



Annual Report

Financial Year 2023/2024

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A Message from the Chair

“This report covers the thirteenth year of operations and provides a summary account and review of the Authority’s achievements during the financial year 2023/2024.

In my seventh year as Chair of the Authority, I, with the support of the Chief Officer, have continued to address the inadequate funding structure of the Authority by engaging with Defra and D&S IFCA’s Funding Authorities. Regrettably progress can only be described as glacial, but the process continues. The task of attempting to resolve the funding crisis was itself a task listed within the Annual Plan for 2023/2024.

D&S IFCA has the largest District of all IFCAs with 4,522 km² of sea area and two separate coasts to manage. However, D&S IFCA operates on the lowest mainland IFCA Revenue Budget of £914,600, and from June 2023 had only 11 full-time Officers and one part-time Officer to undertake all of the Authority’s governance, research and enforcement work. This resourcing is demonstrably inadequate.

The Annual Report provides the platform to report on work undertaken as part of the Annual Plan for 2023/2024. There are some significant achievements; however, due to its limited resources, D&S IFCA is unable to deliver all of its own vision as an organisation or all of its mandatory statutory functions. There are unfortunately many tasks that D&S IFCA has not been able to plan for, and undertake, during 2023/2024.

Despite the funding challenges that I have outlined, I hope that this Annual Report will help all readers to gain a better understanding of the excellent work that is being delivered by D&S IFCA and the value this organisation has, as it continues to strive to meet its statutory duties and the expectations of all stakeholders”.



Chair of the Authority
Professor Mike Williams

Background, and using this Report

Background

D&S IFCA has the largest of the ten IFCA's districts and has two separate coastlines. The area of the District is 4,522km² and is defined in the Statutory Instrument (2010 No. 2212). D&S IFCA's District includes the areas of Devon, Somerset, and Gloucestershire County Councils; Bristol and Plymouth City Councils; North Somerset and South Gloucestershire Councils and all adjacent waters out to six nautical miles offshore or the median line in the Bristol Channel with Wales.

The fisheries and marine environment are markedly different on the two coasts. The north coast of the District from Somerset to the east up the Severn estuary is characterised by significant tidal ranges, large amounts of suspended sediment, and extensive mudflat habitats that support a range of different types of net fisheries and significant recreational angling. The Devon coasts and estuaries in contrast are known for their diverse fisheries including significant pot fisheries, the largest mobile fishing fleet operating in any IFCA District and an extensive network of Marine Protected Areas.

The Full Authority is comprised of 30 Members drawn from relevant Local Authorities (Councillors), General Members (appointed to the Authority by the Marine Management Organisation (MMO) and Statutory Appointees representing the Environment Agency (EA) and Natural England (NE).

D&S IFCA is funded primarily from Central Government, with additional contributions from the eight relevant funding Local Authorities.

As specified in Section 178 Marine and Coastal Access Act (MaCAA), D&S IFCA must prepare a report on its activities each year which will be published and sent to the Secretary of State.

To support the delivery of the national vision, IFCA's agreed with Defra a set of national success criteria matched with corresponding working-level objectives. The vision, success criteria and national working objectives are designed to assist in the creation of a shared understanding of the aims and objectives of all IFCA's nationally and focus service delivery towards achievement of the national vision. These national IFCA performance criteria also link directly to the UK Marine Policy Statement.

Reporting Method

This Annual Report can be read in conjunction with the Annual Plan for FY 2023/2024.

The Annual Plan for FY 2023/2024 sets out key goals that were envisaged to be completed within 2023/2024. Regarding the delivery of these key goals in this time frame, this is either complete or incomplete as shown by indicators in the reporting tables.

As well as reporting on the Authority's key goals, this Annual Report provides a summary of progress for many repeating types of workstreams as measured against the national IFCA success criteria and high-level objectives (outcomes).

The Annual Report demonstrates work completed by D&S IFCA to recognise additional funding provided by Defra to assist with the delivery of three key national workstreams, Fisheries Management Plans (FMPs), Marine Spatial Prioritisation including marine licensing and sustainable development, and Marine Protected Areas (including implementation of necessary management measures).

Information – Annual Plans and Reports

Please visit: <https://www.devonandsevernifca.gov.uk/about-us-our-work/annual-business-plans-reports/>

IFCAs' National Vision

“To lead, champion and manage a sustainable marine environment and inshore fisheries, by successfully securing the right balance between social, environmental, and economic benefits to ensure healthy seas, sustainable fisheries, and a viable industry”.

D&S IFCA's VISION

“We believe in shared responsibility for the health and benefits of the marine environment and uphold our duties, now and in the future. We will be proactive in our management to restore and recover marine ecosystems, habitats, and species. We envisage that the waters, under our authority, will support sustainable fishing practices serving local, national, and international communities. We will innovate, and champion the use of technology, the delivery of low impact fisheries and the UK Government's 'Net Zero' by 2050 carbon target. We embrace co-management and will drive change in inshore recreational and commercial fisheries, recognising their social and economic benefits, and securing a future for sustainable fishing in the coastal belt”.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The financial crisis experienced by D&S IFCA was mitigated by the continuation of additional income from Defra to deliver three key national workstreams. The underlying reality however was that the agreed Levy on the relevant Local Authorities was lower than that achieved in 2012/13. The gap between the operational budget and the levy contributions had risen to £152,400, equivalent to 20% of the income received from the Levy.

D&S IFCA undertook a job evaluation process, and the findings were accepted by the Authority and implemented. However, meeting the increased salary demands meant that two vacant posts (1.5 FTEs) were frozen, and the Annual Plan was delivered by a team of 12 Officers. The Annual Report reflects that the priority workstreams were those that received national funding.

This Annual Report sets out D&S IFCA's performance against the key goals that were identified in its Annual Plan for 2023/2024. It's a testament to the hard work and resilience of Officers and Members that D&S IFCA has been able to deliver so much excellent work during the reporting period. Despite limited resources the team had continued to innovate and develop new ways of working.

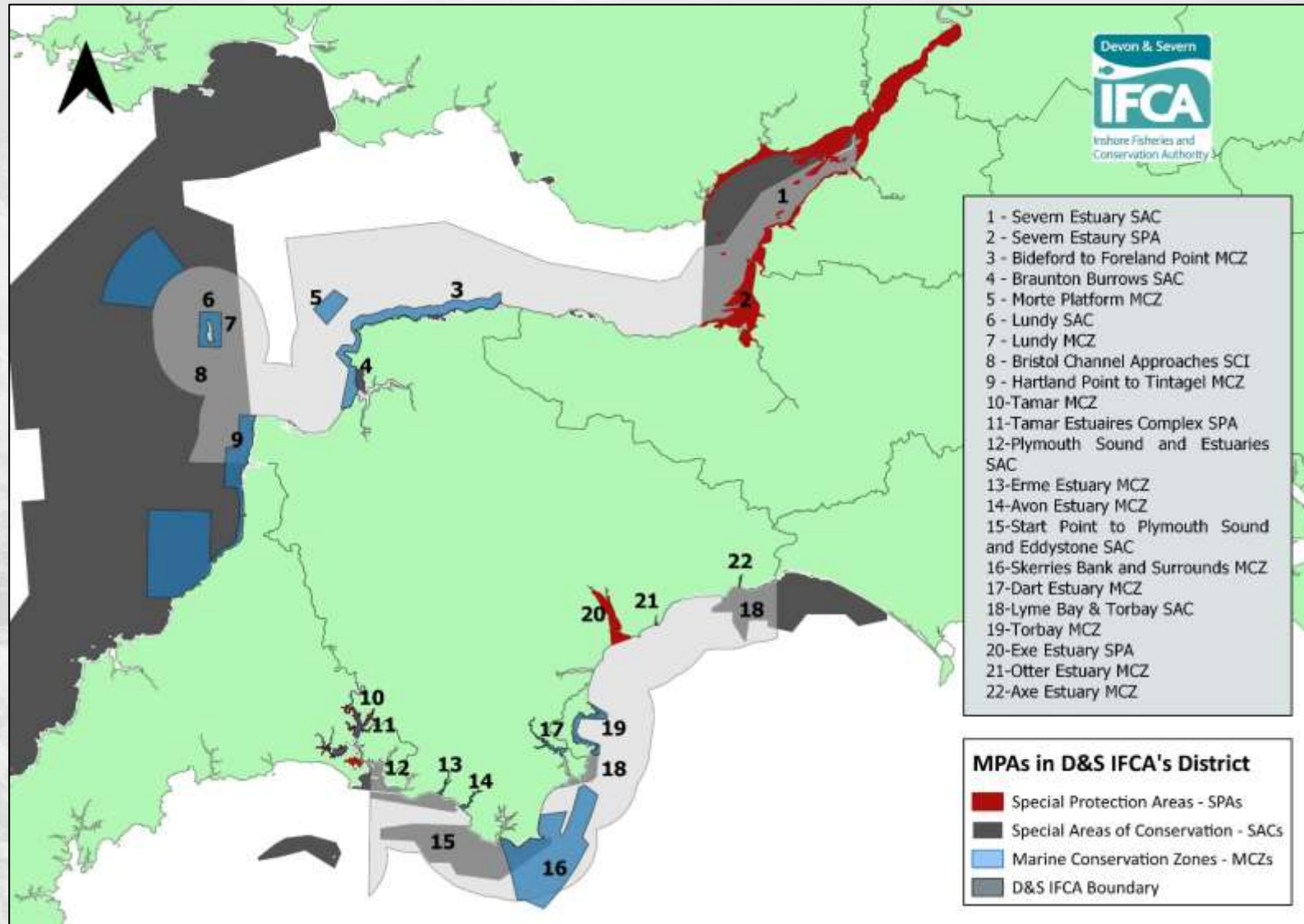
However, it is important to note that D&S IFCA was unable to develop further workstreams such as introducing management to support the sustainable exploitation of numerous recreational and commercial hand gathering fisheries in its District. It is recognised that D&S IFCA is unable to undertake the research work or collect the level of fisheries and environmental data that other IFCAs are able to.

D&S IFCA's lack of capacity means that it is difficult to prioritise undertaking research to understand whether management interventions have been successful. Without its own research vessel, obtaining more detailed habitat mapping of MPAs is reliant on the availability of other organisation's vessels. This translates to having to use habitat evidence that is achieved by broadscale mapping surveys that inherently do not provide the resolution that is needed to limit the impact of displacement of fishing activity.

D&S IFCA prioritises its limited compliance monitoring resources to reduce the impacts of illegal mobile gear fishing in Marine Protected Areas and illegal netting in estuaries. This means other recreational and commercial fisheries including shellfisheries and bass receive monitoring at a level below which many stakeholders feel is acceptable.

Due to its limited resources, D&S IFCA has continued to strive to innovate and make efficiencies in its operation. This includes using and planning for greater use of technology for the monitoring of fisheries and its management, as well as basing its communications work on electronic engagement, rather than the types of in person engagement conducted by comparable organisations.

Our District at a Glance



FINANCE AND RESOURCES

Financial Overview

D&S IFCA's Revenue Budget of £914,600 for FY 2023/2024 represented a record level of funding required to support the delivery of its Statutory Duties. However, the base levy from the funding Local Authorities remained unchanged from the 2022-23 Revenue Budget of £762,200. This is the lowest base levy of the nine mainland IFCAs and is less than the D&S IFCA Revenue Budget in 2012/13 of £764,500.

In 2023/2024 D&S IFCA expected to receive £150,000 of additional funding from Defra. In reality, D&S IFCA received £140,000 of additional income. The forecast additional funding was used to meet the gap between the levy contributions and the operational budget. In total D&S IFCA received £502,238 of Defra funding support of which £362,238 New Burdens Funding. Defra reports to provide D&S IFCA with £409,297 of NBF annually but £47,059 is not forwarded in FY2023/2024 as the Somerset and Severn Local Authorities continue to receive more money than is required to meet their percentage levy obligations to the Annual Budget.

	2022/23 Base Budget £	Base Budget Adjustments £	Inflation £	2023/24 Budget £
Employees	644,000	47,800	35,500	727,300
Premises	34,600	0	2,500	37,100
Transport	14,400	(700)	800	14,500
Supplies & Services	70,700	(2,700)	3,100	71,100
Boat Costs	25,800	5,100	1,400	32,300
Environmental Research	17,200	0	0	17,200
Support	62,200	(8,300)	1,200	55,100
Fees & Charges	(41,200)	1,200	0	(40,000)
	827,700	42,400	44,500	914,600
Contingency /Potential Use of Reserves	(65,500)	63,100	0	(2,400)
DEFRA Funding	0	(150,000)	0	(150,000)
Total Funding from Levies	762,200	(44,500)	44,500	762,200

Resources

- One Office in Brixham
- One 7.8 metre patrol vessel
- One 6.4 metre patrol vessel (near end of service life)
- No dedicated research vessels
- 11 full-time officers
- 1 part-time officer
- A total of 5 Enforcement Officers

RESOLVING D&S IFCA's FUNDING CRISIS

In the Annual Plan for FY 2023/2024, D&S IFCA committed to continue to support Defra and its Funding Local Authorities to find a resolution to its funding crisis. Defra has committed to engaging directly with the Local Authorities to find a way forward to alleviate the financial challenges D&S IFCA faces.

