

Zonation and Code of Conduct Review Crab Tile Meeting



Minutes

09:30-11:30 Thursday 12th January 2017

Location: Starcross Fishing and Cruising Club, Brunel Tower

Attendees

Stephanie Clark, Exe Estuary Management Partnership (EEMP)
Katherine Stephenson, Devon & Severn Inshore Fisheries & Conservation Authority (D&SIFCA)
Owen Perkins, Lower Exe Crab Tilers Association
Mike Western, Lower Exe Crab Tilers Association
Martin Jones, Lower Exe Crab Tilers Association
Russell Thompson, Starcross Crab Tiler
Kevin Rouse, Starcross Crab Tiler
Mike Richardson, Dawlish Warren Crab Tiler
Eric Osborne, Powderham Crab Tiler
Stephen Lynch, Powderham Crab Tiler
Kevin Melhuish, above Starcross Crab Tiler
Ken Gallagher, above Starcross Crab Tiler
Nigel Chappell, above Starcross Crab Tiler
Terry Rowe, Powderham Crab Tiler
Rob Hayes, Lympstone Crab Tiler
Derek Thorman, Lympstone Crab Tiler

Other Invitees

Mike Spiller
Andy Dunn
Anthony Ingham
Colin Davies
Derek Kingshot
Other Members of the Lower Exe Crab Tilers Association

Agenda

To introduce the review of zonation and codes of conduct to crab collectors of the Exe. Discussion and feedback was requested on the initial drafts of the proposed Voluntary Exclusion Zones (VEZs) at Exmouth Duck Pond and Dawlish Warren. Minutes of the previous meeting were discussed and amendments for the existing Crab Collectors Code of Conduct.

Minutes

SC gave a background for the proposals and why the areas are important. Items covered: buoys will be in place, VEZs will be monitored, layby and Cockwood Steps not being closed during this proposal. SC also clarified that dogs are already excluded from the NNR through a byelaw and that angling is already excluded as a voluntary measure.

SC requested that any bait diggers be put in touch with her, to be included in the consultation.

Following the previous meeting, it is likely that SC will propose that crab tilers are not moved out of the Dawlish Warren VEZ, as some rely on crab tiling for a living and use the area responsibly. Seasonal use or relocation would not work, due to reasons given in previous minutes. However, managers of the Exe have suggested that there may be potential for crab tilers to move out of the area in the longer term, although the need for this to happen or not is not definite and will be monitored.

Measures that crab tilers suggested to help manage the area (during the previous meeting) included permits (which could stop more crab tilers moving into the area) and looking into removal of unused tiles below the IFCA byelaw line (with IFCA working with crab tilers). Conversations that SC had with other Fundus owners / managers indicated that there is interest in potentially having permits for the whole estuary.

D&SIFCA will likely be reviewing hand gathering byelaws in 2017. They could look at whether a permitting byelaw could be introduced. The permit could restrict the number of tiles potentially, but may not be able to restrict new crab tilers. Although crab tilers don't want to pay for a permit, an IFCA permit for netting, potting, etc. costs £20 for two years, to give an indication of probable costs. The group mentioned that permits would only work if they restrict the number of people allowed to collect crabs. Suggestion that no new permits are granted, but existing permits could be passed on. Named people on permits (to allow family members to collect on behalf of permitted crab tiler). If people don't have permits, permitted crab collectors could notify IFCA (phone number on permit). Perhaps introduce minimum size of Crustacea / mature crab for conservation purposes (used to be size of old 10p piece). IFCA consultation this year, any re-writing of byelaws will take time, so cannot state how long this could take.

Suggestion from group that HMOs are introduced to them in future.

Suggestion from group to put a row of sticks in place to follow out to the wreck.

SC will be contacting anglers to encourage feedback on proposals.

ACTION: SC to contact MW to organise consultation meeting with anglers.

Group suggested SC contact winklers to educate about how to collect responsibly and introduce a code of conduct. SC stated difficulty with getting in touch with winklers.

ACTION: MW to try to get into contact with Mike Thomas and put in touch with SC.

Summary of Proposed Suggestions from Crab Collectors Meeting

- SC likely to propose that crab tilers are not moved out of the Dawlish Warren VEZ, as some rely on crab tiling for a living and use the area responsibly.
- Seasonal use or relocation would not work, due to reasons given in previous minutes.
- Removal of unused tiles below the IFCA byelaw line (working with IFCA and crab tilers / MW to do this).

- Sign needed at access point(s) to explain why crab tiling is permitted in area (and history).
- Row of sticks put in place for people to follow out to the wreck.

Suggestion to introduce permit system:

- Tilers to carry permit when collecting
- Nine permits for Dawlish Warren
- Code of conduct given alongside permit
- If don't adhere to the code of conduct, don't get permit the following year
- Regulate number of users
- Named people on permits (to allow family members to collect on behalf of permitted crab tiler).
- No new permits granted, existing permits passed on with notification: "This permit can be transferred on agreement of the owner and 'authorities'" (likely to be D&SIFCA or whoever distributes permits).
- Need for policing
 - HMO and D&SIFCA contact details for tilers to report incidences, if can't attend then tilers can take details to pass on (can help HMOs as Voluntary Wardens, with some kind of identification, such as an armband)
- Winkling should also require a permit
- Don't use the word 'licence'
- Should be free – if there is a cost, they want to see the money go towards policing
- OP happy to give out permits
- Potential to introduce permits for crab tilers over the whole estuary

Suggested Amendments/Additions to Code of Conduct:

- Contact details of Habitat Mitigation Officers (HMOs) and D&SIFCA
- Wear dark colours
- 2 hours either side of low water
- Wait for birds to disperse before approaching
- No dogs allowed on mudflats within the Dawlish Warren NNR (byelaw)
- Signs at steps
- National Federation now National Trust
- DSF now D&SIFCA
- English Nature now Natural England
- Agree with blue part of existing code
- Get there when water is high to ensure no one else turns their tiles, tide drops and collectors wait for birds to move and fly away, which can take about 2.5 hours. Collectors are usually there for about 5 hours.
- Don't take juvenile or berried crabs. Perhaps introduce minimum size (for mature crab) - used to be size of old 10p piece.
- Not to take crabs from tiles that are owned by other crab collectors.
- "It is an offence, under the Wildlife and Countryside Act, for anyone to intentionally or recklessly damage, destroy or disturb the habitats or protected species of the Exe Estuary SSSI."
- What to do if see incidences.
- SC will compare with codes from other areas. Draft will be distributed via email for feedback, when ready (OP will distribute to other crab tilers).