



## North Norfolk Advisory Group

The Wash and North Norfolk Marine Partnership

1900-2130, Thursday 19<sup>th</sup> July 2017

Sack House, Staithe Street, Wells-next-the-Sea, Norfolk, NR23 1AU

### - Welcomes/introductions

### - Apologies

### - Previous minutes/matters arising

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

- Development of fisheries management in Marine Protected Areas
  - a. The Wash & North Norfolk coast
  - b. Cromer Shoal MCZ
- Community Voice Method project update
- Eastern IFCA Marine Protection update

#### 2. Presentation on Common Law

#### 3. Natural England

- a. Conservation Advice Package
- b. English Coastal Path
- c. New designations
- d. Hornsea 3 offshore windfarm
- e. Wildfowling consents change

#### 4. Natural England: State of the North Norfolk Coast

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

#### 6. European Marine Site updates

- a. Communications, Promotion and Outreach
- b. Tourism and Recreational Disturbance
- c. Relevant Authority Support

#### 7. AOB

## **Eastern IFCA update**

### **1. Management of Fishing Activities in Marine Protected Areas**

#### **a. Progress to date: measures in place to protect MPAs: The Wash cluster MPAs**

All feature-fishing interactions have been assessed and are currently undergoing a review process.

#### **Shrimp management measures (shrimp trawling interactions with subtidal mud and subtidal mixed sediment):**

**Assessment conclusions:** Cannot rule out no adverse effect. Therefore, mitigation is required and will be applied via:

- Spatial closures (to protect most sensitive seabed areas)
- Effort management (via a new shrimp fishery permitting scheme).

Management of effort needs to occur outside the closures otherwise displacement could lead to increased efforts in this area.

We are also committed to considering technical innovation as part of future management measures in the shrimp fishery. We cannot rely on gear improvements alone to mitigate impacts at this stage but trials of new gear are being developed with the fishing industry (European funding has been secured for this) and could be a part of the solution in the future.

A full consultation will be undertaken before any fishery restrictions are implemented.

#### **b. Cromer Shoal Marine Conservation Zone**

Although there are nearly 20 European Marine Site designations in the Eastern IFCA district, this is our only Marine Conservation Zone. Eastern IFCA are continuing to progress the assessment of fishing activities in this site. The types of fishing gear used and the features of the site have been identified (see designation details at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/marine-conservation-zones-cromer-shoal-chalk-beds> ). We have also identified fisheries that could occur within the site but would have no impacts on site features. We are liaising closely with Natural England in relation to conservation advice for this site. Under Defra's "Revised approach to the management of fisheries in Marine Protected Areas", fisheries measures – if required – should be developed within two years of designation (for this site, January 2018). The assessments will inform whether we consider new fisheries measures to be required; if this is the case, measures will be developed in consultation with local stakeholders.

Natural England announced at the February NNAG meeting that a new feature was being considered for this site: Native oyster. Eastern IFCA's assessment will consider fishery interactions with this feature if it is designated, but the current work does not include this potential feature. Further information is required on the status and location of native oysters within the site.

### **2. Community Voice Method Project Update**

This was a joint project between:

- Eastern Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority (EIFCA) and;
- The Marine Conservation Society (MCS), with assistance from;
- The Wash and North Norfolk Marine Partnership (WNNMP).

The project sought to identify what people value about the coast and sea, what issues exist and what local marine managers (Eastern IFCA) could potentially do to resolve issues. It aimed to gather a broad spectrum of views, including those from people less used to participating in community meetings or consultation events.

A series of filmed interviews with local stakeholders and related workshops were held in EIFCA's district during 2016 (further background details about the CVM project can be found on the EIFCA's website: <http://www.eastern-ifca.gov.uk/>). We look forward to sharing the final report with you in August.

The initial raw data from the CVM workshops was considered by EIFCA when developing their 2017/18 Strategic Assessment, (an annual priority-setting exercise) available at: [http://www.eastern-ifca.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/Strategic\\_Assessment\\_2017\\_Final.pdf](http://www.eastern-ifca.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/Strategic_Assessment_2017_Final.pdf).

Following the publication of the CVM report, EIFCA aims to develop an action plan to address the **253 actions** identified by the CVM workshops, although we are very much applying the lessons we've learned through the CVM process to our ongoing working practices.

