

WASH MANAGEMENT SUB-COMMITTEE

Minutes of the Wash Management Sub-Committee meeting held on **Wednesday 15th August 2007**, at 1200 hours.

PRESENT

Councillor A Turner	Chairman - Lincolnshire County Council
Councillor D Rye	Norfolk County Council
Councillor R Ward	Suffolk County Council

R Brewster)	
R Garnett)	
N A Lake)	
C Southerland)	DEFRA Appointees
S Williamson)	
M Yates)	

M R Mander	Clerk & Chief Fishery Officer
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APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Bakewell (LCC), Baxter (NCC) and Williams (LCC).

DECLARATIONS OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS

Messrs Brewster, Garnett, Lake, Southerland and Williamson declared an interest in items on the agenda as they were all Wash fishermen.

WM07/06 MINUTES OF THE WASH MANAGEMENT SUB-COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 4th JULY 2007

As there were no matters arising, it was agreed to approve the minutes.

WM07/07 CLERK'S UPDATE ON THE WASH SUCTION DREDGE COCKLE FISHERY

The Clerk advised that the initial two weeks of the fishery had gone well. Approximately 650 tonnes had been taken from Daseleys Sand. Effort had also been directed at Holbeach Sand. Having walked on the sands the Senior Research Officer had noted that the areas of concern were quite messy but there were still one-year old cockles in the ground. With one third of the TAC already taken the Clerk would be monitoring the landings and if returns dropped below a reasonable rate then it may be necessary to close the fishery if it was considered too much effort was being put onto the grounds. If this scenario did arise the Clerk would write to the local Associations for their support. In the event that support was not unanimous it would be necessary to convene the Wash Management Sub-Committee again.

Mr Lake questioned why the Clerk had not taken action against vessels which had gone out of King's Lynn prior to the opening of the fishery, and come back laden with cockles. The Clerk was unable to comment as this was an ongoing legal situation. He did however state that the office were in receipt of reports of fishing in closed areas. However on occasions these had proved to be malicious and solely to enable the anonymous caller to illegal fish

themselves whilst the patrol boat was away investigating the report. Inevitably it is difficult for one patrol vessel to police all the vessels in the Committee's district 100% of the time.

The Clerk also added that he had received a report on the vessels in question and had ascertained that they were not fishing on Daseleys as had been reported.

Councillor Turner felt it was not prudent for members of the Committee to tell the Officers how to carry out their policing of the Wash. Enforcement duties should be left for them to organise.

WM07/08 CLERK'S REPORT ON THE APPLICATION FOR THE USE OF A VESSEL EXCEEDING 14m OVERALL LENGTH IN THE WASH

The Clerk advised members that vessels over 14m in length had received authorisations to fish for sub-littoral mussels on the Lincolnshire Coast. As a result of this it had been brought to his attention that these vessels were also relaying the stock in to lays within the Several Fishery, despite previous Committee resolutions stating that no vessel over 14m should work the private lays. The Clerk had passed this information on to the vessel owner in question who had immediately ceased using the vessels within the Several Fishery, however he had subsequently sent a request to the Clerk for the over 14m restriction to be relaxed.

The Clerk advised that having consulted Boston Fishermen's Association, they believed that under no circumstances should the restriction be relaxed as it could be seen as setting precedent. They felt the vessel size restriction of 14m was one of the most important elements in protecting the fisheries.

Concerns were expressed that modifications could be made which would mean the vessels could have far greater holding capacities. However, the Clerk reminded members that the Several Fishery lays were private undertakings and the Committee's decisions should not impinge on private business, providing it did not have a detrimental effect on the Regulated fishery.

Mr Lake felt that the 14m rule was sacrosanct and that to relax it would open a big loophole. He did not want Regulation No7 relaxed. Knowing the vessel was locally based Mr Garnett felt it should be given the opportunity to fish and wondered whether it was possible for a special derogation to be given.

The Clerk advised that a derogation would have to be made through the WFO lease for a layholding and all lay holders would be in a position to request a similar derogation. Potentially this could mean vessels from anywhere being able to have a piece of ground in the Wash with a derogation to use a large vessel to fish it. Mr Brewster agreed this was the basis for the decision made by the Boston Association. They were concerned that to set the precedent now would mean others making similar requests and slowly the gates for more problems were being opened.

Members discussed the matter in detail and many felt a great deal of sympathy for the vessel owner in question but ultimately that to safeguard the fisheries for the future the regulations should not be relaxed to operate this vessel to work on the private lays.

It was Resolved not to relax Regulation No 7 of the Wash Fishery Order 1992 in respect of the Several Fishery in the Wash.

Proposed : Councillor Ward

Seconded: Councillor Rye

Despite the decision having been made Mr Lake requested to know why the Clerk had allowed this vessel to continue transporting sub-littoral seed from the Lincolnshire Coast to private lays for a period of 3 months. The Clerk advised that he had not been aware of the activity until he was informed by letter, at which time he had contacted the vessel owner and the activity had ceased.

The Chairman did not feel the Committee were there to question the actions of the Clerk in this matter.

There being no other business the meeting closed at 1240 hours.