One particularly difficult aspect of this is balancing the protection of current businesses against the ability for new/young fishers to join. This has been a key consideration with regards to whelk and shrimp management. Whelk permits are not currently limited but could be if needed. Similarly, initial proposals for shrimp management included an unlimited permit system where effort was controlled through closures during the year in accordance with 'threshold model'. We also understood that there are parts of the industry in favour of limiting the number of permits and that this is based on track record. All views will be considered when developing future management measures.

## **2.0 Marine Management Organisation: introduction to the BAG**

Caley introduced herself to the group as the new MMO officer in King's Lynn. The MMO would like to have a greater presence at the advisory groups to obtain relevant feedback for their projects. The Norfolk Vanguard consultation will be taking place in December.

## **3.0 Natural England update**

Natural England would like to submit apologies for being unable to attend the current advisory group meeting. As you may or may not be aware there has been a great deal of change within the local team with several members of staff changing roles, locations and of leaving the organisation. As a consequence although we are stretching current resources as far as we can, not all meetings can be attended.

We are recruiting to the roles as soon as possible and hope to have people in post in the first quarter of 2018. As a consequence any applications to shoot or licence renewals are unlikely to be processed before this time.

### **3.1 Coastal path**

#### Hunstanton to Sutton Bridge

We have a route to propose for 80% of the length. We are still in discussions with a few landowners about the preferred route and the impact on protected areas. We can't therefore give a publication date but it is unlikely to be for a year.

There have been issues in the progress of the coastal path around North Norfolk surrounding access at Sandringham.

### Sutton Bridge to Skegness

Proposals for the Sutton Bridge to Skegness stretch are now planned to be published by the end of December 2017. As expected, the proposed route will follow the line of the outer sea bank for almost the entire length as the assessment for sensitive features has identified suitable measures that can be incorporated into the trail to avoid any significant disturbance to wildlife.

At Gibraltar Point they are looking at using the existing bridge. The Lindsey Marsh Drainage Board have come to an agreement regarding the coastal path. Due to right of access for the boats a new bridge cannot be installed that would deflect visitors away from Jackson's Marsh, an area where visitors have not previously had access too. Currently visitors are kept to the east of Jackson's Marsh on the footpath, meaning the waders are undisturbed. They are planning to mitigate potential disturbance by having the path follow the flood bank, and there will be no 'spreading room' allowed. It was mentioned that there were already issues on Gedney Marsh. The team at Gibraltar Point are looking at what can be included in an exclusion zone (except for traditional uses i.e. wildfowling), while Natural England are looking at what can be done to mitigate bird disturbance. The path will be moveable in negotiation with Natural England to accommodate, for example, sensitive breeding areas for little terns, roosting hen harriers or issues such as crumbling cliffs, unless it follows an existing PROW, which is inflexible.

How are visitors going to be managed? There are already issues at Gedney Marsh and Friskney with dog walkers and dogs off lead wandering beyond the paths (to be discussed later in the meeting).

### **3.2 Conservation advice package**

The conservation advice packages for the Wash and North Norfolk Coast EMS were updated following an invitation to comment. The formal packages were published in September and are now available online at <http://designatedsites.naturalengland.org.uk/>

Bryan comments that he hopes the younger generation of staff will listen and take note to the older generations experience and local knowledge.

### **3.3 Offshore windfarms**

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### **3.4 Wildfowling consents**

The National Wildfowling Consultation – guidance review – is running until 1 December and represents a desire within Natural England to work more closely with Wildfowling Groups in relation to assessing consents and license applications in addition to understanding any changes to wildfowl populations at a local level.

The purpose of the survey is not to add further complications or consents but rather to afford greater input and influence from wildfowling groups to changes the NE are looking to make to the standard guidance. It is hoped that the result will be an improved system, healthy and sustainable bird populations and better working relations for all.

There is now a PDF detailing all of the questions within the survey available at the beginning of the survey to allow adequate consideration of replies before starting. Unfortunately the way the survey is set up it is not possible to move back through the survey once it has been started but it is possible to cancel and restart.

## Requests for consent

Any requests for consent currently or soon to be submitted may be paused in their processing pending the appropriate allocation of staff. It is important to note that in order to properly assess the levels of wildfowling on a site, full bag returns are required for all of the group's activities as a part of the evidence base as previously highlighted by Catherine Collop and Anna Millard.

