

Angling Zone Monitoring Plan- boat-based survey methodology

Rationale

We are conducting boat based surveys of the Skerries Bank pilot Angling Zone to try and collect data that will give us a clearer picture of the use of the site by anglers and commercial fishermen. The aim of this survey is to collect data on any fishing activity that you witness during the survey period. Separate surveys will also collect extra data on commercial fishing (from monthly activity recording forms) and shore based recreational angling. The data will be used to determine the level of potential gear conflicts occurring as well as gather fine-scale information on the seasonality and geography of different kinds of fishing within the Skerries Angling Zone. This will be done by mapping the locations of boats using the site and collecting information on their location, size, type of fishing etc as well as conducting interviews with boat users wherever possible. Ultimately the data generated will inform the management of the site and help to determine whether further gear restrictions are necessary within the Angling Zone, and if any further seasonal/ temporal management could improve the current management at the site. The survey time will also be used to monitor adherence with the voluntary code of conduct, in particular whether bag limits are being adhered to and also checking fishing gear in the water to determine whether pots or nets are being fished, to ground truth information collected in the commercial fishing activity logs.

The surveys will also be an excellent opportunity for letting people know about the Angling Zone and the code of conduct – this is a really important aspect and information on the Angling Zone will be given to all boats approached. Please make sure you know the codes of conducts for each site. Any questions at all, just ask Mat or Libby.

Equipment list

Site visit forms
Interview forms
Weather writer
Handheld GPS
Spare batteries
Binoculars
Skerries Bank flyer packs
Camera

Methodology

The survey will be based around four transects running across the inner, middle and outer Skerries Bank Angling Zone (which coincides with the IPA no trawling zone). Whilst on the survey you will be (in priority order):

- Roughly following four transects to make sure coverage of the site is standardised
- Leaving the transects to record the location and activity of fishing and angling boats
- Interviewing as many charter and private angling boats as possible in the time available
- Checking compliance with the voluntary code of conduct
- Raising awareness of the Angling Zone and Code of Conduct
- Recording the location and type of fishing gear being used in the Skerries Angling Zone

The transects start just off Torcross and follow a serpentine, try and keep to a relatively constant and slow speed (approximately 8 knots). The transects are followed to make sure the whole of the area is covered relatively evenly. Even in good visibility you may not be able to see some of the really small boats angling unless you are quite close. However, the transects are more of a guide than anything and you will regularly veer off them to go and record the locations of boats and interview private angling boats. If you leave a transect to go to a boat restart the transect in roughly the location you left it after you are finished with the boats, this need not be precise. Each transect (without boats) takes 15-30 minutes so if there are few boats you can do several loops of the transects, to make sure you are keeping an eye on the whole of the site.

Record any boats you see on form AZ6 including all the details asked for: location, type of boat, whether it was fishing when you logged it or whether it was in transition. Get alongside all boats to take their latitude and longitude. Interview as many as you have time within the 4 hour survey window.

If you record a boat in an area on one transect, and you can see it from a second transect, do not record again, however if it has clearly moved from one area of the Skerries (e.g. just off Beesands to the outer bank) and it was seen to be fishing at both of these locations then record a second time in the new location. Please also complete an interview (with as many boats as it is possible to do so, still allowing for the fact that all four transects need to be completed over the 4 hour survey window). You only need to interview private boats who are angling (i.e. not commercial boats or charter boats) but it would be good to make sure all angling boats are sticking to the voluntary bag limits (i.e. including charter boats). The bag limit is 10 plaice and 3 ray per angler per day (so for a charter boat with 10 anglers onboard 100 plaice and 30 ray).

If the site is particularly busy it is better to interview a few boats on different transects / different areas of the Skerries Angling Zone compared to all the boats on one transect / same area of the Zone.

