

By: KEIFCA Chief Fishery Officer

To: Kent & Essex Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority
– 25 May 2021

Subject: **Marine Protected Area – Tranche 3 MCZ Update**

Classification Unrestricted

Summary:

This paper will provide Members with the progress to date of the next phase of Marine Protected Area management in the KEIFCA district and the approach KEIFCA will take in engaging local stakeholders developing management options for the Goodwin Sands MCZ site.

Recommendations:

1. Members are asked to **DISCUSS** the assessment and management process of the Goodwin Sands MCZ site and **AGREE** to KEIFCA being the lead Authority for the assessment and management of the site.

Progress so far

Since the January Authority meeting, we have held a number of productive meetings with the regional Natural England staff to discuss the new Tranche 3 (T3) MCZ assessments and discussed in broad terms how we could proceed with the development of management measures if required. Following these meetings our science team has started the process of developing individual site assessments. As described previously our aim will be to run all our site management meetings in one process so that management options for different sites can be seen in combination.

As described at the last meeting developing management options for Goodwin Sands MCZ is likely to be by-far the biggest challenge of the T3 designated sites in our district. As the site straddles both the IFCA and the MMO districts we have had several meetings with the MMO on the assessment and management

of the Goodwin Sands MCZ. Initial discussions have been productive, however the MMO face a significant challenge as they have over fifty MPA sites around the coast that require assessment and if necessary, management measures. To address this significant workload the MMO are looking to work across all their sites and are prioritising a majority of their efforts on the most sensitive/ recover features. The MMO estimate that this work could take the next two to three years and it would be after this that a further piece of work would be undertaken across the MMO sites to assess and if required, develop management measures for the rest of the features on the site. If KEIFCA worked to the MMO timetable for the Goodwin Sands MCZ it could be 2024 before the whole site has been assessed and appropriate management finalised.

In an effort to speed up this process the MMO have agreed to work to a KEIFCA timetable if KEIFCA take the lead on the site. In practical terms this would mean more work for KEIFCA as we would now be undertaking a site assessment and developing management measures over a wider area. However, we would be doing all these tasks anyway, and taking the lead would mean we could make the process more locally focused and stick to our ambition to try and agree management measures by the end of this year.

Update on NE/KEIFCA Sabellaria survey

The location and extent of Ross worm reefs (Sabellaria) on such a dynamic site as the Goodwin Sands is going to pose challenges in developing management. To try and address this we successfully applied to Natural England to part-fund (£10,000) a small drop-down survey to help better understanding of the extent and nature of Ross worm reefs in the MCZ. The specific objective of the project will be to carry out a ground truthing survey using video and/or sound to determine the accuracy of the Sabellaria reef distribution model provided by JNCC and Defra. The survey will come with its own challenges as the site is relatively shallow and is a notoriously treacherous area having claimed at least 285 shipwrecks in the MCZ alone.

We will visit three categories of sites inside and outside the 6NM limit 1) Sites with high probability of Sabellaria reefs supported by confirmed records from 2014 survey; 2) Sites with high probability and no past confirmed records, 3) sites with low probability with ground truthing data 4) sites with low probability and no ground truthing data. The aim will be to use video cameras and sound imaging to validate and update the distribution models for Sabellaria to make better informed decisions when putting spatial management in place in the Goodwin Sands MCZ. Our aim will be to work closely with EIFCA who use this equipment regularly in the Wash. As long as COVID-19 rules allow, and once we have got the equipment up and running, we are looking to invite authority members, members from the Goodwin Sands Conservation Trust and local fishing industry representatives on to Nerissa to see the survey firsthand.

Proposed timeline for Goodwin Sands MCZ assessment and management

COVID-19 measures allowing, our aim for the site will be to try and include the community as much as possible in both developing the assessment of the site, taking part in the Sabellaria survey and in reviewing possible management options. Our hope would be to get a first draft working copy of the assessment to stakeholders for initial comment and data input by mid-June, incorporate the comments, and send out a second draft for further comment in August/September. Our aim would be to finalise the assessment by October and start reviewing management options after this. The Sabellaria survey will be running alongside this process with the hope of using initial results from the survey to help inform the management options process.

Recommendations:

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