

WASH MANAGEMENT SUB-COMMITTEE

Minutes of the Wash Management Sub-Committee meeting held on **Wednesday 27th May 2009** at 1030 hours.

PRESENT

Councillor A Turner	Lincolnshire County Council	
Councillor S Williams	Lincolnshire County Council	
Councillor Baxter	Norfolk County Council	
Councillor R Ward	Suffolk County Council	
R Brewster	DEFRA Appointee	
R J Garnett	DEFRA Appointee	
N A Lake	DEFRA Appointee	
S Williamson	DEFRA Appointee	
M Yates	DEFRA Appointee	
M R Mander	Clerk & Chief Fishery Officer	
Conor Donnelly	Natural England)
Duncan Vaughan	Deputy Clerk & Fishery Officer – ESFJC)	Present by Invitation

APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Bakewell (LCC) and Rye (NCC) and Mr Southerland (Defra Appointee).

DECLARATIONS OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS

Messrs Brewster, Lake, Garnett and Williamson declared interests in the items on the agenda as they were lay and WFO Entitlement holders.

WM09/06 MINUTES OF THE WASH MANAGEMENT SUB-COMMITTEE MEETING HELD 25th FEBRUARY 2009

There were no matters arising. Members agreed to sign the minutes as a true record of proceedings.

WM09/07 CLERK'S REPORT ON THE OFFICERS PROPOSED MANAGEMENT MEASURES OF THE HOLBEACH MUSSEL BED

The Clerk reminded members that they had previously discussed the opening of a small bed of mussels on Holbeach sand, for relaying. At the time it had been thought a more suitable time for this to take place would be during the spring/summer, consequently the bed had been resurveyed and the members were asked to reconsider opening the bed for relaying purposes. All Wash Entitlement Holders had been consulted for their views on whether or not to open the bed, the majority of responses received had been in favour of opening the bed. It was felt that if the mussels were left they could become encrusted and be of no benefit to the harvestable fishery.

The Clerk also advised that the opening of this bed may provide the only opportunity for fishing during June as the handwork cockle fishery would have to be closed at the end of May as a further assessment of the stock needed to be carried out.

Mr Brewster expressed concern at the closure of the cockles. If they were to be closed he

felt it would put a lot of pressure on a small bed of mussels, which would be dangerous for the vessels fishing. He was particularly concerned as it was only a small quota which would probably only last a week leaving the industry without a public fishery to pursue for the remainder of June.

The Clerk advised that the situation was different this year due to the Committee listening to the industry's concerns regarding the cockle survey data and therefore requesting that the surveys be carried out closer to the 1st July. Subsequently the handwork cockle fishery opening and closing would not be as streamlined as it had been in previous years. Once the surveys had been completed and the data analysed it would still be necessary to get Natural England's consent before the fishery could open. The Clerk was, however, optimistic it would be possible the handwork fishery would not have to wait until the opening date of the dredge fishery.

Councillor Williams returned to discussing the mussel fishery and questioned what the breakage rate was like for relaid mussels and would it not make sense to handwork the mussels to allow more vessels an opportunity to fish them. The Clerk advised that the method of dredging mussels was less damaging than for cockles and the breakage rate was far less. Unfortunately it would not be sensible to open the relaying fishery to handworking only as the bed was on a bombing range and therefore only open at night and weekends and handworking mussels was very demanding physically in muddy conditions.

Mr Donnelly advised that NE were able to review an Appropriate Assessment relatively quickly, but added that with regard to Holbeach sand which was still dominated by juvenile stocks it may be viewed as a suitable source to leave in situ and allow to become more established and become a benefit to the fishery in the future. The Clerk felt that the bed was more appropriately viewed as a source of seed. If sufficient remained to allow the bed to rejuvenate, it was a better option than leaving it to grow as it would become a mix of year classes which would render it unviable for fishing. Mr Brewster felt the bed should be fished as despite what had been reported the bed was in a vulnerable site which could be adversely affected by easterly winds.

Mr Lake questioned why the quota was not 8 tonnes and whether they could be kept in the hold rather than in bins, boxes or bags as stated in the regulation. The Clerk advised that with such a small quota it was necessary to monitor it carefully and it was more accurate to do this using bins, boxes or bags than by making an assessment of how many were in a hold.

It was Resolved to agree to the Officers proposals regarding the relaying mussel fishery on the Holbeach bed.

TAC:	175 tonnes
METHOD OF FISHING:	Dredging 158 tonnes Handworking 17 tonnes
OPENING DATE:	1st June 2009
OPENING TIMES:	Dredge :5 days/wk –Monday to Friday Handworked: 7 days/week
BEDS OPEN TO FISHING:	Holbeach as defined on the chart
CATCH RETURNS:	To be sent to the ESFJC office on a weekly basis
MAXIMUM DAILY QUOTA:	4,000kg to be contained in bags, boxes or bins

**Proposed: Councillor Baxter
4 votes in favour
0 against**

Seconded: Councillor Williams

WM09/08 CLERK'S REPORT ON TWO APPLICATIONS FOR LAY GROUND ON THE WRANGLE SAND IN THE WASH

Prior to the Clerk passing comment on these lays Mr Lake requested to make a comment. He advised that the King's Lynn Fishing Vessel Owners and Skippers Association had previously put in an objection to these lays on the ground that there was insufficient food supply to support any further stocks, however, in light of the new cockle bed found close to the end of the Boston river he asked that the objection be withdrawn.