#### **Student CVM project extension**

EIFCA have been approached by a student from Plymouth University, Eleanor Kowalska O'Neil, who would like to do an extension of our CVM project focusing on 'the next generation'.

Eleanor's project is at an early stage and details haven't been confirmed – but it will seek to capture– ***what young sea users think of Marine Protected Areas***.

If you can think of any 'young folk' who might like to get involved please let Sandra Cowper at EIFCA know via email: [sandracowper@eastern-ifca.gov.uk](mailto:sandracowper@eastern-ifca.gov.uk) or by Tel: 01553 775321, it would be great to hear from e.g. young fishers, recreational anglers, RNLI, NGO's, people involved in the tourism sector etc, anyone from the 'next generation' with a marine interest who would be willing to take part in a filmed interview.

### **3. Eastern IFCA Marine Protection team**

A healthy relationship with local stakeholders and a thorough understanding of local fisheries is fundamental to successful fisheries management. The role of warranted Eastern IFCA officers (Inshore Fisheries & Conservation Officers or IFCOs) includes liaison with local fishermen; inspection of licences, catches and fishing gear; and the communication and enforcement of a suite of local, national and European regulations relating to fisheries and marine conservation.

In May 2017, Eastern IFCA updated its approach to Marine Protection, moving away from a single "Area Officer" for different parts of the district towards establishing two "Area teams". Previously IFCO Jason Byrne was responsible for Lincolnshire/The Wash, and IFCO Ady Woods for north and east Norfolk. Now, additional Marine Protection officers will be seen on the ground, gaining a closer insight to fishers and fisheries in their areas. IFCOs will work in one of two dedicated teams, covering:

- the West area (Lincolnshire coast, the Wash and West Norfolk) and
- the East area (Wells, East Norfolk and Suffolk Coast).

IFCOs are happy to explain their role further or answer specific fisheries/conservation questions, so please do interact with them on the coast or at our King's Lynn or Lowestoft offices, via (01553) 775321.

## Natural England Updates

### Conservation Advice Packages:

- Conservation Advice packages for the Wash and North Norfolk Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) and Special Protection Areas (SPAs) are now online.
- The 'invitation to comment' or consultation on these packages ended on Friday 23rd June and Natural England are now in the process of reviewing and addressing the comments that we received.
- Natural England held a seminar to talk through these conservation advice packages on Tuesday 13th June, prior to the end of the 'invitation to comment' period. Advisory group members were invited to this session and members all three advisory groups attended, and provided us with valuable feedback on the packages. The seminar brought to light a real need for an easy to follow, jargon-free guide to how to use the packages and this requirement has been fed back to our national team.
- Draft advice for Cromer Shoal Chalk Bed MCZ is due to be published online at the end of September 2017. This will be followed by an invitation to comment period.

### English Coastal Path

- We are still in the process of finalising the alignment between Thornham and Titchwell on the Weybourne to Hunstanton stretch.
- Once this has been established, we are aiming to publish the final report in the autumn, though at this stage we do not have a specific date set for this. I have been informed that Kevin Thatcher is on our distribution list and will receive an email from us when the report is published and the consultation period begins.
- A number of questions on the coastal path arose at the last AG meeting. The answers to these questions were published at the end of the meeting minutes, however if there are any further questions please try and get these to me prior to the meeting on 19th July, so that I can try and find out an answer for you.

### New designations (pSPA and MCZ)

- Consultation on the Greater Wash pSPA closed at the end of January and Natural England have been analysing and responding to stakeholders, as well as summarising all responses in a consultation report to Defra. We anticipate submitting our final recommendations to Defra following Natural England Board sign off, but the decision to classify the site is that of the Secretary of State. I'm afraid that we don't have any specific updates on when this may be.

For information, the Greater Wash pSPA will encompass areas of importance for non-breeding red-throated diver, common scoter and little gull, and will also incorporate the foraging area for tern species (common, sandwich and little) breeding within existing SPAs).

The new designation of most interest to members of the NNC Advisory Group will be the potential designation of an additional feature at Cromer Shoal Chalk Beds MCZ. This additional feature is native oyster.

If native oyster are designated at Cromer Shoal MCZ they will likely have a 'recover' objective (which means we would like to increase their numbers). This is mainly due to potential threats from cabling activities and

bottom-towed fishing gear (trawls and dredges), and means that there may be increased management for these activities.