	2024/25 Budget	2023/24 Budget	2022/23 Actual	2021/22 Actual
Expenses	148,338	141,387	146,234	143,258
Personnel	36,208	31,139	36,031	39,889
Materials & Services	74,929	78,892	74,992	73,292
Staff Costs	36,999	36,450	31,400	36,117
Grants	17,222	17,222	16,239	16,729
Other Income	39,428	37,428	36,819	36,338
Other Income and Grants	100,000	100,000	100,000	100,000
Grants Received Budget	837,000	846,200	849,000	1,034,500
Deficit	184,177	184,177	184,177	184,177

D&S IFCA's Funding Authorities:

- Devon County Council
- Torbay Council
- Plymouth City Council
- Bristol City Council
- South Gloucestershire Council
- Gloucestershire County Council
- Somerset Council
- North Somerset Council

Report:

The Chair wrote on a further two occasions to the Minister for Farming, Fisheries and Food setting out the financial crisis that D&S IFCA is experiencing. Defra has confirmed that it has engaged with D&S IFCA's funding Local Authorities and that it intends to continue discussion with the Local Authorities in 2024/2025 to seek a revised funding structure for D&S IFCA.

Unique among IFCA's, the total levy from the five Somerset and Severn Local Authorities continues to be supported fully by New Burdens Funding provided by Defra. No local taxpayers' money from these Local Authorities has ever been used to support D&S IFCA's Revenue Budget. Due to the levy requirements remaining low, these five local Authorities have received £788,994 of New Burdens Funding over the lifetime of the IFCA that has not been forwarded to D&S IFCA.

A three-year financial plan (2025/2026 – 2027/2028) that identified the scale of the crisis facing D&S IFCA was produced for D&S IFCA Members in January 2024 and provided to the Minister and Defra in February 2024.

The medium-term financial plan identified that the deficit between the operational budget requirement and total levied on Local Authorities was forecast to be £184,177 in 2024/2025. Even if the reviewed levy contributions resulted in all NBF being received by D&S IFCA, it was acknowledged by Defra that this would not resolve D&S IFCA's financial crisis.

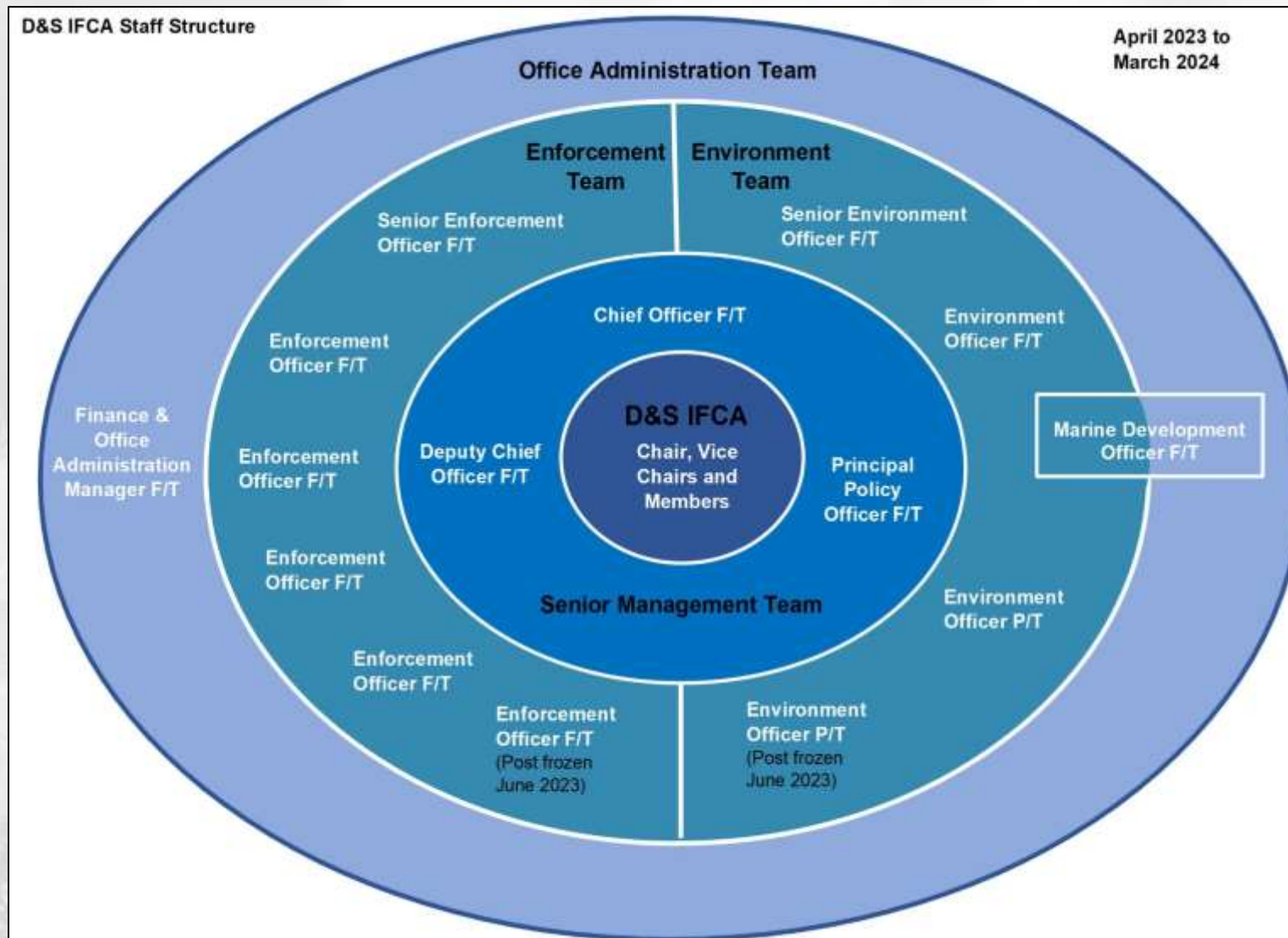
Information and Evidence

All papers and reports (other than Part 2) that are produced for Authority meetings are published on D&S IFCA's website:

Resource Library: <https://www.devonandsevernifca.gov.uk/resource-library/b-internal-practice-and-procedure/>

Authority & B&PSC meetings page: <https://www.devonandsevernifca.gov.uk/authority-meetings/>

STAFF STRUCTURE



Staff Training: Four of the officers completed the RYA Small Ships and Radar course. Two of the officers completed the RYA Advanced Powerboat course. One officer has completed the RYA Yacht-Master theory course, and one officer has completed the First Aid at Work course. Five officers have undertaken EA/CIFCA Cross Warrant training. Two officers undertook the mandatory four modules for STCW training. Officers refreshed their Working at Height Awareness training and the Finance and Administration Manager undertook First Aid Awareness and Fire Safety Training.

Information

To contact an officer, please visit the *Contact Us* page on the website:

<https://www.devonandsevernifca.gov.uk/about-us-our-work/contact-us/>

ENFORCEMENT WORK

Success Criterion 2: IFCA's implement a fair, effective and proportionate enforcement regime

Definition: The IFCA enforcement regime is risk-based, makes appropriate use of intelligence, meets legislative standards, and complies with the Regulators Code. It should make effective use of the resources available to regulators, complement and align, if possible, with the regimes in adjacent IFCA Districts and management by other organisations including the MMO and Environment Agency. Consistency and fairness are important. Regulatory compliance is promoted. Enforcement action is carried out by trained, professional officers working to clear standards of conduct.

The Enforcement Team was reduced to five officers in June 2023 following the departure of a long serving officer. Due to budgetary constraints, the officer was not replaced.

Between 1st April 2023 and 31st March 2024, 50 case files were created and four cases, outstanding from the previous year, were concluded. Only one of these cases remains open - a prosecution for which the initial court hearing is expected in January 2025.

Outcomes for investigations (50) between 1st April 2023 and 31st March 2024 :

- Number of verbal warnings, verbal re-briefs, advisory letters (10).
- Number of IFCA written warnings including gear offence and seizure notices (15).
- Financial Administrative Penalties issued (6).
- Number of simple cautions (2).
- Court prosecutions (1).
- No further action due to insufficient evidence or unable to identify offenders (15).
- Case forwarded to the Marine Management Organisation (MMO) (1).



D&S IFCA's Patrol Vessel - David Rowe

Monitoring and Enforcement Action to Protect Marine Protected Areas

D&S IFCA has many Marine Protected Areas within its District; however, Marine Protected Areas are not protected without effective monitoring and enforcement action.

The monitoring of IVMS, VMS and AIS data for mobile fishing gear vessels and the targeting of mobile gear vessels that may be operating without fully functioning IVMS and VMS devices remains a priority workstream for D&S IFCA. This workstream is imperative to ensure monitoring of compliance of spatial restrictions under the Mobile Fishing Permit Conditions and to seek to ensure the protection of designated features of Marine Protected Areas.

Officers have spent considerable time monitoring spatial data from the towed gear vessels operating in its District. Five formal investigations have been started in the reporting period involving one case of non-reporting IVMS device and four cases of suspected illegal incursions by towed gear boats into Marine Protected Areas. Two MPA investigations involved foreign vessels. In addition, a further four cases from previous years have been concluded.

Reactive Enforcement – Intelligence Led:

Illegal Gill Net Recovered From Salcombe – Kingsbridge Estuary

On Friday 22nd September 2023, a report was received by D&S IFCA regarding a net that had been set in Bowcombe Creek, Kingsbridge.

Officers made a site visit and established that the net spanned across the creek (east to west) above New Bridge. The net was seen to be secured to tree roots on the East bank of the creek and extended two thirds of the way across the creek.

On Saturday 23rd September 2023, officers had sufficient equipment available to recover the illegal net which measured approximately 150 metres in length. Officers removed 47 grey mullet and 17 bass from the net. Most of the bass that were removed from the net were below 42 cm in length (the Minimum Conservation Reference Size).

On this occasion the person who set the net was not identified. Those engaged in illegal netting are known to travel across the Southwest to fish and based on officers' experience it is highly likely that the net had been deployed by fishers that were not local to the Salcombe area. The net and dead fish have now been disposed of. Patrols of the Salcombe – Kingsbridge Estuary will continue as part of an intelligence led and risk-based approach to enforcement.

Seeking Compliance - Guidance for Fishermen:

D&S IFCA has produced guidance for fishers to help them remain compliant with the Permit Conditions.

Following increased levels of 'V'- notched, mutilated, and berried lobster being discovered when boarding fishing vessels or when undertaking shore inspections, D&S IFCA Enforcement Officers produced some guidance for fishers to help them remain compliant with D&S IFCA's Permit Conditions. The new guidance was directly circulated to Permit Holders (commercial and recreational fishers) in July 2023.

Investigation Tables:

Please visit the D&S IFCA website for more detailed investigation tables for 2020 / 2021 / 2022 / 2023/ 2024.

<https://www.devonandsevernifca.gov.uk/Enforcement-Legislation/Investigation-Tables>



ENFORCEMENT OUTPUTS

2023/2024

- Sea Patrols – (38)
- Shore Patrols – (71)
- Premises Inspected – (47)
- Investigations – (50)
- Verbal Warnings & Advisory Letters – (10)
- Written Warnings & Gear Seizure Notices – (15)
- Simple Cautions – (2)
- Fixed Administrative Penalties – (6)
- Formal Prosecutions – (1)
- No Further Action – (15)
- Case forwarded to MMO – (1)

FISHERIES MANAGEMENT PLANS (FMPs)

All IFCAs have received additional funding from Defra to undertake work to support the development and implementation of national Tranche 1 and Tranche 2 FMPs.



Action:

D&S IFCA has reviewed all the consultation documentation associated with the five front-runner FMPs that are relevant to the D&S IFCA District. This involved thorough review of the FMP itself together with the evidence statement and fisheries data, research requirements and Strategic Environmental Assessments. Officers provided written responses on the Bass FMP, Whelk FMP, King Scallop FMP, Crab and Lobster FMP and Channel Non-quota Species FMP frontrunner FMPs and shared these with Members of the D&S IFCA Byelaw and Permitting Sub-Committee (B&PSC) for comment. Responses were submitted to Defra before 1st October 2023. D&S IFCA continues to sit on the groups and is now inputting into short term management interventions. Officers attended Defra's conference on identifying evidence gaps in the Frontrunner FMPs in February 2024. Officers sit on Tranche 2 FMPs for Skates and Rays and have been invited to join the Celtic Sea and Western Channel Pelagic FMP.

