



Agenda item B10

By: Chief IFC Officer

To: Kent and Essex Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority – 23 May 2017

Subject: Whelk management update

Classification **Unrestricted**

Summary:

This paper updates Members on the progress of the whelk legislation amended at the last meeting and on development of a research project with Bangor University.

Recommendations:

The Authority is asked to **NOTE** the correspondence between KEIFCA and the industry

The Authority is asked to **COMMENT** upon and **APPROVE** the joint project with Bangor University and further engagement with the Thames FLAG project

Feedback and letters from the fishing industry relating to the new package of whelk management measures

At the last quarterly meeting, the Authority agreed a package of whelk management measures under the whelk permit byelaw. Following the meeting letters were sent to the industry (to each of the thirty six 2016 permit holders) informing them of the decision and that the new measures would be enforce from 3rd April 2017. KEIFCA received the following correspondence from fishermen regarding the new management measures (Appendix 1). In conjunction to this Mr Craig also sent a copy of his letter to DEFRA and the Minister. Following Mr Craig's letter there was a discussion with DEFRA officials and KEIFCA sent a reply (Appendix 2). Following this exchange of letters additional information was sent to fishermen reiterating the need for compliance with the new management measures. To date twenty six permits have been issued for 2017/18 and officers have been enforcing the legislation.

Developing a KEIFCA, area specific, whelk aging and size of maturity project with Bangor University

As discussed at previous Authority meetings, although KEIFCA have been working with CEFAS and Universities there is a limited amount of fundamental whelk biological and stock information. Whilst we have applied for funding to the EMFF for a project that studies seasonal maturity within our district, gathering growth and maturity data from different areas in our district would help provide the much-needed local information to make decisions, whilst at the same time addressing local fishermen's concerns. To this end KEIFCA officers contacted Dr Hollyman, the national expert on whelk aging and assessing maturity, to see if we could develop a project. As fortune would have it, Dr Hollyman was already working on a project that studied exactly these variables in whelk populations along the Welsh coastline, and had a gap available in the summer where he could analyse three to four whelk populations from our district. Due to Dr Hollyman's schedule after this period he is starting a different project which he will be working on for a year or so.

Working collaboratively with local fishermen from the four different areas in our district we are looking to collect about 250 whelks over a range of sizes so that area specific growth curves and size of maturity can be calculated. Dr Hollyman has worked up the cost of this project which would cost £7,107 (plus vat). In addition to producing the data, Dr Hollyman has also agreed to present his findings to the local fishermen, including working practically in the field and going out on fishing boats. It is proposed that we would take this money from the research fund to cover the costs of this project (Appendix 3).

Medium and long-term whelk research plans

Effort has also been made in trying to support medium and longer-term developments and improvements in the local whelk industry starting with the formation of a Whelk Association which idea the Chief Officer discussed at the April Thanet Fisherman Association meeting. Discussions have also taken place with the Thames FLAG project and KEIFCA about funding a collaborative whelk project.

Recommendations:

The Authority is asked to **NOTE** the correspondence between KEIFCA and the industry

The Authority is asked to **COMMENT** upon and **APPROVE** the joint project with Bangor University and further engagement with the Thames FLAG project