- We submitted our pre-consultation advice to Defra for the rMCZs in Norfolk and Suffolk at the end of February, and they are now considering this and deciding which sites and features to put forward for public consultation. This consultation is planned for late summer this year, but we have been informed that there is a possibility of some slippage to this date due to Brexit.

### **Hornsea 3 Offshore Wind Farm**

- Preliminary environmental information for Hornsea 3 will be out for consultation at the end of July. Please register with the planning inspectorate as a consultee if you would like to be involved in this consultation.
- The developers have submitted a marine licence application to the MMO for geotechnical surveys to inform this development, but we are waiting to be consulted by the MMO on this.

### **Wildfowling consents change**

- There are no changes planned to existing consents, though some shooters are adopting voluntary measures as changes to their own consents.
- However, as consents are renewed or new ones granted, we will be asking for shooters not to wildfowl between the hours of 10am and 2pm. This measure gives any marsh some respite from shooting disturbance during the middle of the day and fits well with the notion of traditional and sustainable shooting.
- In future we will be asking for shooters to adopt a regular day of rest (as well as Sundays). Shooters may choose any day of the week they prefer but it must remain a constant through the season.
- The measures above will work alongside established controls such as limiting gun days, no shoot zones etc.
- All forms of disturbance remain a concern on the north Norfolk coast and NE is currently engaged in a project to understand these issues and reduce their potential impacts.

## Minutes from the meeting

**Date and time:** 1900 to 2130 on 19<sup>th</sup> July 2017

**Location:** The Sack House, Wells-next-the-Sea, Wells, Norfolk

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Attendees	Apologies
Kevin Thatcher – NNAG Chair	Estelle Hook – Norfolk Coast Partnership
Chris Palmer – NNAG Secretary	Kerys Whitton – North Norfolk DC Landscape Officer
Brian Everett – Common Rights	
Jason Pegden – Police Officer and Wildfowler	
Chris Cotton – Common Rights and Wildfowler	
Stephen Bocking – Common Rights	
Nicky King – Fisherman	
Richard Brazier - Fisherman	
Peter Bickle – Tourism and ex-fisherman	
Peter Terrington – Local resident and sailor	
Guy Warren – Wells Town Council	
Cyril Southerland - Fishermen	
Geoff Needham – Common Rights and Lifeboats	
Sam Lew – WNNMP Project Manager	
Scott Hardy – Natural England	
Ros Preston – Natural England	
Jen Love – Natural England	
Elise Quinn – E-IFCA	
Sandra Cowper – E-IFCA	
Liz Appleton – RSPB	
Victoria Egan – National trust	
Sarah Henderson – Holkham	
Kirsty – Norfolk Wildlife Trust	
Marie Strong – Norfolk CC	
Tracey Bayfield - Blakeney Parish Council	

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### Actions from this meeting:

- Action 1. Silting of mussel beds should be an item at the next meeting
- Action 2. E-IFCA to provide a clear brief and background to decision making on the absence of evidence
- Action 3. E-IFCA to provide a clear brief and background to the decision making on permits
- Action 4. E-IFCA to provide information on their approach to maintain a viable industry for young fishers
- Action 5: an NE lead for the coastal path should be invited to the next meeting.
- Action 6: SL will register share details of how to register as individuals for Hornsea 3 consultations
- Action 7: SH's presentation on the State of the NN coast project to be sent out with the minutes.

### 1. Minutes of previous meeting and matters arising:

Natural England legal advice has been sent out BE and SL  
CC to do a brief report on Common Rights.

Sediment: NE says there is no evidence that directly links sediment loading at Morston to dredging at Wells Harbour.

PT: there is circumstantial evidence linking silting of mussel beds at Morston and Wells Harbour dredging but there was no monitoring in process.

Action 1. Silting of mussel beds should be an item at the next meeting

### 2. Managing fisheries in Marine Protected areas:

**Progress to date: measures in place to protect MPAs: The Wash cluster MPAs:** all feature-fishing interactions have been assessed and are currently undergoing a review process.

**Shrimp management measures (shrimp trawling interactions with sub tidal mud and sub tidal mixed sediment):** Cannot rule out no adverse effect. Therefore, mitigation is required and will be applied via:

- Spatial closures (to protect most sensitive seabed areas)
- Effort management (via a new shrimp fishery permitting scheme).