FMP Engagement

As part of the national FMP work D&S IFCA committed to engage with the FMP groups and provide information and expertise to help inform the FMPs. D&S IFCA also set out to disseminate information to stakeholders in its District so that they could engage with the FMP process through in person and on-line events.

During FY 2023/2024, D&S IFCA continued to be the IFCA lead in the Crab and Lobster FMP Working Group, Science Sub-Group and the Shellfish Industry Advisory Group.

D&S IFCA has provided input into the development of the FMP and its evidence statement and research priorities. D&S IFCA has disseminated information to all relevant permit holders, D&S IFCA Members and the wider public regarding in person and on-line engagement events.

D&S IFCA continued to be the lead IFCA in the Channel NQS FMP and is a member of the NQS FMP's working group.

Since 1st April 2023 there has been seven separate mail shots (email circular or Mailchimp) to highlight FMP development and engagement opportunities.

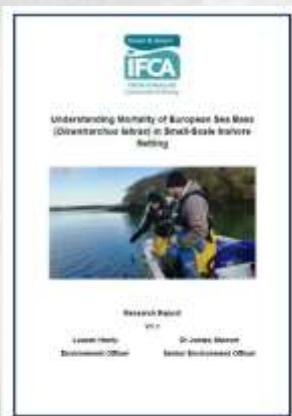
Two news items have been produced (May and August) to highlight relevant FMP information – to advertise Defra Flyers and Defra consultations on six front runner FMPs.



ENVIRONMENTAL AND SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH WORK

Success Criterion 3: IFCA's use evidence based and appropriate measures to manage the sustainable exploitation of sea fisheries resources and deliver marine environmental protection within its district.

Definition: IFCA's are relevant authorities for implementing international environmental commitments including the Birds, Habitats, Water and Marine Strategy Framework Directives and make an important contribution to securing a network of well managed marine protected areas, including European Marine Sites and Marine Conservation Zones. Fisheries Management Plans identify local management measures which should be based on evidence; be timely; subject to appropriate consultation and in step with national initiatives and priorities. An IFCA should balance the social and economic benefits of exploiting sea fisheries resources with the need to protect the environment. It should make a contribution to sustainable development.



The work of D&S IFCA's Environment team is broad, ranging from undertaking surveys and research in the field, both in the intertidal environment, such as molluscan surveys undertaken on the Taw Torridge Estuary and research on-board fishing vessels, to desk-based research. Officers have undertaken a significant amount of survey planning, desk-based research and environmental work. For FY 2023/2024 this has included literature reviews to complete the MPA assessments required to assess the likely impact of fishing activities on the designate features of Marine Conservation Zones and European Marine Sites.

Officers also dedicated time to analysing all the data collected from the bass survivability field work, working with a Salcombe fisher and the University of Plymouth, undertaken in 2022/2023. Officers published the final report 'Understanding Mortality of European Sea Bass (*Dicentrarchus labrax*) in Small-Scale Inshore Netting' on 22nd August 2023. This report was followed by a supplementary data file on 25th August 2023 in response to a request for additional information from an Authority Member. The report was presented at the B&PSC meeting on 31st August 2023, and a finalised report was published on 1st November 2023. The evidence and results of this work informed later discussions on the review of Netting Permit Conditions and helped to inform decision making, at the B&PSC meeting on 22nd February 2024.



Additional research on the timing of scallop spawning in the District was undertaken up to October 2023, to provide further evidence to the report on scallop spawning published in May 2023. This report has yet to be updated. Since sampling began in late March 2023, 18 samples (each of 30 scallops from Torbay) have been processed and data collected will be analysed in 2024/2025. Additional survey planning was carried out for a drop-down video (DDV) and stills camera survey in part of the Start Point to Plymouth Sound and Eddystone (SPPSE) Special Area of Conservation (SAC). D&S IFCA chartered Cornwall IFCA's vessel and completed filming of 12 of the survey sites on 24th August 2023. This survey investigated the location and quality of the coarse sediment in the area. Poor weather limited further survey work. Officers have also contributed to the planning of a PhD research programme to fulfil evidence needs on essential fish habitat; this work (led by the University of Plymouth) commenced in October 2023 and focusses largely on the Severn Estuary. Reactive research planning has also been undertaken for emerging research such as linking IVMS and landings data to demonstrate the economic importance of specific areas to the inshore fleet. Planning for the potting and netting activity surveys with fishers has taken place and meetings commenced in January 2024 (task 21). Planning for delivery of Crustacea research (task 29-31) and intertidal molluscan surveys at sites across the District was undertaken.

MARINE SPATIAL PRIORITISATION

D&S IFCA received additional funding from Defra to assist with work relating to Marine Spatial Prioritisation.



D&S IFCA reviews and responds to consultations on Marine Licence Applications (MLAs), environmental permits and other development consents. Through this work, D&S IFCA seeks to ensure that developers minimise, mitigate or compensate for their impacts on fish and designated habitats, and to ensure that the needs of existing users of the sea (including fishing, aquaculture and the recreational sector) are accounted for.

This work involves engaging with the developers and those stakeholders who may be impacted by the development, and to analyse environmental and fishing activity data to provide the best evidence to inform consultation responses. In FY 2023/2024, 26 MLAs were reviewed and responses were provided where necessary and appropriate. D&S IFCA has also responded to both the South Marine Plan and South West Marine Plan Monitoring Surveys in August 2023.

Hinkley Point C Nuclear Power Station

Work relating to this workstream was expected to continue into FY 2023/2024 in particular in relation to the development & proposed material changes to the water intakes at Hinkley C.

On 29th February 2024, D&S IFCA responded to Nuclear New Builds Company (NNB-EDF)'s public consultation to outline its concerns about impacts on fish populations and the evidence base for NNB's plans to create compensatory habitats to compensate for the fish kill associated with the cooling water intakes. The response was able to draw on D&S IFCA's partnership work with scientists from a range of organisations, including Dr Thomas Stamp from the University of Plymouth. Though in principle there are potential benefits to additional fish habitats, work by Dr Stamp and others has shown that recently created saltmarsh (like that planned by NNB) does not entirely fulfil the ecological role of established saltmarsh and suggests that it may take many years for compensatory saltmarsh to be equivalent to natural saltmarsh for fish. D&S IFCA's response was also able to build on recent data from a study of twaite shad, led by Swansea University. This study suggests that NNB may have underestimated the number of fish likely to be killed by the HPC cooling water intakes.

As a result of this and a range of other evidence, D&S IFCA argued that the compensatory measures planned by NNB do not go far enough to compensate for the harm likely to be caused by NNB's proposals to remove the Acoustic Fish Deterrent. Although D&S IFCA recognises the important ecological role of saltmarsh and other coastal habitats, D&S IFCA also believes that compensatory measures, for harm caused to protected sites and species, should be more ambitious than those proposed by NNB in the recent consultation.

Among other issues, D&S IFCA also challenged some of the evidence used in NNB's impact assessments, NNB's case for removing the acoustic fish deterrent from the cooling water intakes despite evidence of likely harm to protected sites, and the suitability of NNB's compensation and monitoring plans. The full consultation response is available to read on D&S IFCA's website.



Information and Evidence

Please visit the D&S IFCA website – Marine Spatial Prioritisation Display page for a range of information:

<https://www.devonandsevernifca.gov.uk/marinespatialprioritisation/>

RESPONDING TO PUBLIC CONSULTATIONS

D&S IFCA responds to range of public consultations from different organisations. In addition to Defra's Fisheries Management Plans consultations, D&S IFCA has responded to the following consultations in FY2023/2024:

MMO Consultations:

Seasonal Closure of the Crawfish Fishery in ICES Area 7: D&S IFCA provided a response on 27th November 2023 and supported a closed season for the fishery. **Lyme Bay Potential Management Measures for the Sole Fishery:** D&S IFCA highlighted concerns regarding the impact of the increased netting for sole in the Lyme Bay area and the impact of this activity on crab stocks, due to bycatch and crushing of crabs in the net haulers, as well as the issues of gear conflict raised by fishers operating out of the local East Devon Ports. D&S IFCA supported a potential increase in the minimum conservation reference size of sole, in light of the information provided by Cefas, as well as the consideration of an increase in minimum mesh size for fixed nets, otter trawls and beam trawls. However, D&S IFCA highlighted the potential need to look at the impacts of these measures on the wider ICES 7e area and on fishing opportunities in the area.

Defra Consultations:

Remote Electronic Monitoring in English Waters: D&S IFCA responded fully supporting the approach to maximise the benefits of REM technologies and stated that the adoption of REM across the main English fisheries is necessary if the Country has any meaningful prospect of having world class fisheries. D&S IFCA also went on to state that REM provides the opportunity to gather much better, high-quality data, which will inform how current fisheries are actually operating at the moment and allow, through a co-management approach, to introduce better management. D&S IFCA highlighted that REM technologies can be used to provide meaningful protection of MPAs nationally. D&S IFCA pointed out that with collaboration with the fishing industry, co-management can be achieved, and the use of REM technologies can be beneficial to the fishing industry as well as for regulators and evidence gathering. D&S IFCA also made the point that REM is likely to be much more effective at monitoring fishing activity and compliance with regulations than using patrol vessels and aircraft.

Environment Agency Consultations:

Plymouth City Council Application to vary an Environmental Permit for Discharge: D&S IFCA raised concerns regarding the increase in quantity of discharge from the Chelston Meadow LTP site and its potential impacts on the River Plym. It was also concerned that the application does not deal with the underlying issue that the plant storage and treatment facility is insufficient to deal with the amount of leachate that required treatment especially through increased rainfall events. D&S IFCA also raised some concerns about the concentrations of metals in the discharge and the need to monitor the surround area of the discharge point. D&S IFCA also pointed out the River Plym is a County Wildlife Site and the mudflats in the vicinity of the discharge are used by overwintering feeding birds, and that the site is part of the Plymouth Sound and Estuaries SAC designated for allis shad and is a migratory route for smelt, eel, salmon and sea lamprey, all of which are susceptible to acute toxicity and chronic sediment accumulation.

NRW Marine Licence Applications:

Bedwyn Sands and North Middle Ground, Severn Estuary – Dredging for Marine Minerals: D&S IFCA raised concerns regarding the potential impacts to the features of marine protected areas including Annex 1 habitats within the Severn Estuary SAC and Severn Estuary SSSI and the marine fish assemblage of the Severn Estuary SAC. D&S IFCA stated that it believes, by the nature of the aggregate extraction process, the conservation objectives of the site and its features will be directly impacted. D&S IFCA highlighted that the extraction of volume of approximately 5 million m³ will impact the vertical distribution of sediments and that dredging would lower the substrate across the entire licence area by approximately 35cm, which is a significant change to the designated features. D&S IFCA also raised concerns regarding the low-level monitoring of the macrofaunal changes in the site by the applicant and the poor sampling methodology, both leading to unsatisfactory assessment of the impacts of the dredging activity. D&S IFCA challenged the five-year substantive review baseline being used by the Applicant as it makes it impossible to know what damage to the habitat features has occurred, due to the dredging that has taken place since dredging began over a much longer period than five years (since 2008 in Bedwyn Sands and 2011 at North Middle Grounds). D&S IFCA raised concerns on the impact of fish species such as cod and whiting, and in particular sand eels that are a component of the fish assemblage and of the regional food web. D&S IFCA also responded to a similar consultation held by MMO on aggregate dredging from these sites in English waters.

MARINE PROTECTED AREAS

Success Criterion

The work undertaken on these workstreams meets Defra Success Criterion 3

The IFCA will support implementation of a well-managed network of marine protected areas by: developing a range of criteria-based management options; implementing management measures to ensure that inshore fisheries activities comply with the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009 and the revised approach to managing commercial fisheries in European Marine Sites; and that local management contributes to delivery of targets for the Marine Strategy Framework Directive, Water Framework Directive and Marine Plans.

D&S IFCA received additional funding from Defra for work associated with Marine Protected Areas.