The Clerk advised members there were concerns about the close proximity of naturally occurring cockle beds to the proposed lay ground. Mr Donnelly advised that an Appropriate Assessment of the area would be required, the key reason for this would be due to the impact on cockle beds, however he added there would also be concern regarding the food supply. Councillor Williams felt the Committee should not be granting any more lays until the food supply survey had been completed, he was however happy to put these to the top of a waiting list for discussion. The Clerk acknowledged that the possible problems relating to the food supply needed to be investigated but felt that if this proved to be the only problem with the lay application then if the result of the survey proved there was not a significant problem with the food supply then the lays could be granted without coming back to the Committee for further discussion. Mr Brewster felt it would be better to discuss the lays later once the food production trials had been completed.

Mr Williamson advised that he had received reports the previous day that the growth of the shellfish on his lays was exceptional, he felt that it was unfair that some industry members had lays whilst others had lodged their request for a lay a long time ago, he felt the issue of food production should be taken out of the equation whilst considering the lays being discussed during the meeting.

The Clerk did not feel the issue of food production had gone away. It was only a few weeks since the Committee had requested that an assessment should be made as it had been considered to be a potentially serious problem. He also advised that cockles on Holbeach, which in February appeared to be healthy were now gaping on top of the sand, and due to the low densities in the area he did not consider it was due to ridging out.

Members continued with discussion of the lays on Wrangle Sand. It was noted that the difficulties were not solely with food production, but also the close proximity to areas that has harboured significant cockle stocks.

It was Resolved that the proposed lays numbered WW1 & WW2 on Wrangle sand should not be granted as they may result in conflict between the layholders and the vessels participating in the regulated cockle fishery nearby.

Proposed: Councillor Williams

Seconded: Councillor Baxter

3 votes in favour

0 votes against

WM09/09 CLERK'S REPORT ON AN APPLICATION FOR LAY GROUND ON SCOTSMAN'S SLED SAND IN THE WASH

Members were advised that following consultation two responses had been received, opposing to the lay. The concerns raised were the potential lack of food supply, the lay encroached on historical cockle ground, and that the area was regularly fished by shrimp boats. The Clerk had already expressed his concerns regarding food supply but had no evidence to support the opinion that the lays coincided with areas important to both the cockle and shrimp fisheries. Both Messrs Garnett and Lake had shrimped in the area, and it was felt at low water it may be hard for a vessel to turn without encroaching on the proposed lay ground. Mr Garnett had also gathered cockles in the this area in the past.

It was Resolved that discussion of this lay ground should be deferred to allow time for further evidence to be sought relating to the potential shrimp fishery in the area.

**Proposed: Councillor Williams
4 votes in favour
0 votes against**

Seconded: Councillor Baxter

At this point it was considered whether or not Mr Lake should leave the room as the next item on the agenda was relevant to him personally. It was agreed that as he had declared an interest he would be able to stay but not vote. This approach has in line with the Joint Committee's Standing Orders.

WM09/10 CLERK'S REPORT ON THREE APPLICATIONS FOR LAY GROUND ON THE THIEF SAND IN THE WASH

The Clerk advised the area had been surveyed and the Senior Research Officer's report had concluded that only low densities of invertebrates were present in and around the proposed lays and that the introduction of lays would not adversely affect the designated features of the site through smothering, the only potential issue, common to all the lay applications, was with food supply. The only received objection to the lay applications had been on the same basis.

Mr Donnelly advised that the potential lay holders should be made aware that the introduction of these lays would create a large block of lay ground which had been shown to increase the likely use of the area by Eider Ducks. This issue would need to be considered when an Appropriate Assessment was submitted for the proposed activity.

It was Resolved that the granting of the proposed new lays TH9 & TH10 and the extension to TH6 should be delayed until it had been established that there would be no adverse impact on the localised food availability and a favourable response to the submission of an Appropriate Assessment was received from Natural England.

**Proposed: Councillor Baxter
4 votes in favour
0 votes against**

Seconded: Councillor Williams

WM09/11 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

COCKLES: There followed a discussion on the impact the closure of the handwork fishery at the end of May would have on the industry. It was felt it may put additional pressure on the shrimp fishery, as well as leaving the industry with no molluscan shellfish fishery to pursue for a month. The Clerk questioned whether the industry members did not feel the handwork fishery would benefit from being left to rest for a month. The general opinion was that whilst the cockles were being worked the cockles would grow more quickly. They also believed that if the handwork cockles were to be closed for a period of time it should be during March/April when they were spawning, not in June when the meats were increasing and the factories were ready to process them

RAZOR FISH: The Clerk advised that he had contacted Defra to enquire what was required to resurrect the experimental razor fishery. He was still awaiting a response.

There being no other business the Chairman took the opportunity to advise members that Councillor Baxter was not standing at the forthcoming elections and thanked him for his work on the Committee.

The meeting closed at 1145 hours.