Management of effort needs to occur outside the closures otherwise displacement could lead to increased efforts in this area.

We are also committed to considering technical innovation as part of future management measures in the shrimp fishery. We cannot rely on gear improvements alone to mitigate impacts at this stage but trials of new gear are being developed with the fishing industry (European funding has been secured for this) and could be a part of the solution in the future.

A full consultation will be undertaken before any fishery restrictions are implemented.

#### **Cromer Shoal Marine Conservation Zone:**

Although there are nearly 20 European Marine Site designations in the Eastern IFCA district, this is our only Marine Conservation Zone. Eastern IFCA is continuing to progress the assessment of fishing activities in this site. The types of fishing gear used and the features of the site have been identified (see designation details at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/marine-conservation-zones-cromer-shoal-chalk-beds>).

We have also identified fisheries that could occur within the site but would have no impacts on site features. We are liaising closely with Natural England in relation to conservation advice for this site. Under Defra's "Revised approach to the management of fisheries in Marine Protected Areas", fisheries measures – if required – should be developed within two years of designation (for this site, January 2018). The assessments will inform whether we consider new fisheries measures to be required; if this is the case, measures will be developed in consultation with local stakeholders.

Natural England announced at the February NNAG meeting that a new feature was being considered for this site: Native oyster. Eastern IFCA's assessment will consider fishery interactions with this feature if it is designated, but the current work does not include this potential feature. Further information is required on the status and location of native oysters within the site.

NK: how can you prove a negative? (a reflection on decision making to implement management on the absence of evidence).

SC: in effect it is "guilty before proven innocent". This is basis of the legislation on certain aspects of management.

Action 2. E-IFCA to provide a clear brief and background to decision making on effort restrictions based on the absence of evidence

PB – the few independent shrimpers don't have their opinions considered. E-IFCA preferentially give permits to the larger vessels over smaller independents.

Action 3. E-IFCA to provide a clear brief and background to decision making on permits

RB: "the big boys call the shots" and is it is difficult for young people to get into the industry.

Action 4. E-IFCA to provide information on their approach to maintaining a viable industry for young fishers

#### **Community Voice Method Project Update**

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SL: there will be four public showings of the CVM documentary during Wash Week at Gibraltar LWT, True's Yard, King's Lynn, The Green Britain Centre, Swaffham and Cley Marshes, NWT. It is a great opportunity for the wider public to understand the conflicts and issues about managing activities in the sea.

#### **Student CVM project extension**

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IFCOs are happy to explain their role further or answer specific fisheries/conservation questions, so please do interact with them on the coast or at our King's Lynn or Lowestoft offices, via (01553) 775321.

NK: it was better when there was one person for an area so people could build a relationship. This was also the first that they had heard of the change

SC: the new system gives E-IFCA organisational resilience when staff members cannot work or leave E-IFCA. It is also a very new change to E-IFCA working  
SL: proposed MMO attend NNAG meetings in future as there are two members of staff based at the E-IFCA office who are keen to build better working relationships. It was agreed that MMOs could attend future.  
NK: we've heard this before but often MMO just don't show up

### **3. Presentation on Common Rights:**

CC: made a presentation tracing the development of Common Rights from the early 1800s and how land was given to the commoners in Brancaster although it was recognised that common rights are different in different places.

In 1965 people had to register their common rights and this register is maintained by County Hall – different people have different rights. In Brancaster, there are freehold rights that are passed down in perpetuity. Some people, however, have sold parts of their rights; purchased by people throughout the country, especially by Kent Wildfowlers.

GN: in Holme, common rights cannot be sold and are connected to a property.

JP: there are frequent complaints about alleged abuses of common rights by Kent Wildfowlers

### **4. Natural England:**

#### **Conservation Advice Packages:**

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- The 'invitation to comment' or consultation on these packages ended on Friday 23rd June and Natural England are now in the process of reviewing and addressing the comments that we received.
- Natural England held a seminar to talk through these conservation advice packages on Tuesday 13th June, prior to the end of the 'invitation to comment' period. Advisory group members were invited to this session and members all three advisory groups attended, and provided us with valuable feedback on the packages. The seminar brought to light a real need for an easy to follow, jargon-free guide to how to use the packages and this requirement has been fed back to our national team.
- Draft advice for Cromer Shoal Chalk Bed MCZ is due to be published online at the end of September 2017. This will be followed by an invitation to comment period.