Within the D&S IFCA's District there are currently twenty-two MPAs: ten European Marine Sites (SAC, SPA); four Tranche 1 MCZs; two Tranche 2 MCZs and six Tranche 3 MCZs. These MPAs cover 42.39% of the D&S IFCA's District. The MPA site designation of and conservation advice for the features are aimed at reducing the potential destruction, damage, or reduction in distribution of marine species and/or habitats. D&S IFCA has the largest mobile fishing fleet (demersal towed gear vessels) operating within an IFCA district. The designated MPA area with the D&S IFCA's District covers 1,914.35 km², of which 1,100 km² is currently closed to demersal fishing gear to protect the sensitive features, which equates 57.39%. Of the remaining 814 km² within MPAs, a large proportion is designated for non-benthic species such as the harbour porpoise in the Bristol Channel Approaches SAC. Sixty-eight percent or 1,302.26 km² of the designated MPA area are subject to management measures for the protection of sensitive habitats and species (including spiny lobster).

EMS/MCZ Assessments

All but one MCZ assessment for all Tranches of MCZs were completed by 31st March 2024. The remaining assessment relates to netting in a small area of the Devon Avon MCZ that lies outside the Avon Estuary boundary. A draft was produced in March 2024 but not finalised. This screening assessment outlines the potential for netting to take place although this activity does not currently take place. Of the ten European Marine Sites within the District all assessments have been completed for nine of the sites. The only outstanding Habitat Regulations Assessments that need to be completed are for the Bristol Channel and Approaches SAC, where harbour porpoise is the designated feature. D&S IFCA has been in discussions with the MMO and CIFCA, who share responsibility for management of fishing activities within the site, and have attended meetings and workshops, the latest of which was in February 2024 to share knowledge and potential approaches to managing fishing activity in this site. These will be completed by the end of 2024. Officers have also provided details of all the MPA assessments completed since 2012 to the AIFCA and Defra, explaining the formal advice received from Natural England, what management is in place and whether those outstanding assessments will be completed with management in place by the end 2024 to fulfil UK commitment under the Environmental Improvement Plan.

EMS/MCZ Monitoring and Control Plans

Monitoring and Control Plans (M&CPs) are in place for certain fishing activities in some MPAs in the D&S IFCA's District, those being: Lundy SAC (trawling on coarse sediment); Torbay MCZ (trawling on mud habitat, and netting and potting on seagrass); Plymouth Sound and Estuaries SAC (netting vs shad and potting on seagrass) and Severn Estuary SAC (netting vs shad). The activities occurring in these sites are monitored and reviewed annually and either reported to Natural England or recorded in a D&S IFCA audit trail database. All reviews of the M&CPs were completed in FY2023/2024.

Publishing MPA Assessments

To view completed Marine Conservation Zone (MCZ) Assessments and Habitat Regulation Assessments (HRAs) please visit the website: Resource Library – Section H

<https://www.devonandsevernifca.gov.uk/Resource-library/H-Environment-and-Research>

RESEARCH WORK – OUT IN THE FIELD

Taw Torridge Bivalve Mollusc Stock Assessments

Whilst surveying of the mussel stocks on the Taw Torridge Estuary was carried out on three out of the five established beds, a full survey was not achieved in 2023/2024. Due to tidal constraints and boat logistical difficulties, access to two of the main Taw Torridge Estuary mussel beds, Sprat Ridge and Pulleys, was not accomplished. In order to overcome this problem, officers worked with a drone operator to take aerial footage of the beds. Analysis of this footage identified that it was not possible to differentiate live mussel from dead mussel on the ground, and therefore this footage could not be used to inform the assessment of stocks on these beds. In late February, officers did manage to get access, by foot, to the Pulleys bed on a low water spring tide to try and ground truth the drone footage. Whilst this too proved difficult, officers were encouraged by the amount of mussel identified and the extent of the bed. The remaining beds were surveyed, and data were analysed. A report was drafted in March 2024. Taw Torridge cockle beds were also surveyed. The cockles beds on the Taw Torridge were surveyed, data analysed, and a draft report produced.



Seasonality of Egg Bearing Lobsters

Officers have undertaken lobster surveys regularly throughout the summer and autumn of 2023, on board several fishing boats operating in the North and South of the District. A total of 16 surveys were undertaken. Morphometric data have been collected on carapace length, sex, abdomen width and claw size and, for those lobsters that are egg bearing, the condition and developmental stage of the eggs has been recorded. All data collected have been inputted in spreadsheets for analysis later in 2024, alongside additional data to be collected during the on-board surveys during 2024. Officers determined that an additional year's survey work was required to get the best evidence of the seasonality of egg bearing lobsters, and therefore further survey work will be undertaken in 2024 to gather a second year's worth of data. During on-board surveys, Officers also engaged with fishers to discuss their thoughts and concerns on the crustacea fisheries within both the District and nationally.



Success Criteria

The work undertaken on these workstreams meets Defra Success Criterion 3 – with different Success Outcomes.

“The IFCA will develop Fisheries Management Plans for priority species where appropriate. Shared objectives will be developed with identified partners; actions identified, and best practice reflected so that management makes a contribution to sustainable development”.

The IFCA will identify issues likely to affect sustainable management of the marine environment in the D&S IFCA District; undertake risk assessment and gap analysis; review appropriateness of existing measures; evaluate management options and develop and implement proportionate marine management solutions.

Information and Evidence

Please visit the D&S IFCA – Environment & Research display pages for a range of information.

Section H of the website Resource Library contains many completed research reports.

GOVERNANCE

Governance related work is relevant to different Success Criteria – however the Authority is supported by an organised, efficient, and effective secretariat. New members will receive an induction pack and briefing from the Authority. There will be a rolling twelve-month schedule of quarterly Authority meetings. Notices of meetings and documentation will be made available in line with Standing Orders.

There is a rolling twelve-month schedule of quarterly Authority meetings and officers organise and prepare relevant information for these and other meetings including the Byelaw & Permitting Sub-Committee and the working groups that have been established by the Authority to assist with different workstreams.

Planning, organising, and managing different elements of work undertaken by the Authority is a time consuming, but necessary requirement if goals are to be achieved. Internal working and systems must meet legal requirements and other areas of internal process are constantly under review. A Governance Working Group (GWG) has been established by the Authority and has immediate and longer-term goals, including beginning and completing tasks that were set out in recent Annual Plans.

D&S IFCA's Publication Scheme has expanded during 2023/2024, with the website Resource Library maintained as the platform for the Authority to continue to be as transparent as possible with its information. The range of meetings undertaken by officers is divided between internal and external, the later catering for a wide range of interests applicable to the organisation.

Publishing of Non-Reserved IFCA Committee Papers.

Authority meetings have taken place this financial year on 15th June 2023, 21st September 2023, 25th January 2024 and 21st March 2024. All information other than Part 2 information is published on the website – Meetings tab and within the Resource Library. Draft minutes that have been initially reviewed by Members are also published, along with minutes that have been approved at the following meeting.

B&PSC meetings have taken place this financial year on 31st August 2023, 16th November 2023, and 22nd February 2024. All papers and reports for B&PSC are published in the same way as the Authority papers. It is the same process for minutes of the B&PSC meetings as it is for the Authority meeting minutes with both draft minutes and approved minutes being accessible to the public.

<https://www.devonandsevernifca.gov.uk/resource-library/>

<https://www.devonandsevernifca.gov.uk/authority-meetings/>

Governance Working Group (GWG)

The GWG did not complete the review of D&S IFCA's Communication Strategy in 2023/2024.

The GWG did not begin the review of D&S IFCA's Compliance & Enforcement Strategy in 2023/2024.

Job Evaluation

The GWG assisted officers with the job evaluation process, as set out within the Annual Plan. A paper was developed for the September 2023 Authority meeting and as a result of the Members' decision, D&S IFCA has adopted a new pay scale, including unsocial payments where relevant.

In addition, officers have developed and implemented a policy to cover work undertaken in exceptional circumstances. Updated Job Profiles and Role Information Questionnaires were prepared as part of the Job Evaluation process.

PERMITS AND EXEMPTIONS

Permits

Permits are needed to conduct mobile fishing, potting, netting, and diving for specific species.

Other than mobile fishing, there are permits for both commercial and recreational fishers.

The permit conditions contain most of the control measures for each fishing method.

In FY 2023/2024 D&S IFCA issued 691 permits which can remain valid for two years. At present (31st March 2024) there is a total of 472 commercial permit holders and 813 recreational permit holders: In total there are 1285 permits in use.

Potting (commercial) -	188	Mobile Fishing (at sea) -	112
Potting (recreational)-	452	Mobile Fishing (estuary) -	9
Diving (commercial) -	20	Netting (commercial) -	143
Diving (recreational) -	289	Netting (recreational) -	72

Exemptions

This task is related to the consideration and potential issue of authorisations (Exemptions) under the Exemption Byelaw 2019 (or individual Byelaws) for scientific, stocking and breeding purposes, which must be determine within 60 days of receipt.

During FY 2023/2024, D&S IFCA received (24) Exemption requests and issued (22) Authorisations to a range of stakeholders including the Environment Agency, Cefas, University of Plymouth, Essex University, and the Marine Biological Association.

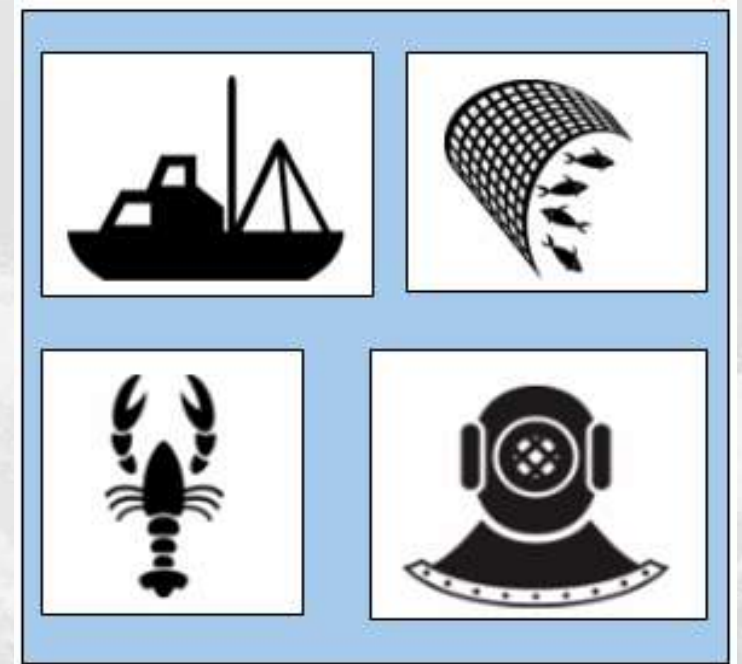
This is an on-going workstream.

The Authorisation request form, to obtain an exemption, is available on D&S IFCA's website – on the Exemptions display page - or can be requested by contacting the Office.

Information

The online permit application facility can be found here:

<https://www.devonandsevernifca.gov.uk/apply-for-a-permit/>



Information

For more information about Exemptions/Authorisations, please visit the website:

<https://www.devonandsevernifca.gov.uk/enforcement-and-legislation/exemptions-to-byelaws/>

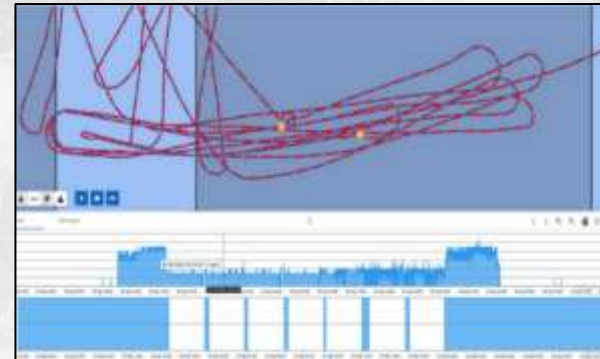
USING TECHNOLOGY, INNOVATION, & TRIALLING NEW TECHNOLOGY

Trialling New Technologies

The task for FY 2023/2024 was to secure external funding to continue the trial of REM and cameras and sensors on 10 scallop dredgers operating within the D&S IFCA's District to further test its success and application. This is with a view to potentially use these technologies to further manage the exploitation of sea fish resources in Marine Protected Areas in the District and protect sensitive designated features. In addition, the expectation was to extend the REM trial onto potting vessels in the District to assess the suitability of this technology on these vessels.

Report:

This project was expected to start in April but for various reasons was not progressed as quickly as first envisaged. Seven vessel owners volunteered to be part of the second phase of the Remote Electronic Monitoring trials. Cameras and gear sensors were fitted to five vessels during September and October 2023. An extension to the Fisheries and Seafood Scheme funded project was granted until end of April 2024 due to the late start of the project. The vessels involved in the second phase of the trial included both otter trawlers and scallop dredging vessels.



The varying size of the vessels and the different fishing methods will help to demonstrate the applicability of the technology across all demersal towed gears.