The expectation is that there will be decisions made in time for the season beginning 1 September 2018. This should then allow production/consultation of relevant management plans and use of any newly amended guidance after the national consultation project.

Catherine has left Natural England. There has been a national survey on wildlife surveys, where they are going to look at details on a local level. Clubs have managed wildfowling responsibly for decades. They will continue to respond officially through the clubs. There are no NE staff available to continue with this project currently. Wildfowling has caused no detrimental effects to the site or the birds, and have records going back to 1985 to support this. Sam asked what the wildfowling response to the last survey question might be – do you think any other activity/feature should be monitored? The answer was recreational pressures. Wildfowling could support this process by providing their data to Natural England. Sam suggests that NE propose what data they need to fill in the gaps in their knowledge. The wildfowling commented that they have already shared this information with NE. Peter Rushmere set up the Incident Recording system that worked well but it hasn't kept up the same momentum recently. Catherine was the expert on this topic and it is a great shame that she has left NE, but Sam would like to follow this up.

Kev asked how the wildfowling managed where on the marsh they are allowed to go? Most clubs have their own rules, for example, they don't go on the mud but do go on the green marsh. They also have their own 'no go' zones, and cause limited disturbance. They warden in thoroughly, manage and shoot responsibly. They do not wish to lose their shot gun licenses through poor management, so ensure they do things responsibly.

## **5.0 Coastal Site Management**

### **5.1 Gibraltar Point**

Gibraltar Point and Saltfleetby NNR are currently undertaking their management plan summit with Natural England. They are classed as one SAC to protect their salt marsh and sand dunes with sea buckthorn. On the open coast there is no intervention from grazing and is a very healthy, dynamic area. The discussions have focused on the sand dunes. The management plan will be completed by next spring (2018).

Bulldog bank, that separated the salt and fresh water, was breached in the 2013 storm surge. Prior to the storm surge, it was surveyed that there were 30,000 southern marsh orchids on

Freshwater Marsh, with 30 species/m<sup>2</sup> surveyed in 2013. The Environment Agency has made the decision not to reinstate Bulldog Bank as a form of flood defence. They have reinforced the section of the bank near the golf course. A new stewardship funding feasibility study has been approved to investigate removing the bank and returning to an intertidal habitat, where the tide will irrigate the slacks again. There is a conflict of interest with the golf course. HR Wallingford have secured the contract. The LWT had to exclude the centre of the reserve from the new stewardship scheme until the feasibility study is complete, which they want to do as soon as possible. They will need a phase two stewardship scheme as a result. They will test four scenarios to ensure the protection of the golf course and nearby houses.

Stephen commented that the perception is that the sea is going to come in much closer but the reality is that it is not going to be big waves. The repurposing of the marsh is quite unusual, but it still has the structure of the creeks, so it will possibly return to what it was quite quickly. It is important to monitor the process closely. Can the company do this for the LWT as the site managers do not have the capacity? Mitigation for the loss of habitat will be very important as they will be losing Freshwater Marsh.

South east of the golf course there were at least ten hectares considered to be at risk. It was covered in dune scrub, and NE funded its removal about 10 years ago at the same time Gibraltar Point was tasked with reducing scrub cover on the reserve. Last year that area got stock fenced so that they could manage it with a local grazer. This is an area that is adjacent to the northern edge of the reserve but isn't 'playable' area.

## **5.2 RSPB – Frampton and Freiston**

John Badley was unable to attend the meeting but Tammy gave an update as there have been a number of changes in staff – there is a new regional conservation manager for the Wash Area. Mike Jones is now the Wash Conservation Manager. Phil Pearson is the Senior Conservation Assistant. John has been covering Snettisham and Titchwell as Rob Lucking has been seconded to national.

## **6.0 WNNMP updates**

Sam has broken down the different work areas into five key themes, which has been reflected in all literature to make it consistent and easier to navigate.

### Protecting nature

This includes the following: the management scheme; the annual management plan where Sam has specified the duties of the relevant authorities along with the correct contacts, which will be updated every six months (Sam will send out a contact request). Sam would welcome feedback from the Boston Advisory Group in the New Year.