SL: Access to the new CAP will be on the WNNMP website. It will be accompanied by a jargon free guide provided by NE.

#### **English Coastal Path**

- We are still in the process of finalising the alignment between Thornham and Titchwell on the Weybourne to Hunstanton stretch.
- Once this has been established, NE are aiming to publish the final report in the autumn, though at this stage we do not have a specific date set for this. Kevin Thatcher is on the distribution list and will receive an email from us when the report is published and the consultation period begins.
- Many questions on the coastal path arose at the last AG meeting. The answers to these questions were published at the end of the meeting minutes, however if there are any further questions please try and get these to me prior to the meeting on 19th July, so that NE can try to find an answer.

PT: noted that it could be difficult to get hold of coastal path people.

Action 5: an NE lead for the coastal path should be invited to the next meeting.

GN: inquired whether there was funding available for disabled access to the path.

JL: does not believe there is funding available but will find out.

SB and PB: raised the issue of provision of public toilets and that people relieving themselves on the marsh  
SL: who is responsible and is there a map of toilet locations along the NN Coast?

### **New designations (pSPA and MCZ)**

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The new designation of most interest to members of the NNC Advisory Group will be the potential designation of an additional feature at Cromer Shoal Chalk Beds MCZ. This additional feature is native oyster.

If native oyster is designated at Cromer Shoal MCZ they will likely have a 'recover' objective (which means we would like to increase their numbers). This is mainly due to potential threats from cabling activities and bottom-towed fishing gear (trawls and dredges), and means that there may be increased management for these activities.

KT: noted that villages are built on oyster shells and that the presence of shells is not an indicator of a living population.

CS: noted how whelks had replaced oysters and then crabs – the last oyster boats were in 1909

NE submitted their pre-consultation advice to Defra for the rMCZs in Norfolk and Suffolk at the end of February, and they are now considering this and deciding which sites and features to put forward for public consultation. This consultation is planned for late summer this year, but we have been informed that there is a possibility of some slippage to this date due to Brexit.

### **Hornsea 3 Offshore Wind Farm**

- Preliminary environmental information for Hornsea 3 will be out for consultation at the end of July. Please register with the planning inspectorate as a consultee if you would like to be involved in this consultation.
- The developers have submitted a marine licence application to the MMO for geotechnical surveys to inform this development, but we are waiting to be consulted by the MMO on this.

KT: most people along the NN coast recognise the importance of the windfarms to energy generation and how it supports many local businesses. The NNAG would very much like to be kept in the loop about how Hornsea 3 develops.

Action 6: Sam Lew will register on the group's behalf and share details of how to register as individuals.

### **Wildfowling consents change**

- There are no changes planned to existing consents, though some shooters are adopting voluntary measures as changes to their own consents.
- However, as consents are renewed or new ones granted, we will be asking for shooters not to wildfowl between the hours of 10am and 2pm. This measure gives any marsh some respite from shooting disturbance during the middle of the day and fits well with the notion of traditional and sustainable shooting.
- In future, we will be asking for shooters to adopt a regular day of rest (as well as Sundays). Shooters may choose any day of the week they prefer but it must remain a constant through the season.
- The measures above will work alongside established controls such as limiting gun days, no shoot zones etc.

- All forms of disturbance remain a concern on the north Norfolk coast and NE is currently engaged in a project to understand these issues and reduce their potential impacts.

JP: registered opposition to a regular rest day as there are many rest days due to weather. Self-regulation should be considered in any consents changes.

KT: noted that leases were needed by 1 September but arrangements had been outsourced to a private company that was “dragging its feet”. However, if leases were not available in time there would still be permission to shoot.

NK: suggested that the public does more damage than wildfowling so why aren't there days when tourists aren't allowed? Agreed by all.

JL: noted that there is no regulation for the public.

BE: suggested that no regulations will affect Common Rights holders anyway.

CS noted the significant problem of dogs

SL: the WNNMP are building a strategy to start to deal with the dog walking problem but with a balanced approach: Love dogs, love nature.

## 5. State of the North Norfolk Coast:

SH outlined plans to report on the condition of the natural environment, issues and threats relating to that condition, from Hunstanton to Sheringham. This is an evidence gathering exercise and a report should be published early in 2018.