Results from the project to date are very encouraging. Due to improved technology, live reporting from the gear sensors and cameras was available throughout the District and far outside, 10-15 nautical miles offshore. The cameras and tracking devices experienced no failures. Gear sensors did fail on one of the scallop dredging vessels. The most notable lesson so far was how important the initial installation of the devices was to the successful use of the technology.

The technology trialled offers a low-cost solution to deliver automated monitoring of mobile gear vessel activity in the District and provision of meaningful protection to the Marine Protected Area network. It is the Authority's intention to seek external funding to support the potential roll out and of the technology across the mobile gear fleet operating in its District and cover the annual operating costs for each vessel and back-office support. It will also be necessary to introduce the amended Mobile Fishing Permit Byelaw. Work has not begun on extending the trial to potting vessels due to delivering other workstreams.

Success Criterion 3

The IFCA will support implementation of a well-managed network of marine protected areas by: developing a range of criteria-based management options; implementing management measures to ensure that inshore fisheries activities comply with the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009 and the revised approach to managing commercial fisheries in European Marine Sites; and that local management contributes to delivery of targets for the Marine Strategy Framework Directive, Water Framework Directive and Marine Plans.

Information

A presentation on the Remote Electronic Monitoring Project (including the equipment being used) can be viewed by visiting the website:

<https://www.devonandsevernifca.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/REM-Presentation-2024.pdf>

BYELAW DEVELOPMENT & PERMIT CONDITION REVIEW

Success Criterion 3

IFCAs use evidence based and appropriate measures to manage the sustainable exploitation of sea fisheries resources and deliver marine environmental protection within its district.

Success Criterion

Outcomes

The IFCA will identify issues likely to affect sustainable management of the marine environment in the D&S IFCA District; undertake risk assessment and gap analysis; review appropriateness of existing measures; evaluate management options and develop and implement proportionate marine management solutions.

Task – To Review the Netting Permit Conditions

The findings of pre-consultation were documented and presented to Members of the B&PSC along with officers' papers setting out recommendations. Other papers and reports relevant to the review were also presented to the B&PSC and this included the findings of a Bass Survivability Study. Potential changes to management measures were identified by the B&PSC to be set out in a formal consultation. This included the opening of Salcombe Estuary to fixed netting, a topic not recommended by officers to be included in the formal consultation. This addition as a topic for formal consultation resulted in a significant amount of unplanned additional work for officers, and some financial costs to the Authority including the purchase and testing of technology - tagging of nets. There was a B&PSC meeting on 22nd February 2024 with officers' papers including the findings of the formal consultation. A decision was reached on what changes to make to the Netting Permit Conditions. It was determined that Salcombe Estuary should remain closed to drift and fixed nets. Changes to Netting Permit Conditions (to apply from 1st July 2024) included new management measures for both commercial and recreational fishers. The B&PSC agreed that the Emsstrom Angling Zone should become a no netting zone – as regulation, rather than continuing as a voluntary code of conduct. New catch restrictions for recreational fishers were agreed including daily bag limits for a range of finfish species

Task – To Introduce new Byelaws - Size of Fishing Vessels Byelaw 2022 and Mobile Fishing Permit Byelaw 2022

A package of information for both of the replacement Byelaws (proposed Byelaws, Impact Assessments, proof of advertising, minutes of meetings) were sent to the MMO (byelaw review/legal team) in late May 2023. The MMO confirmed receipt of both Byelaws; however, the MMO was unable to provide feedback and advice within the expected 45-day period for Quality Assurance.

On 3rd August 2023, the MMO provided feedback on the proposed Size of Fishing Vessels Byelaw 2022 and the accompanying Impact Assessment. Changes to both the Byelaw and the Impact Assessment were recommended by the MMO before the Byelaw was submitted to the Secretary of State. Officers analysed the comments and discussed the feedback with the Byelaw Technical Working Group. Officers applied minor changes to the Byelaw. The Byelaw was sent back to the MMO with a revised Impact Assessment on 13th December 2023. The Byelaw was submitted to Defra on 15th December 2023 with a recommendation from the MMO that it is signed by the Secretary of State.

Regarding the Mobile Fishing Permit Byelaw 2022, officers received a package of information relating to MMO comments and advice in December 2023 (Byelaw feedback) and in January 2024 (Impact Assessment feedback). Further correspondence with the MMO was undertaken during 2024. D&S IFCA has refused to accept advice from the MMO regarding changes to some of the content of the Byelaw.

Information and Evidence

All papers and reports presented to the B&PSC are published on the website.

Information such as Impact Assessments and final Byelaw Development Reports can be viewed in Section F of the website Resource Library.

COMMUNICATION & CONSULTATION

D&S IFCA's Approach to Communications

D&S IFCA must recognise its limited resources with its approach to communications. The Authority's website and social media, such as Facebook, remains a key component of D&S IFCA's Communication Strategy. Electronic engagement, rather than one-to-one communications, is effective and importantly less expensive and less time consuming.

Data Base of Contact and Communication Options

D&S IFCA maintains a data base of contacts that includes a wide range of stakeholders. D&S IFCA's use of permits to manage fishing activity has enabled the collection of contact details, and therefore enables some targeting of communications to different sub-groups.

Mailchimp is often used to reach all D&S IFCA contacts for key messages and for formal consultation. Email (and sub-groups of email addresses) can be effective reaching smaller audiences, such as different groups of permit holders, or Authority Members. Hard copies are sent in the post for those with no access to e-mails.

The Website & Facebook

The website is the central point for a lot of communication work. The website supports a range of display pages to inform stakeholders (and Members) about our role with the marine environment, fisheries legislation, our enforcement activity, meetings, news (flexible content depending on requirements) and more. There is a dedicated display page for "Engagement and Have Your Say". D&S IFCA is committed to transparency with information and can demonstrate successful delivery by publishing its outputs (in the Resource Library on its website).

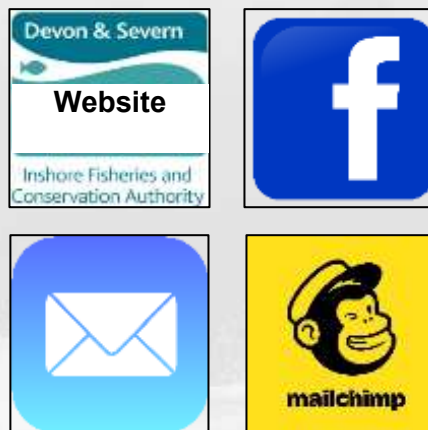
News Items

News items of mixed content can reflect work undertaken by D&S IFCA, and often partner organisations.

Website analytics demonstrate that news items attract the attention of visitors to D&S IFCA's website.

News items can link to more detailed information held in D&S IFCA's Resource Library or other websites.

<https://www.devonandsevernifca.gov.uk/latest-news-information/>



Success Criterion 1

IFCAs are recognised and heard, whilst working in partnership and engaging with stakeholders.

Success Criterion 1 Outcomes:

The IFCA will maintain its website, ensuring public access to current fisheries and conservation information for the District, including management requirements and byelaws. Non-reserved IFCA Committee papers will be published.

Outputs:

27 news items were produced – various content.

42 direct circulation information mail shots

Information and Evidence:

The website is updated every week.

D&S IFCA has over 1500 contacts on its mailing list.

All news items are produced both in blog format & in pdf format.

An archive of all news items is maintained in the website Resource Library (Section G).

Information circulated for different work such as byelaw consultations, and fishing activity surveys is also held as an archive.

Netting Permit Conditions Review (communication aspect)

The review of the Netting Permit Conditions included different phases of communication work, that was fully documented.

The pre-consultation began on 19th May 2023 and ended on 30th June 2023. This was an “open” phase of informal consultation that enabled all stakeholders to provide their views on current management and to submit any additional evidence.

A report was produced for the B&PSC and discussed on 31st August 2023. To reflect the decision making of B&PSC Members, formal consultation was undertaken on a series of proposed changes to the Netting Permit Conditions. The formal consultation began on 1st December 2023 and ended on 19th January 2024. In both cases, communications for consultations included direct circulation of information (Mail Chimp) and a communication package (news/text) used on both the website (Latest News Page & Engagement Page) and Facebook. D&S IFCA provided stakeholders with options how to respond and stakeholders were encouraged to contact the Officers if they had any questions about the review.

• Effective Communications:

There were (364) responses to the formal consultation – the highest response D&S IFCA has ever had to a consultation. For context, Defra received a total of (255) responses to its national Bass Fisheries Management Plan consultation. Many of those that participated in the review were impressed with the detail and availability of background information that were made available as part of the communication package (including hyperlinks to Officers’ papers and minutes from B&PSC meetings). Officers have confidence that the existing Communications Strategy is effective.

Supporting Partner Organisations with Communications

News items of mixed content can reflect work undertaken by D&S IFCA, and often partner organisations. In FY 2023/2024 news has been produced to support communications originally produced by Defra, the MMO and the AIFCA. Items are often shared on social media, reaching a wide audience. In addition, the content of news items can be directly circulated to D&S IFCA’s contacts.

• Creation of News Item:

The news item (right) was produced to assist communications highlighted to all IFCA’s by AIFCA. The news item informed the audience about partnership working involving Cefas, Substance, and the Angling Trust about angling research with the opportunity to become a contacted surveyor for the “Catchwise” project.

The news item was produced in different formats, with the pdf version held as an archive. The archived news is held in D&S IFCA’s Resource Library and can be read [here](#).



ATTENDANCE AT AUTHORITY & BYELAW & PERMITTING SUB-COMMITTEE MEETINGS

There is a rolling twelve-month schedule of quarterly Authority meetings, that are planned and advertised well in advance of the meeting dates. The membership is comprised of Elected Members from the Funding Local Authorities, Marine Management Organisation (MMO) appointees (General Members), including MMO officer, and Statutory Members representing Natural England and the Environment Agency. From this Membership, appointments are made to the B&PSC.

Authority Meetings FY 2023/2024

Authority Meeting	June 2023	September 2023	January 2024	March 2024
Local Authority (Number of Elected Members)	Elected Members Attending	Elected Members Attending	Elected Members Attending	Elected Members Attending
Devon County Council (5)	2	2*	4	3
Torbay Council (1)	1	1	1	1
Plymouth City Council (1)	1	0	0	0
North Somerset Council (1)	0	0	0	0
Somerset Council (1)	0	0	0	0
Bristol City Council (1)	0	0	0	0
Gloucestershire County Council (1)	0	0	1	0
South Gloucestershire Council (1)	1	1	0	1
Total (12)	5	4	6	5
General Members (including MMO Officer)	General Members Attending	General Members Attending	General Members Attending	General Members Attending
Total (16)	13	4	7	9
Natural England (NE) Representative	NE Representative Attending	NE Representative Attending	NE Representative Attending	NE Representative Attending
Total (1)	1	1	0	0
Environment Agency (EA) Representative	EA Representative Attending	EA Representative Attending	EA Representative Attending	EA Representative Attending
Total (1)	0	1	0	1
Total Membership (30)	Total Attending (19)	Total Attending (10)	Total Attending (13)	Total Attending (15)

B&PSC Meetings FY 2023/2024

Byelaw & Permitting Sub-Committee Meeting	August 2023	November 2023	February 2024
18 Members – (appointments, although open to all Members)	15	11	14

Information

A list of current Authority Members, and those appointed to the B&PSC, can be found by visiting the website: Our Members Page.

<https://www.devonandsevernifca.gov.uk/about-us-our-work/our-members/>

NATIONAL IFCA SUCCESS CRITERIA

To support the positive delivery of the national vision, IFCAs have agreed a set of national success criteria matched with corresponding working-level objectives. The vision, success criteria and national working objectives are designed to assist in the creation of a shared understanding of the aims and objectives of all IFCAs nationally and focus positive service delivery towards achievement of the national vision. These national IFCA performance criteria also link directly to the UK Marine Policy Statement.

Focus and Priorities for the Year – Annual Plan 2023/2024

Each year the Authority Members agree and set their objectives for the year ahead which are outlined within the summary work programme contained within the Authority's Annual Plan. The 2023/2024 Annual Plan was adopted by Members on 16th March 2023.

Success Criterion 1:

IFCAs are recognised and heard, whilst working in partnership and engaging with stakeholders.

Success Criterion 2:

IFCAs implement a fair, effective and proportionate enforcement regime.

Success Criterion 3:

IFCAs use evidence based and appropriate measures to manage the sustainable exploitation of sea fisheries resources and deliver marine environmental protection within their districts.

Success Criterion 4:

IFCAs have appropriate governance in place and staff are trained and professional.

Success Criterion 5:

IFCAs make the best use of evidence to deliver their objectives.

