

**SUMMARY OF EXTRAORDINARY
TECHNICAL & SCIENTIFIC SUB-COMMITTEE:
FRIDAY 17TH OCTOBER 2025**

Extraordinary meeting held to revisit trawl management options for Coquet to St Mary's MCZ, following the earlier October meeting.

- **Previous information provided was not sufficient** for members to form a confident recommendation on future management.
- Key concerns:
 - Use of older data (2015–2018) and whether it is valid for current comparisons.
 - Missing benthic survey information referenced at prior meetings.
 - Lack of baseline understanding of site condition in 2016 (at designation).
 - Inconsistencies in habitat classification (mud vs mosaic/sand).
 - Need for more detailed, site-specific ecological data rather than broadscale science.
- Some evidence indicates **reduced fishing effort (~90% decline)** since designation, but members emphasised this does not automatically mean recovery or reduced ecological pressure.
- Discussion on whether the site should be managed for “maintain” or “recover,” depending on whether the feature is still in favourable condition.
- Suggestion to conduct **new camera surveys and grab sampling**, targeting both trawled and non-trawled mud areas, including sample stations from 2016 and areas further north.
- Otterboard gear trial noted; results will take years to provide meaningful comparative impact data.
- **Agreed recommendation to General Committee:**
 - Keep all current management measures in place (effort cap and permit limit).
 - Collect new grab sampling data next year at original 2016 stations and additional comparison sites.
 - Review findings next year and make a final decision for long-term management once new evidence is available.
 - Officers to prepare an initial survey plan and costings for the next Quarterly Meeting.