

Tamar Estuaries Consultative Forum (TECF)

Natural England (NE) Update [March 2023]

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1. Casework

We continue to be consultees to MMO licence applications and Council Planning applications, providing environmental advice on developments.

Compared to last year the team has experienced a ~27.037% increase in the number of cases for this quarter so far.

2. Monitoring

NE are awaiting confirmation of funding available for 2023/24, however these are the projects we hope to be conducting in 2023:

- July - Dive Survey Plymouth Sound and Estuaries SAC seagrass monitoring (for LIFE Recreation ReMEDIES project)

3. Condition Assessment and Conservation Advice

Condition assessments can be accessed through by using the [search tool on Designated Sites View](#). Conservation Advice packages can be accessed via the [Marine Protected Areas: conservation advice packages collection](#) on GOV.UK, alongside previously published advice. You can also navigate directly to the packages by using the [search tool on Designated Sites View](#) or via the [Index Map](#).

- The [Plymouth Sound and Estuaries SAC Condition Assessment](#) and subsequent [Plymouth Sound and Estuaries Conservation Advice Package](#) were last updated in September 2021.
- [Start Point to Plymouth Sound and Eddystone SAC Condition Assessment](#) was published in November 2022.
- Skerries Banks and Surrounds MCZ aims to be published by the end of March 2023.

NE is in ongoing discussions with TECF regarding a condition assessment workshop/ Q&A session. Any specific items that you would like covered in this please contact Jade Ryding (NE) or Amelia Sturgeon (PCC - TECF).

4. Fisheries

Natural England staff continue to work closely with CIFCA and D&SIFCA as they continue their assessments of Fishing in MPAs, focussing on MCZ sites.

4.1 Pacific oysters

The “Partnership led strategy to monitor and manage the spread of Pacific oyster populations in south Devon and Cornwall” report is available [here](#).

Natural England is generally supportive of such efforts (e.g. by local groups) although any advice on specific Pacific oyster control activities would be informed by the specifics of the proposed location for control. Therefore, this must be assessed on a case-by-case basis. If you require any further information or have any questions, please contact Natural England.

4.1.1 The DEFRA Pacific Oyster Policy

A draft Defra position statement was provided to the Chair of the All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG), and the Shellfish Association of Great Britain (SAGB) during 2022 in relation to management of Pacific oysters.

This Defra policy has been agreed between Defra, NE and Cefas and although still in draft at the moment, is not expected to change substantially before publication on gov.uk (which is expected soon). The overarching objective of the policy is to reduce the rate of Pacific oyster spread, rather than to eliminate the species from sites. Natural England’s approach to implementation of this policy centres around the need to reduce the impact of Pacific oysters on designated sites and features, alongside the wider environment.

The policy recommends more stringent controls on Pacific oyster aquaculture operations in areas above 52 degrees North latitude*, where the incidence of wild/feral Pacific oysters is still relatively low, in an attempt to reduce the rate of spread in these areas. Below the line of 52 degrees North latitude, many areas already contain extensive feral Pacific oyster populations and therefore the approach in these areas is to contain the risk by taking steps to delay further spread where possible and slow the forming of reefs.

Decisions regarding Pacific Oysters will be assessed on a case-by-case basis. Cefas are also currently undertaking a review of consents process for Pacific oyster aquaculture operations within protected areas. There is no fixed timeline for completion, and Cefas, NE and Defra will be working together to apply and test this novel approach and policy position through this process.

5. Highly Protected Marine Areas

On 28th February 2023, Defra announced that [Highly Protected Marine Areas to be designated in English waters - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/highly-protected-marine-areas-to-be-designated-in-english-waters)

Defra is leading on the process of HPMA selection and designation, therefore please send any queries to their dedicated mailbox hpma@defra.gov.uk

6. Connecting people with Nature

Updates to follow.

7. Funded Projects

7.1 LIFE Recreation ReMEDIES project

Muriel Plaster will be taking on the role of NE Site Lead for ReMEDIES work within the Plymouth Sound and Estuaries SAC and will be working closely with myself as well as PCC and OCT to support the project actions. Jade Ryding continues to be the Site Lead for the Plymouth Sound and Estuaries SAC as a site.

Further information about the project is available [Home - Save Our Seabed](#)

7.2 Pioneering nature projects launched to test carbon capture methods in fight against climate change

Six projects will receive funding to research how nature-rich woodlands, grasslands, wetlands, and urban habitats take up carbon. One of the projects is Plymouth's Natural Grid 'Nature Based Solutions for Climate Change at the Landscape Scale' project. Approximately £1 million will support Plymouth City Council, working in collaboration with the National Trust, to restore natural habitats and create local solutions to climate change in the urban environment through wood pasture, species rich grassland and woodland creation, salt marsh restoration and floodplain mosaic habitat creation. ***(More info on all the projects can be found here: [Pioneering nature projects launched to test carbon capture methods in fight against climate change](#) - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk))***

8. Marine Natural Capital Ecosystem Assessment

Marine Natural Capital Ecosystem Assessment (mNCEA): The Natural Capital and Ecosystem Assessment (NCEA) is an England-wide programme involving several Defra group organisations. Its purpose is to assess and describe the extent and condition of England's biodiversity, ecosystems, and natural capital assets. A marine element of the programme (mNCEA) covers the marine environment.

Shad

Working with the EA, NE are getting some scales from an mNCEA survey genetically analysed. These were taken from probable shad caught in the Tamar estuary.

9. Other

Student Projects

Early discussions are underway regarding the upcoming academic year project proposals. Any in year proposals for student projects will be added to a list of project ideas, reviewed, and actioned once a year. Please contact Sophie Hare or Jade Ryding for more information.

Staffing

Senior Adviser/s: Kate Sugar, Angela Gall, and Alan Kavanagh

Lead Advisers: Gareth Townsend, Jade Ryding, Jules Webber, Jay Boyle, Esther Hughes, Sophie Hare, Beth Mathias-Davies, *Muriel Plaster*

Advisers: Liz Bailey, Meg Hayward Smith, *Eleanor Goodall and, Jazmine Rlx*

NE Lead/ Representative	Location	IFCA
Jade Ryding	Plymouth Sound and Estuaries SAC	-
Jay Boyle	South Devon Estuaries AONB Torbay MCZ & Exe Estuary SPA	D&SIFCA
Esther Hughes	Fal and Helford SAC	CIFCA
Sophie Hare	Lundy SAC and MCZ	-
Jules Webber	Isles of Scilly Complex SAC	Isles of Scilly IFCA

Jade Ryding

Jade Ryding ([they/them](#)) Marine Lead Advisor - Please note my homeworking hours are: *Tues-Fri 08:00-16:00*
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