Success Criterion 1: IFCA's are recognised and heard, whilst working in partnership and engaging with stakeholders.

Outcomes

The IFCA will maintain and implement an effective Communication Strategy.

01 The GWG to Review D&S IFCA's Communication Strategy & Delivery Plan

This work will involve familiarisation with current documentation, establishing a drafting team, developing robust drafts, and attending Governance Working Group (GWG) meetings to review drafts. The final objective is the adoption of the Communication Strategy by the Authority.



Report:

This task was carried forward from FY 2022/2023 and is a Key Goal for 2023/2024. Since 1st April 2023, work has not progressed on the review of the Communications Strategy. There was one meeting of the GWG between 1st April 2023 and the end of February 2024. The GWG meeting in 2023 did not focus on the review of the review of the Communications Strategy. In June 2023, the GWG were given an additional task by the Authority relating to the job evaluation exercise (task 038). The GWG reviewed the financial package of Officers and reported back to the Authority at the September Authority meeting. Although the review has not begun, it is the view of Officers that the existing Communications Strategy is effective, evidenced by the large response in the formal consultation for the review of the Netting Permit Conditions (task 07), the largest response to a consultation that D&S IFCA has ever had.

02 Stakeholder Database

To maintain a database of stakeholder contacts which will be reviewed and updated by 31st March each year. This will facilitate engagement with stakeholders. Also, to maintain the database of D&S IFCA Permit Holders.



Report:

The data base/s of contacts has been maintained. Depending on the circulated messages and information, the contact list/s has been used for targeted direct communications (for example email circular) for different audiences. These groups include permit holders (per fishing activity), all permit holders, Members of the Authority, and a contact group of all stakeholders. Since 1st April 2023, there have been 40 direct messages that have included information to Members (for example funding updates), information about FMP engagement events, opportunities to be part of the REM project, consultation (Byelaw review) and guidance for fishers to help them remain compliant with legislation.

The IFCA will maintain its website, ensuring public access to current fisheries and conservation information for the District, including management requirements and byelaws. Non-reserved IFCA Committee papers will be published.

The IFCA will contribute to co-ordinated activity at a national level.

03

Website (review) and Communications and Information Sharing

To review the website by the last day of each working month, and by 31st March each year to ensure it meets the objectives of D&S IFCA's Communication Strategy. Producing and uploading news items on the work of D&S IFCA and other relevant information to the website.



Report:

The content of the website is reviewed and updated (when required) every week. Display pages are updated when required and news items are displayed and archived in the website Resource Library (Section G). Although delayed, the website Content Management System (CMS) was upgraded to "Word-press". This change in the CMS impacted on the functionality of some hyperlinks embedded in some pre-published documentation; however, the benefits of the upgrade outweigh any initial complications. Officers have reduced the content of the Members' secure area and invited Members to comment on its layout and what to place in this section for the benefit of Members. Twenty seven news items were produced in FY 2023/2024 covering a mix of topics, including content sent to D&S IFCA by Defra or the AIFCA for further dissemination. Officers are encouraged to highlight completed work/reports suitable for publishing which can then be added to the Resource Library and reports, Officers' papers, and minutes from Authority and B&PSC meetings will continue to be added to the Resource Library.

04

Participation in National and Regional Fisheries and Conservation Activities

By 31st March each year, the IFCA will have participated appropriately, proportionately and at the right level of delegation, in regional and national fisheries and conservation activity including attendance at meetings e.g., NIMEG, RFG, TAG. Officers have continued to review Marine Licence Applications (MLAs) and consultations.



Report:

Twenty-two MLA consultations have been reviewed, which have included several responses to proposed seaweed farms in several locations including: in Charlton Bay; just outside the harbour limits of Torbay and one in North Devon at Combe Martin Bay. Responses were also given to a proposed mussel farm in Bigbury Bay; a proposal for green gravel kelp restoration project in the Plymouth Sound, and a marine licence application regarding the White Cross Wind Farm in North Devon. The use of IVMS has been valuable in being able to fully respond to the impact of marine developments on existing uses of the marine space.

Officers have also provided feedback to MMO consultations on the South and South West Marine Plans and participated in a workshop on the marine element of Local Nature Recovery Strategies. Responses were also provided for national proposals for king scallop closures in ICES areas 7d and 7e; managing the sole fishery in Lyme Bay and a seasonal closure for the crawfish fishery in ICES Rectangle 7. D&S IFCA also responded to a consultation on Remote Electronic Monitoring (REM). D&S IFCA participated in an ICES stock identification workshop for the 'Benchmark on selected sea bass stocks' (WKBSEABASS-ID; [report available in ICES library](#)) and participated in the ICES Workshop on Bristol and Western Channel Herring (WKRRBWCH) in December 2023.

The IFCA will contribute to co-ordinated activity at a national level.

D&S IFCA manages the Waddeton Order on the Dart Estuary, providing an opportunity for diversification into small-scale oyster farming. In April 2023, D&S IFCA provided a range of detailed information to the Duchy of Cornwall, which owns the estuary fundus of the Waddeton Order, to encourage consideration of continuing the lease beyond 2026. This information, based on the latest research, demonstrated that Pacific oyster mariculture is consistent with Defra advice on this species, and would not harm the features of local Marine Protected Areas.

05

Hinkley Point C Nuclear Power Station – HPC Marine Technical Forum - MLA Applications

Work relating to this workstream is expected to continue into FY 2023/2024 in particular in relation to the development and proposed material changes to the water intakes at Hinkley C. This will meet the objectives of Marine Spatial Prioritisation programme, as an example of D&S IFCA's commitments to national engagement to support sustainable development, directly funded by Defra.



Report:

Officers have continued to engage with the Hinkley Point C (HPC) Marine Technical Forum and attend meetings with HPC staff and other regulators to discuss environmental permitting and consents for HPC. Officers have also engaged with relevant scientists to gather additional evidence relating to relevant fish species in the vicinity of HPC. In February 2024, officers responded to an HPC consultation for the pre-application phase of a material change to HPC's major planning consent (Development Consent Order), which included responding to proposals to (i) remove the acoustic fish deterrent from the cooling water intakes, and (ii) provide alternative measures to compensate for the resulting harm caused to fish populations.

06

Crustacea Fisheries Engagement

To engage with potting fishers in the District to listen to their concerns about crab and lobster stocks and consider what further management measures would be appropriate.



Report:

Engagement with fishers commenced in 2023 whilst D&S IFCA officers were on-board fishers' vessels undertaking lobster surveys. More structured engagement with potters fishing for crab, lobster and whelk commenced in early 2024 where port meetings were conducted in Clovelly, Appledore and Ilfracombe. These meetings were well-attended, and potting fishers engaged with officers to discuss their concerns with crustacea stocks and management of these fisheries inside D&S IFCA's District, regionally and nationally. The fishers also provided detailed information on their potting activity and location of their operations in the District, which will help inform responses to consultations on marine licence applications as part of the Marine Spatial Prioritisation Programme (task 04). Further port meetings are planned in 2024 for other Potting Permit holders. Officers also attended two workshops and two fishing industry meetings regarding crawfish (spiny lobster) management, involving fishers from Devon, Cornwall, and the Isles of Scilly as well as the MMO, Cefas, Natural England and academic institutions.

The IFCA will maintain its website, ensuring public access to current fisheries and conservation information for the District, including management requirements and byelaws. Non-reserved IFCA Committee papers will be published.

07

Netting Permit Conditions Review (communication aspect)

As part of the Netting Permit Conditions review, there will be an “open” phase of informal consultation to enable all stakeholders to provide their views on current management and to submit any additional evidence. The findings, along with relevant and collated evidence, both from the informal exercise and research (such as findings from the Bass survivability study) will be discussed by the B&PSC. From those discussions, there is potential that appropriate changes to the Permit Conditions will be identified and, if so, formal consultation will be undertaken.



Report:

The pre-consultation began on 19th May 2023 and ended on 30th June 2023. A report was produced for the B&PSC and discussed on 31st August 2023. To reflect the decision making of B&PSC Members, formal consultation was undertaken on a series of proposed changes to the Netting Permit Conditions. The formal consultation began on 1st December 2023 and ended on 19th January 2024. In both cases, communications for consultations included direct circulation of information (Mail Chimp) and a communication package (news/text) used on both the website (Latest News Page & Engagement Page) and Facebook. Stakeholders were encouraged to contact the Officers if they had any questions about the review. There were 364 responses to the formal consultation – the highest response D&S IFCA has ever had to a consultation. For context, Defra received a total of 255 responses to its national Bass Fisheries Management Plan consultation. Many of those that participated in the review were impressed with the detail and availability of background information that were made available as part of the communication package (including hyperlinks to Officers’ papers and minutes from B&PSC meetings). Officers have confidence that the existing Communications Strategy is effective.

08

Fisheries Management Plan Engagement

As part of the national FMP work D&S IFCA will engage with the FMP groups and provide information and expertise to help inform the FMPs. D&S IFCA will also disseminate information to stakeholders in its District so that they can engage with the FMP process through in person and on-line events. All IFCAs have received additional funding from Defra to undertake work to support the development and implementation of national Tranche 1 and Tranche 2 FMPs.



Report:

D&S IFCA continued to be the IFCA lead in the Crab and Lobster FMP Working Group, Science Sub-Group and the Shellfish Industry Advisory Group. D&S IFCA has provided input into the development of the FMP and its evidence statement and research priorities. D&S IFCA has disseminated information to all relevant permit holders, D&S IFCA Members and the wider public regarding in person and on-line engagement events. D&S IFCA continued to be the lead IFCA in the Channel NQS FMP and is a member of the NQS FMP’s working group. Since 1st April 2023 there has been 7 separate mail shots (email circular or Mailchimp) to highlight FMP development and engagement opportunities. Two news items have been produced (May and August) to highlight relevant FMP information – to advertise Defra Flyers and Defra consultations on six front runner FMPs. D&S IFCA Officers provided detailed responses to five out of the six frontrunner FMP consultation in 2023 which included Crab & Lobster, Whelk, Scallop, Bass and Channel NQS FMPs. D&S IFCA continues to sit on the groups and is now inputting into short term management interventions. Officers sit on Tranche 2 FMPs for Skates and Rays and have been invited to join the Celtic Sea and Western Channel Pelagic FMP and North Sea and Channel Sprat FMP.

The IFCA will contribute to co-ordinated activity at a national level.

Success Criterion 2: IFCA's implement a fair, effective, and proportionate enforcement regime.

Outcomes

The IFCA will publish its enforcement risk register and strategy, clearly setting out its approach to achieving regulatory compliance and potential sanctions that may be applied for infringements and/or offences.

09

Review the Compliance and Enforcement Strategy

To review the current strategy and consider introducing new ways of operating. This task is a workstream for the Governance Working Group (GWG).

X

Report:

Work has not begun on the review of the Compliance and Enforcement Strategy. There was one meeting of the GWG between 1st April 2023 and the end of February 2024. The GWG meeting in 2023 did not focus on the review of the Compliance and Enforcement Strategy.

10

Spatial Monitoring of Towed Gear Vessels

To monitor IVMS, VMS and AIS data for mobile fishing gear vessels and to undertake patrols to target mobile gear vessels that may be operating without fully functioning IVMS and VMS devices. This remains a priority workstreams for D&S IFCA. This workstream is imperative to ensure monitoring of compliance of spatial restrictions under the Mobile Fishing Permit Conditions and to seek to ensure the protection of designated features of Marine Protected Areas. Continued monitoring will identify gear conflict between the mobile fishing fleet and other fishing sectors.

✓

Report:

Officers have spent considerable time monitoring spatial data from the towed gear vessels operating in its District. Five formal investigations have been started in the reporting period involving one case of non-reporting IVMS device and four cases of suspected illegal incursions by towed gear boats into Marine Protected Areas. Two MPA investigations involved foreign vessels. In addition, a further four cases from previous years have been concluded.

11

Tasking & Co-ordination Group

To hold bi-weekly Tasking and Co-ordination Group (TCG) meetings in line with the National Intelligence Model (NIM). Officers will continue to prepare intel reports. Outcomes of TCG and intel reports will be disseminated among other regulators (NIMEG) in line with the NIM.

✓

Report:

Officers have held regular internal TCG meetings and there has been a total of eight TCG meetings since 1st April 2023. Officers also attend the MMO's south and south west TCG meetings as well as Southern IFCA's TCG meetings.

Since 1st April 2023 officers have produced 141 Intelligence Reports. These have been produced through a combination of officers' own observations and investigations, together with the information being provided by stakeholders including members of the public.

D&S IFCA will manage operational activity (e.g., through a Tasking & Co-ordination Group) and capture, record, evaluate and disseminate intelligence that is compatible with partner organisations. It is engaged in joint working with partner organisations.

