



Agenda Item No. B5

Success Criteria: 2, 3, 4, 5 & 6

By: Project and IFC Officer

To: Kent and Essex Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority – 22 January 2015

Subject: **BLACKWATER /CROUCH MCZ MANAGEMENT MEASURES AND RIVER ROACH ORDER**

Classification Unrestricted

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Summary: To report on progress in working towards the recovery of native oysters within the MCZ area and actions regarding the River Roach Oyster Fishery.

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## **Native oyster management within the Blackwater, Crouch, Roach and Colne MCZ area**

### 1. 2014 Native Oyster survey

Data collected during the August 2014 KEIFCA Native Oyster survey has now been fully assessed and a report has been produced. This survey covered 160km<sup>2</sup> of sub-tidal seabed with 235 samples taken. The estimated total populations of key species recorded was:

Native Oysters	58 tonnes
Gigas Oysters	138 tonnes
Slipper Limpet	1,330 tonnes
Empty oyster shells	5,963 tonnes
Empty slipper limpet	1064 tonnes

### 2. Annual Workshop

As reported to the last meeting the 2<sup>nd</sup> Native Oyster Restoration and Management Workshop was held at West Mersea on 12 November 2014.

This was a constructive and positive meeting with good attendance.

A total of 28 persons attended representing a number of interest groups.

Presentations were given by Natural England and KEIFCA regarding the current status of the project, what this means for native oysters and the findings of the recent oyster survey.

A presentation was also given by the Blue Marine Foundation who have shown an interest in being involved with the project.

The Workshop discussed issues relating to recommendations from its working group and approved to proceed with the following actions subject to more detailed planning, consideration of environmental impacts and completion of all procedural requirements: These include:

To name the project **Essex - Native Oyster Restoration Initiative**

- To proceed with a grant application to Veolia Environmental Trust for funding to lay cockle shell cultch in up to 4 sites so as to encourage improved native oyster settlement- and to monitor the effectiveness of this action
- To also continue with the cleaning of existing cultch by chain harrowing within defined sites and to also monitor effectiveness.
- To proceed with development of a web site as suggested.

### 3. Future Structure

Issues relating to this Initiative's management remit and structure were given consideration and it was agreed that proposals would be considered at the next Essex – NORI working group meeting which was held on the 21 January 2015.

### 4. Working Group Meeting 21 January 2015

As agreed at the Workshop, representation from the Blue Marine Foundation joined the Working Group.

The Initiative's Terms of Reference management remit and structure were discussed.

Proposals to formally record stock and oyster bed restoration work undertaken on a voluntary basis were also discussed.

An oral report will be given on the outcome of these discussions.

### **5. KEIFCA Formal record of restoration work**

It is proposed that a formal record will be maintained by KEIFCA of voluntary work undertaken to achieve restoration of native oyster populations and native oyster beds following guidelines and conditions agreed by KEIFCA and Essex – NORI (consultation with Natural England would be included via Essex- NORI).

This official record of voluntary work undertaken may be used, if subsequently agreed by KEIFCA, as criteria for decision making with regard to the future issue

of licences or permits to fish for native oysters in a sustainable manner once stocks have recovered. It is proposed that this scheme would be publicised and advertised in local newspapers so that all potential participants would be aware of it.

As specific management legislation has not yet been drafted, such a scheme would not infer any specific expectations or commitment by the Authority that such a record would be used as a criteria in decision making with regard to the future issue of licences or permits to fish for native oysters. The expectation of the Authority is that any criteria for the possible issuing of permits or licences to fish for native oysters would only be agreed by the Authority once detailed management measures or legislation had been submitted and discussed by the Authority.

## **6. Recommendation**

**The Authority is asked to approve proceeding with maintaining this formal record of voluntary work undertaken**

## **7. River Roach Oyster Fishery Order**

Leases were offered to all four previous lease holders for their acceptance and payment. These would be subject to the lease conditions and previously agreed Fishery Management Plan.

Two leases have been granted and other previous lease holders have indicated that they do not wish to take up new leases.

Leaseholders are now preparing the layings for future use.