For further information contact Scott on 0208 2257914 [scott.hardy@naturalengland.org.uk](mailto:scott.hardy@naturalengland.org.uk)

NK: noted that these issues should have been resolved years ago and that if you wanted to resolve the problems of the North Norfolk Coast, Natural England should be disbanded.

BE: reminded Scott that Common Rights holders were stakeholders and should be considered in the project Action 7: SH's presentation on the State of the NN coast project to be sent out with the minutes.

## 6. Coastal Site Manager's updates:

**RSPB:** good breeding season at Titchwell. The trend in visitor numbers has been down for many years but have increased slightly in the last year to an estimated 78,000

GN: asked if there could be signs warning people of the dangers of getting cut off.

LA: RSPB give verbal warnings where possible and are putting up warning signs.

CS: noted the access of mussels at Titchwell and the cooperation between Common Rights holders, the RSPB and EIFCA. All agreed it was a great example of collaborative working between RSPB and local people.

**National Trust:** very difficult to get accurate numbers of visitors but hope to be able to share some baseline data at the next meeting.

PB: suggested that advice has been given to visitors to walking across the marsh and that it was very dangerous for them to do so.

VE: noted the problem of rats and the predation of terns by herring gulls at Blakeney Point. There is now a licence to kill herring gulls in limited numbers.

GN: noted that NT took down the public toilets and asked if there was funding available for public toilets on NT sites.

VE: There is not.

**Holkham:** visitor numbers are measured based on car park tickets sold – an increase from 222,000 in 2014 to 256,000 in 2016. Building work starts on the visitor centre in the autumn. Public toilets will be available.

**Norfolk Wildlife Trust:** the reserve is recovering after the inundation and breeding has been satisfactory. Only a third of visitors to the centre visit the reserve itself.

## **7. European Marine Site update:**

SL:

Relevant Authority support: the annual management plan is being reviewed. It demonstrates that all RAs are meeting their duties to the site. This will also make it clear who is responsible for what and may be of use to the AG. All information will be sent on in due course.

Communications and Promotion: the new brand and identity was presented to the group. Everyone liked it. The new website is at: <http://wnnmp.co.uk>

He also reported on Wash Week 2017 between 4 – 13 August. A week -long series of events celebrating local marine nature and culture. Flyers for Wash Week were distributed at the meeting.

Tourism and Recreation: SL is still waiting for the publication of the report reviewing the national strategy for managing visitor pressure and recreational disturbance.

The biggest recreational use is dog walking. The WNNMP is preparing a workshop to be hosted by Holkham to develop a campaign to start to deal with the problem of dog walking on The Wash and North Norfolk coast.

## **8. Other business:**

BE: the minutes of the previous meeting had not been properly dealt with earlier in the meeting. He said that he could find no mention of what he had said at the meeting in the minutes and that what people said at a meeting should be recorded in the minutes.

He pointed out that Natural England is responsible for Common Land and that the Minister is responsible for Natural England. If people have problems they should write to Michael Gove to stop any action contrary to the Commons Act.

He said that nothing could impact on Common Rights.

Cutting reeds is good for the environment and there should be no more nonsense about reed cutting being damaging to the environment.

He also asked if we could get a copy of the new Regulation 33 documentation – JL will see if that is possible.

Finally, he raised a letter that clarified that the Habitats Directive did not impact Common Rights.

## Natural England Feedback from the meeting

Q: Is there funding available for providing disabled access to the footpath at Holme?

A: Norfolk County Council are the local access authority responsible for Public Rights of Way in the Norfolk. I would be happy to forward your query onto them if you could supply me with a map showing the location of the path in question. Alternatively, you can contact them directly to enquire about the possibility of providing disabled access here. Their number is 0344 800 8020 If the footpath is part of the Norfolk Coast Path National Trail, the appropriate person to speak to would be Russell Wilson on 01603 223383 or 07827 985809 [russell.wilson@norfolk.gov.uk](mailto:russell.wilson@norfolk.gov.uk)

Q: What are the legal requirements for disabled access along the coast path?

A: Natural England is required to implement its coastal access duty in line with the Government's Coastal Access Scheme. Section 4.3.8 covers "Adjustments for disabled people and others with reduced mobility" The scheme can be accessed at this link

<http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/5327964912746496>

This recognises that there can be practical limitations constraining the ability to make the trail suitable for disabled access. Instead it requires us to align the trail in such a way as to make it accessible to the widest range of people possible, avoiding the creation of unnecessary new barriers to access and where appropriate to propose adjustments to make it accessible for people with reduced mobility. We have been working with Russell Wilson, Trails Officer at Norfolk County Council to achieve this.