12

Creation of Case Files

Officers will prepare a case file for each reported illegal fishing activity. Each casefile will be shared with the D&S IFCA Legal advisor as part of the determination on whether the evidential and public interest tests, as set out in the Code of Crown Prosecutors, have been met. The preparation of case files is an essential part of the Enforcement Officer role.



Report:

Between 1st April 2023 and 31st March 2024, (50) case files were created and four cases, outstanding from the previous year, were concluded. Only one of these cases remains open - a prosecution for which the initial court hearing is expected in January 2025.

Outcomes for investigations (50) between 1st April 2023 and 31st March 2024 :

•Number of verbal warnings, verbal re-briefs, advisory letters (10). Number of IFCA written warnings including gear offence and seizure notices (15). Financial Administrative Penalties issued (6). Number of simple cautions (2). Court prosecutions (1). No further action due to insufficient evidence or unable to identify offenders (15). Case forwarded to the Marine Management Organisation (MMO) (1).

In June 2023 the number of Enforcement officers reduced to five following the departure of a long serving officer. Due to budgetary constraints the officer was not replaced.

13

Investigation Tables

To compile records of enforcement activity in a standard format; provide them to the National Inshore Marine Enforcement Group (NIMEG) and publish them on D&S IFCA’s website.



Report:

The investigation tables can be viewed on D&S IFCA’s website:

<https://www.devonandsevernifca.gov.uk/Enforcement-Legislation/Investigation-Tables>

14

Code of Conduct

The national Code of Conduct for IFCOs to be published on the D&S IFCA’s website. The review is an annual task for NIMEG. Any amendments to the Code will be published on the website.



Report:

The national code of Conduct is posted on D&S IFCA’s website – Section E of the Resource Library (Enforcement Related Guidance Documents - folder).

D&S IFCA will manage operational activity (e.g., through a Tasking & Co-ordination Group) and capture, record, evaluate and disseminate intelligence that is compatible with partner organisations. It is engaged in joint working with partner organisations.

Warranted Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Officers (IFCOs) will be trained and accredited to nationally agreed standards. They will maintain professionalism and make appropriate interventions to deliver efficient, effective enforcement activity.

The IFCA will have developed consistency in regulations (byelaws) with other organisations.

15

Accreditation and Training

Warranted Officers attain accreditation. All undertake Continuing Professional Development. Further training of Enforcement Officers will be identified through the Personal Development Plans. Internal training will continue, in particular with scenario training, to ensure all warranted Officers are effective in their enforcement roles.



Report:

Four of the officers have completed the RYA Small Ships and Radar course. Two of the officers have completed the RYA Advanced Powerboat course. One officer has completed the RYA Yacht-Master theory course, and one officer has completed the First Aid at Work course. Five officers have undertaken EA/CIFCA Cross Warrant training. There were no STCW training courses undertaken since 1st April 2023 by the Enforcement Officers.

16

Collaborate with Other Regulators.

To work with other regulators to achieve consistent quality, application, and enforcement of management measures.

D&S IFCA has led IFCA representation on the MMO IVMS project for an extended period of time and provided experience gained from the rolling out of IVMS on all D&S IFCA's Mobile Fishing vessels since 2018. It is envisaged that completion of the MMO's roll-out and D&S IFCA's involvement in the project will continue throughout 2023/2024 to provide consistency in IFCA support.



Report:

Together with the EA and CIFCA, officers attend what has now become a regular annual cross warrant meeting, where each organisation delivers a presentation to cover mutually relevant parts of each organisation's legislation, discuss areas of joint risk to enable us to issue cross warrants. This benefits D&S IFCA, with officers from CIFCA and EA cross warranted, particularly valuable in providing a presence on the North Coast, and in providing mutual support with resource. Due to other commitments, attendance at NIMEG meetings has not been fully met but to minimise the impact and cost of attending meeting the schedule has been amended so meetings will be virtual with one two-day face to face meetings each year. Officers also jointly chair the Inshore Potting Agreement Committee meeting with the MMO. Management measures have been amended through MMO fishing vessel licence conditions and D&S IFCA permit conditions to reflect the decision made at this meeting.

Officers hold regular meetings with the Natural England Area Team and the MMO Marine Licencing Team, in order to ensure efficient approaches to a range of management-relevant issues. Officers have also held meetings with Cornwall IFCA and the MMO to discuss assessment and management of activities in the Bristol Channel Approaches SAC (a cross-border marine protected area designated for harbour porpoise) and attended an MMO run workshop on the potential management of fishing activities to prevent bycatch of harbour porpoise in the two offshore harbour porpoise MPAs. This workshop included representatives from MMO, Natural England, JNCC, NRW, Defra, CIFCA, D&S IFCA and EIFCA. D&S IFCA has also attended meetings with the Duchy of Cornwall to discuss the Waddeton Order on the Dart and the future of intertidal shellfisheries within Duchy owned estuaries in Devon. D&S IFCA continues to collaborate with other regulators and Relevant Authorities on reviewing and delivering effective management in line with statutory management schemes for protected sites including the Severn Estuary EMS, Plymouth Sound and Estuaries SAC, and the Exe Estuary SPA.

Success Criterion 3: IFCA's use evidence based and appropriate measures to manage the sustainable exploitation of sea fisheries resources and deliver marine environmental protection within its district.

Outcomes

The IFCA will identify issues likely to affect sustainable management of the marine environment in the D&S IFCA District; undertake risk assessment and gap analysis; review appropriateness of existing measures; evaluate management options and develop and implement proportionate marine management solutions.

17

Review of the existing Netting Permit Conditions

The Netting Permit Conditions were due for a formal review in 2021. Stakeholder expectations are that this review will be undertaken; however, it is advantageous that relevant information to inform the review is available at key phases of discussion and decision-making otherwise momentum is lost. The task of reviewing the Netting Permit Byelaw and Permit Conditions will begin and involve different phases, which will all be documented. There will be an "open" phase of consultation to enable all stakeholders to provide their views on current management. The findings, along with relevant and collated evidence (such as findings from the Bass survivability study) will be discussed by the B&PSC. From those discussions, there is potential that appropriate changes to the Permit Conditions will be identified. If so, further consultation will be undertaken including setting out what the changes would look like as amended Permit Conditions. The review includes communications, administration, and potential drafting of Permit Conditions.

X

Report:

The task of reviewing the Netting Permit Byelaw and Permit Conditions has involved different phases. Initially there was an "open" phase of consultation that enabled all stakeholders to provide their views on current management. The findings, along with relevant and collated evidence (such as findings from the Bass Survivability Study) was discussed by the B&PSC in August and November 2023. From those discussions, potential changes to management measures were identified by the B&PSC to be set out in a formal consultation. This included the opening of Salcombe Estuary to fixed netting, a topic not recommended by officers to be included in the formal consultation. This addition as a topic for formal consultation resulted in a significant amount of unplanned additional work for officers, and some financial costs to the Authority including the purchase and testing of technology - tagging of nets. There was a B&PSC meeting on 22nd February 2024 with officers' papers including the findings of the formal consultation. A decision was reached on what changes to make to the Netting Permit Conditions. To complete this task, (after 1st April 2024) officers must make changes to the Netting Permit Conditions to reflect the decision making of Members and issue the amended Netting Permit Conditions.

18

Introducing the Size of Fishing Vessels Byelaw 2022

Following additional quality assurance from the BTWG, Officers will prepare a final Impact Assessment that recognises the formal consultation response (discussed by the B&PSC in February 2023). A package of information will be sent to the Marine Management Organisation (MMO) for quality assurance prior to submission to the Secretary of State for potential confirmation. Depending on the feedback provided by the MMO, the B&PSC may decide to undertake further decision making. Additional work will include communications and administration.

X**Report:**

A package of information (proposed Byelaw, Impact Assessment, proof of advertising, minutes of meetings) were sent to the MMO (byelaw review/legal team) in late May 2023. The MMO confirmed receipt of the proposed Size of Fishing Vessels Byelaw 2022. The MMO was unable to provide feedback and advice within the expected 45-day period for Quality Assurance; however, on 3rd August 2023, the MMO provided feedback on the proposed Size of Fishing Vessels Byelaw 2022 and the accompanying Impact Assessment. Changes to both the Byelaw and the Impact Assessment were recommended by the MMO before the Byelaw was submitted to the Secretary of State. Officers analysed the comments and discussed the feedback with the Byelaw Technical Working Group. Officers applied minor changes to the Byelaw. The Byelaw was sent back to the MMO with a revised Impact Assessment on 13th December 2023. The Byelaw was submitted to Defra on 15th December 2023 with a recommendation from the MMO that it is signed by the Secretary of State. The Byelaw was not signed by the end of FY 2023/2024.

19**Introducing the Mobile Fishing Permit Byelaw 2022**

Following additional drafting work by the BTWG to recognise the objections (relating to the associated Permit Conditions) submitted during the formal consultation (discussed in February 2022), Officers will prepare a final Impact Assessment that recognises the formal consultation response and the adjustments to the Byelaw (and Permit Conditions) as proposed in the formal consultation. A package of information will be sent to the Marine Management Organisation (MMO) for quality assurance prior to submission to the Secretary of State for potential confirmation. Depending on the feedback provided by the MMO, the B&PSC may decide to undertake further decision making. Additional work will include communications and administration and changes to the on-line permit application facility.

X**Report:**

The MMO (byelaw review/legal team) was provided with a package of information in late May 2023 which included the proposed Byelaw, Impact Assessment, proof of advertising, minutes of meetings and (for context) the proposed Permit Conditions. The MMO confirmed receipt of the proposed Mobile Fishing Permit Byelaw 2022; however, the MMO was unable to provide feedback and advice for quality assurance purposes within the expected 45-day period. D&S IFCA officers received a package of information relating to MMO comments and advice in December 2023 (Byelaw feedback) and in January 2024 (Impact Assessment feedback). Officers have worked with the Byelaw Technical Working Group and subsequently amended the Byelaw. Officers have produced an amended Impact Assessment and completed the MMO/D&S IFCA comments spreadsheet. On 22nd February 2024 the revised package was returned to the MMO. Officers requested an additional meeting with the MMO to complete the financial element of the Impact Assessment. Further correspondence with the MMO was undertaken since February 2024. D&S IFCA has refused to accept advice from the MMO regarding changes to some of the content of the Byelaw.

20

Bass Survivability

To continue to investigate the survival of bass tagged in 2022/2023 after being caught by nets and to maintain the acoustic monitoring of the use of the Salcombe estuary by tagged bass. The acoustic and vitality data collected will be analysed and a report published on this work which will be presented to the B&PSC.



Report:

Officers published the final report 'Understanding Mortality of European Sea Bass (*Dicentrarchus labrax*) in Small-Scale Inshore Netting' on 22nd August 2023. This report was followed by a supplementary data file on 25th August 2023 in response to a request for additional information from an Authority Member. The report was presented as Agenda Item 6 at the B&PSC meeting on 31st August 2023. The report was discussed at length, and the evidence informed later discussions on the review of Netting Permit Conditions. It was agreed at the B&PSC meeting that there should be some minor amendments made to the report and the amended report (version 1.1) was finalised on 1st November 2023.

21

EMS/MCZ Assessments

To complete outstanding MCZ assessments and review MPA assessments as and when required. This is a workstream that continues into the Annual Plan 2023/2024 as assessments are reviewed in light of MPA conditional assessments provided by Natural England and designation of new features. Defra has provided IFCA with additional funding to support its expectation that all MPA assessments will be undertaken by the summer of 2024.



Report:

All but one MCZ assessment for all Tranches of MCZs were completed by 31st March 2024. The remaining assessment relates to netting in a small area of the Devon Avon MCZ that lies outside the Avon Estuary boundary. A draft was produced in March 2024 but not finalised. This screening assessment outlines the potential for netting to take place although this activity does not currently take place.

Of the ten European Marine Sites within the District all assessments have been completed for nine of the sites. The only outstanding Habitat Regulations Assessments that need to be completed are for the Bristol Channel and Approaches SAC, where harbour porpoise is the designated feature. D&S IFCA has been in discussions with the MMO and CIFCA, who share responsibility for management of fishing activities within the site, and have attended meetings and workshops, the latest of which was in February 2024 to share knowledge and potential approaches to managing fishing activity in this site. These will be completed by the end of 2024. Officers have also provided details of all the MPA assessments completed since 2012 to the AIFCA and Defra, explaining the formal advice received from Natural England, what management is in place and whether those outstanding will be completed with management in place by the end 2024 to fulfil UK commitment under the Environmental Improvement Plan

The IFCA will identify issues likely to affect sustainable management of the marine environment in the D&S IFCA District; undertake risk assessment and gap analysis; review appropriateness of existing measures; evaluate management options and develop and implement proportionate marine management solutions.

