

From: Will Wright, Chief Officer Kent and Essex IFCA

To: Kent and Essex Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority – 30 November 2017

Subject: **Whelk update**

Classification: **Unrestricted**

**Summary:**

This report will provide Members with the key findings to date of the results of the whelk project carried out with Bangor University and details of further analysis that will be undertaken by them. The report also informs Members of correspondence received regarding the changes to the technical measures of the Whelk Permit Byelaw.

**Recommendations:**

This report is for **COMMENT** and **NOTING** only

Shortly before our last meeting in September the Authority received a letter from Mr Andrew Craig outlining the concerns he had regarding the Authority's approach to whelk management in the district (provided as Appendix 1, together with a copy of the IFCA report that is referred to) which was distributed to Members before the meeting. We contacted Mr Craig and asked whether we could discuss the issues he raised in more depth at our November meeting. Postponing the discussion until November would allow time for the initial set of results to be received from Bangor University, which in turn might help address the issues that Mr Craig has raised in his letter. Mr Craig agreed to this proposal.

Since the last Authority meeting Dr Hollyman's whelk project has collected and analysed area specific whelk age and size of maturity data from each of the four areas in our district. All the whelks were collected over the space of a few days by local fishermen and a meeting was held on 22 September 2017 with Dr Hollyman and the local fishermen to discuss the results of the research. Unfortunately, not all the fishermen that took part in the trial could attend but efforts have been made to pass on the results of the trial to them. The meeting was very productive and all parties came away with a better understanding of whelk biology/populations and there was a really useful exchange of practical experience and research-based evidence gathering. One of the actions from the

meeting was to engage with the local whelk industry and pass on the results of the trial. A two-page flyer was developed to help address this action and sent on 21 October 2017 to all those fishermen that had/have held permits between 2014 and 2017 as well as other members of the whelk industry (Appendix 2).

Whilst the results so far are useful and have already produced some key findings (Appendix 2), the results have focused on the sizes and proportions of the catch that are mature and immature. As whelks have an annual breeding cycle; breeding in the winter months, a whelk might have been immature the previous winter (2016), have grown to become mature at the time of sampling (June 2017), however not yet had a chance to breed as it needs to wait until this coming winter (2017). Thus, just looking at the percentages of mature and immature does not give the whole picture. Using the aging and growth rate techniques developed by Dr Hollyman we are looking to re-analyse the data so that we can try and show the proportion of the catch that has reproduced versus the proportion that has not. Using this analysis, the impact of removing whelks at different sizes could become much clearer and we could judge the fishery against the basic sustainable harvest principle that a whelk would have had a chance to reproduce before you harvest it. Dr Hollyman is currently in the Antarctic but has agreed to present his work at our January meeting where we annually discuss and set the management for the 2018/19 fishery.

**Recommendations:**

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