Q: Once the coastal path is in place is there any funding available for converting it for disabled access?

A: We endeavour to develop proposals that are accessible to the widest range of people possible and seek to remove any existing barriers with associated costs met at establishment stage. Along the Weybourne to Hunstanton stretch our proposals include recommendations for removal of a stile along the board walk at Brancaster along the existing Norfolk coast path.

Once a coast path is in place the access authority receives a maintenance grant who prioritise where the monies are spent each year along the trail.

Q: Can a map of disabled access points and toilets be provided for existing stretches of the coastal path?

Norfolk County Council manage and maintain the existing Norfolk Coast Path National Trail. Please contact Russell Wilson for this information on 01603 223383 or 07827 985809 or email him at [russell.wilson@norfolk.gov.uk](mailto:russell.wilson@norfolk.gov.uk)

Q: Concerns were raised around disturbance in spreading room

Natural England's statutory purpose is to conserve, enhance and manage the natural environment for the benefit of present and future generations. In keeping with this we aim to strike the right balance in each circumstance between securing opportunities for the public to enjoy the natural environment, and ensuring appropriate protection of it when developing our proposals for the England Coast Path.

In relation to 'European sites' such as Special Protection Areas or Special Areas of Conservation, we comply with all relevant legal obligations to protect the key sensitive features in question, and we share and publish an audit of how we will achieve this alongside our Coastal Access Report setting out our proposals for improving coastal access.

Q: Concern was expressed about Health and Safety of walkers in relation to spreading room.

We recognise that some areas of spreading room such as saltmarsh and mudflat are unsuitable for walkers and pose dangers that are not apparent to many visitors. We will therefore not normally align the trail across these areas and have the power to restrict public access to them where we feel this is necessary, using notices on the ground explaining these restrictions to users as required. The effect of this would be to maintain the status quo, i.e. not introducing public access where it would be unsuitable.

Q: Is there standard width requirements for the coastal path?

A: The legislation which enables the creation of The England Coast Path secures access rights to the land 2 metres either side of the route shown on the map by default. This allows for the trail to be 4 metres wide

under ordinary circumstances, enabling two people to walk comfortably abreast. However, in practice, we often adopt existing paths and tracks that are wider or narrower than this.

Q: Concerns were raised about the England Coast Path encouraging more visitors to areas that are already struggling to cope with the existing volume of tourists.

A: We share your concern about the potential for negative impacts from visitor pressure on parts of the Norfolk Coast, and are committed to working in partnership with stakeholders to address this. Whilst it may initially seem counterintuitive we believe the careful provision of well managed public access can be an important component in this.

The England Coast Path builds on the existing Norfolk Coast Path National Trail opened 30 years ago between Cromer and Hunstanton. It will extend this provision around the entire Norfolk coastline by 2020 forming part of the 2700-mile trail around the English coast. By extending the National Trail we hope to reduce pressure on existing sites and introduce people to other great areas they can enjoy and which would welcome the economic benefit more visitors might bring. At the same time, we are also working to realise the opportunities the creation of the England Coast Path offers to better manage access to sites under most visitor pressure and reduce the impact of this on habitats and species.

Q: There were concerns that the need for facilities associated with this (e.g. toilets) had not been considered.

A: The duty placed on Natural England's under the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009 does not extend beyond the provision of the coast path and associated margin for open air recreation on foot. Local Authorities take on the responsibility for the ongoing management and maintenance of the Coast Path and we offer grant funding to support this.

In Norfolk, this responsibility sits with the Norfolk Trails Partnership led by Norfolk County Council. They work hard to secure enhancements to the trail corridor working with both public and private sector partners and leveraging in external funding. Their current improvement and delivery framework can be accessed through this link.

[http://www.nationaltrail.co.uk/sites/default/files/peddars\\_way\\_and\\_norfolk\\_coast\\_path\\_improvement\\_and\\_delivery\\_framework\\_april2016\\_0.pdf](http://www.nationaltrail.co.uk/sites/default/files/peddars_way_and_norfolk_coast_path_improvement_and_delivery_framework_april2016_0.pdf)