### Protecting culture

Advisory Group working

### Tourism and Recreational Use

Dog walking is a key theme, for example in extreme cases there have been examples of dogs on Holkham estate killing muntjac deer. Sam doesn't have a huge amount of resources so he is focusing on dog walking and recently held a very successful workshop which was well represented from all the different stakeholders. We need to proactively deal with the problems caused by dog walkers whilst not forgetting the benefits they bring. From the workshop a causality tree has been created. The next stage is working with a dog walking behavioural specialist to help tailor the mitigation strategy to create a sustainable dog walking campaign. By the end of this year Sam will have a clear idea of what this will look like. The way forward is of course dependent on funding.

Bryan commented that we need to make a provision for dog walkers as we are not going to get rid of them, dogs need to be walked somewhere. He agreed that the workshop was very useful and professional. The dog walking behaviour expert has a permanent contract now with Natural England. The question was raised 'Are the council going to re-open areas to dogs?' There has been a lack of a co-ordinated approach to managing the problem and we need to deal with this problem coherently across the region. Councils could open some areas they have previously closed as it would reduce some of the pressure on more sensitive areas. Councils have a clear idea of what the problem is with dog walking and amenities, but less understanding of the broader issues such as bird disturbance. Why is the coast seen as a lesser area? For example on heathland dogs need to be kept on a short lead (there is a legal definition) during the breeding season but this is not enforced on the coast. Peter Udy commented that the Boston Borough and South Holland Councils have already carried out surveys and altered their management plans.

The coast is seen as a dog friendly area, for example, at Holme, 75% of visitors come with dogs according to their chief ranger. Bar an exceptionally high tide, the exclusion zone at Gibraltar Point has proven to be very successful. The question was asked 'Do birds come back when the dogs are gone, and can we distinguish between disturbance caused by pet dogs and wild foxes?' Research suggests that abandoning nests due to dog disturbance is minimal but deemed unacceptable as it is a human-introduced disturbance. There has been some excellent data collected at the Humber by Footprint, looking at when birds are disturbed, if and when they return, and how long they are away from their nests. Natural England are asking the BBC from the HRA to try and map where the breeding areas etc. are to create sensitivity maps which can be overlaid with the Footprint ecology data to look at where people go – small adjustments to this can make a big difference.

Sam would like to be able to extend these maps to cover the areas around the Wash. Sam would like feedback from the wildfowling and the advisory groups to support this information.

Gibraltar Point is in the process of putting more signs out for the roosting waders in the north end of the reserve when the mudflats are submerged by the tide. Dawlish has made the first ever prosecution for bird disturbance by a dog walker to the roost. But it was agreed that signs alone don't work – we need a multi-faceted approach.

### Communications and outreach

The new website is now up and running. There is lots of information available, on aspects such as nature, partnerships and culture, including artists in the Wash. It is written in a way that can be understood by the general audience rather than experts only so that is accessible to all.

Sam reinstated Wash Week in 2017, where various events were held, and it was considered by all to be very successful. It was originally set up by Tammy as part of her role at WESG. Sam would like to have a theme for 2018, such as recreational management, food and local gastronomy, litter and pollution or coastal values. Please let Sam know if you have any ideas.

### Research and education: the broader values of Marine Protected Areas

Sam has been approached by Hull University to identify broader values of the coast. It is NERC funded and will involve working with a group of students. It will potentially look at the values of the salt marsh, including the economic, ecological, cultural and local understanding. Sam would like to work with the advisory groups to map out these zones. He would also like to hold workshops with users of the Wash so he can gain as much understanding as possible. Sam is going to have training on how to produce the satellite maps showing vegetation density. He will be in touch in the New Year about the workshops.

### **7.0 A.O.B.**

At Wrangle Sea Bank there has been an issue with the tender but works are still going ahead. They still need an HRA before they can start work. Bryan is not convinced.

Tammy would like to make the group aware that the House of Lords is undertaking an evidence review of rural communities – it includes all that created Natural England. Tammy is very suspicious as to why they would be reviewing this, as they put out the evidence request over the summer holidays when everyone is away, and is worried from a conservation point of view.

### **8.0 Date of the next meeting**

The following dates were agreed for the forthcoming meetings, to be held at the Boston Witham Sailing Club:

Thursday 8 March, 7-9pm

Thursday 12 July, 7-9pm

Thursday 8 November, 7-9pm