EMS / MCZ Assessments

To review data and evidence collected regarding fishing activity within four MPAs in the D&S IFCA's District to inform the Monitoring and Control Plans for these MPAs. To use Monitoring and Control Plan (M&CP) findings to review MPA assessments as appropriate. This is a workstream that continues into the Annual Plan 2023/2024 as M&CPs are reviewed annually to inform whether additional management is required.



Report:

Monitoring and Control Plans (M&CPs) are in place for certain fishing activities in some MPAs in the D&S IFCA's District. The sites with M&CPs include: : Lundy SAC; Torbay MCZ; Plymouth Sound and Estuaries SAC and Severn Estuary SAC. Officers produced M&CPs for netting and potting on the features (seagrass and long-snouted seahorse) in Torbay MCZ in September 2023 which support the formal advice from Natural England for these activities in the site. The annual monitoring of fishing activity as agreed under the M&CPs for towed gear in Lundy SAC (trawling on coarse sediment and Torbay MCZ (trawling on mud habitat) was completed and reports were produced in March 2024.

The remaining M&CPs are netting vs shad (Severn Estuary SAC), netting vs shad (Plymouth Sound and Estuaries SAC), and potting vs seagrass (Plymouth Sound and Estuaries SAC). These are no longer formally reported on unless specified trigger points are exceeded. The trigger points relate to increases in the number of permit holders from localised ports, undertaking the specific activity. D&S IFCA encourages permit holders to report bycatch of shad through its bycatch reporting initiative which fulfils the M&CPs' agreed actions. For potting on seagrass within the Plymouth Sound and Estuaries SAC, NE agreed the trigger point of an increase of 25% in active potting permits with the base ports of Plymouth, River Yealm and Saltash using the 2021 baseline reported number of permits issued. For these M&CPs if trigger points are exceeded then a review of the HRAs will be undertaken. An audit trail (Excel spreadsheet) is maintained annually for these trigger point assessments. The Audit trail for 2023/2024 was completed in March 2024.

Monitoring of Commercial Scallop Dive Fishery

To monitor the commercial dive vessels operating in D&S IFCA's District during July, August and September using IVMS and to gather catch and landings data for analysis to measure compliance with the Commercial Diving Permit Conditions during these months.



Report:

Data collation, including IVMS data, Catch app data, sales notes, and landings data, for the vessels operating in the commercial dive fishery during July, August, and September 2023, has not been undertaken due to limited resources. Collation, analysis, and reporting from the two previous years will take place in 2024/2025. Additional research on the timing of scallop spawning in the District was undertaken up to October 2023, to provide further evidence to the report on scallop spawning published in May 2023. This report has yet to be updated. Since sampling began in late March 2023, 18 samples (each of 30 scallops from Torbay) have been processed and data collected will be analysed in 2024/2025.

The IFCA will develop Fisheries Management Plans for priority species where appropriate. Shared objectives will be developed with identified partners; actions identified, and best practice reflected so that management makes a contribution to sustainable development.

24

Fisheries Management Plans (FMPs)

D&S IFCA sits on the national FMP groups and has inputted into the development of six FMPs. Officers will continue to provide evidence and expertise to help the progress of further FMPs. As part of this work D&S IFCA disseminates information to stakeholders in its District so that they can engage with the FMP process through in person and on-line events. All IFCAs have received additional funding from Defra to undertake work to support the development and implementation of national Tranche 1 and Tranche 2 FMPs.



Report:

D&S IFCA has reviewed all the consultation documentation associated with the five front-runner FMPs that are relevant to the D&S IFCA District. This involved thorough review of the FMP itself together with the Evidence statement and fisheries data, research requirements and Strategic Environmental Assessments. Officers provided written responses on the Bass FMP, Whelk FMP, King Scallop FMP, Crab and Lobster FMP and Channel Non-quota Species FMP frontrunner FMPs and shared these with Members of the B&PSC for comment. Responses were submitted to Defra before 1st October 2023. D&S IFCA continues to sit on the groups and is now inputting into short term management interventions. Officers attended Defra's conference on identifying evidence gaps in the Frontrunner FMPs in February 2024. Officers sit on Tranche 2 FMPs for Skates and Rays and have been invited to join the Celtic Sea and Western Channel Pelagic FMP.

25

Taw Torridge Bivalve Mollusc Stock Assessments

To assess the intertidal mussel and cockle stocks in the Taw Torridge Estuary. Officers will survey and assess the bivalve mollusc stocks on the intertidal beds of the Taw Torridge SSSI. The SSSI is designated for its over-wintering birds and the mussels and cockle are an important food for the birds. The results of these assessments will feed into the food availability model and will be used to determine the amount of mussels that can be removed by shellfish operators.



Report:

Officers have surveyed the cockle beds and three out of the five established mussel beds on the Taw-Torridge. Officers have also identified and surveyed a newly settled area of mussel that had not previously been surveyed. Logistical constraints in accessing mid-channel beds (Pulleys and Sprat Ridge) meant that officers worked with a drone operator who undertook an aerial survey of the remaining beds, at the end of September 2023. Analysis of the footage has determined that with the sensor and flight altitudes used, the footage is not sufficient to identify live and dead mussels for input into the stock assessment for the Taw Torridge mussel beds. Analysis of these data will inform the feasibility of future surveys. Officers visited the Pulleys bed at low water on a big spring tide in February 2024 to ground-truth some of the data gathered by the aerial survey and were encouraged with the amount of mussel that was present on this bed. However, given tidal time restraints, a full survey was not undertaken but the discovery of other mussel settlement will help inform the survey work for 2024/2025.

The IFCA will identify issues likely to affect sustainable management of the marine environment in the D&S IFCA District; undertake risk assessment and gap analysis; review appropriateness of existing measures; evaluate management options and develop and implement proportionate marine management solutions.

26

Inshore Potting Agreement Areas

To chair the South Devon Inshore Potting Agreement (IPA) Committee, produce minutes of the meeting, produce an annual chart of the IPA area, disseminate any changes in management of the IPA to permit holders and to the MMO for licence variation purposes.

D&S IFCA, MMO and fishers from the potting and mobile gear sectors meet to discuss co-management options for the IPA. This fisheries conflict resolution management system has been in place for decades and allows for fishing opportunities for both sectors through a combination of D&S IFCA's Mobile Fishing Byelaw permit conditions and MMO Licence Variation.



Report:

A meeting of the Inshore Potting Agreement (IPA) Committee was held on Monday 30th October 2023, where D&S IFCA and MMO jointly chair the meeting. Updates at the meeting included any spatial infringements in the IPA, rollout of the REM trials in the D&S IFCA's District and management of the Skerries Bank and Surrounds MCZ and Start Point to Plymouth Sound and Eddystone SAC which co-locate with the IPA areas. Minutes of the October 2023 meeting were taken, and draft minutes shared with Committee Members in December 2023. Due to the infringement identified in 2023 in the Corridor of the IPA Area (Area C of D&S IFCA's Mobile Fishing Permit Annex 5a) the Committee made the decision to close the Corridor for 2024. D&S IFCA officers have amended the Mobile Fishing Permit Byelaw Category One Permit Conditions and the chart for Annex 5a to show this change, following a brief period of consultation with Mobile Fishing Permit holders. The amended Mobile Fishing Permit Byelaw Category One Permit Conditions and annexes were circulated to permit holders on 28th February 2024.

27

Exemption Authorisations

To review all Exemption Authorisation applications under D&S IFCA Byelaws and determine them within 60 days of receipt.



Report:

Officers assess and process exemption requests as required and within 60 days of receipt. Where the proposed activity involves a gear-feature interaction within a protected area, the necessary protected site assessments are carried out and sent to NE for formal advice before the exemption is authorised. D&S IFCA's website is updated to reflect all current and ongoing exemptions. Twenty-two authorisations have been issued since the beginning of April 2023, and officers have held discussions with regulators on upcoming exemption requests. A table of Exemptions/Authorisations can be viewed on D&S IFCA's website.

<https://www.devonandsevernifca.gov.uk/Enforcement-Legislation/Exemptions-to-Byelaws>

28

Trialling New Technologies

To secure external funding to continue the trial of REM and cameras and sensors on 10 scallop dredgers operating within the D&S IFCA's District to further test its success and application. This is with a view to potentially use these technologies to further manage the exploitation of sea fish resources in Marine Protected Areas in the District and protect sensitive designated features.

To extend the REM trial onto potting vessels in the District to assess the suitability of this technology on these vessels.

X

Report:

This project was expected to start in April but for various reasons has not progressed as quickly as first envisaged. Seven vessel owners volunteered to be part of the second phase of the Remote Electronic Monitoring trials. To date cameras and gear sensors have been fitted to five vessels during September and October 2023. An extension to the Fisheries and Seafood Scheme funded project was granted until end of April 2024 due to the late start of the project. The vessels involved in the second phase of the trial included both otter trawlers and scallop dredging vessels. The varying size of the vessels and the different fishing methods will help to demonstrate the applicability of the technology across all demersal towed gears.

Work has not begun on extending the trial to potting vessels due to delivering other workstreams.

29

Crustacea Research (1)

To gather data on crustacean catches, fishing effort and gear used and to determine the seasonality of egg bearing of lobsters.

Officers will undertake surveys on board fishing vessels operating in the D&S IFCA's District, throughout the year, to ascertain the months of the year lobsters carry eggs, the stages of development of these eggs, the shedding period and the months where there is no egg bearing by lobsters. This evidence will help inform the use of the enforcement tools that may be used to identify if a berried lobster has been scrubbed of its eggs.

X

Report:

Officers have undertaken lobster surveys regularly throughout the summer and autumn 2023, on board several fishing boats operating in the North and South of the District. A total of 16 surveys have been undertaken at time of writing. Morphometric data have been collected on carapace length, sex, abdomen width and claw size and, for those lobsters that are egg bearing, the condition and developmental stage of the eggs has been recorded. All data collected have been inputted in spreadsheets for analysis later in 2024. Further survey work to be undertaken in 2024 to gather a second year's worth of data.

Crustacea Research (2)

Measuring the Hardness of the shell of edible Crab, *Cancer pagurus*.

As part of the Crab and Lobster FMP evidence gathering needs, D&S IFCA, together with Seafish, South Devon and Channel Fishermen and the University of Bangor applied for Fisheries Industry Science Partnership funding to develop a methodology to measure the hardness of the shell of the edible brown crab. This will be trialled using a tool called a Durometer that is used in North America fisheries for this purpose and to monitor compliance with regulations. D&S IFCA Officers together with a Researcher (funded through the project) will be trialling the durometers on board fishing vessels in the D&S IFCA's District.

X

Report:

The progress of this workstream has been delayed in 2023 but will be progressed in 2024. D&S IFCA has been involved in the project, together with Bangor University and South Devon and Channel Shellfishermen and has undertaken two rounds of interviews to recruit a Research Assistant that will be funded by the Fisheries Industry Science Partnership (FISP) project. A candidate was selected in the second round of recruitment in December 2023, and they accepted the position. This ensures that the project can commence in late spring 2024. Durometers, which will be trialled to determine the hardness of the shell of brown crab, have been purchased. Officers, together with the Executive Officer of the South Devon and Channel Shellfishermen, visited the Blue Sea Company to trial the durometers on crabs that were about to be processed. They appeared to work well and Bangor University (who is lead on the Project) will be developing some weights that can be fitted to the durometer to test whether this alteration will improve consistency in the pressure applied to the shell during durometer application. This is an on-going workstream for 2024 and results will feed into the development of early interventions for the Crab and Lobster FMP.

Crustacea Research (3)

Catch/Landings Data

As part of the on-board surveys D&S IFCA Officers will gather catch, gear and activity data to feed into other Crab and Lobster FMP FISP projects and to provide data on catch and landings per unit effort and potentially provide evidence to support considerations in the management of pot fisheries in the District. D&S IFCA officers will work with permit holders in its District and Members of the Authority who have expertise in this area of work.

X

Report:

Officers have been gathering data on lobster catches whilst on-board fishing vessels as part of Crustacea Research (1). Due to the failure to recruit the FISP funded Research Assistant early in 2023, the gathering of data for crab catches, landings and activity has been pushed back into 2024. The gathering of the crab catch data on board fishing vessel will be combined with testing the use of durometers to measure the hardness of the shell of brown crab so that officers use their time on board fishing vessel to gather as much information as possible.

Skerries Bank Angling Zone

Officers will investigate the use of the Skerries Bank Angling Zone and gather data on the fishing activity taking place and the level of catches /landings by the different sectors. This will involve the use of the MMO Catch App and landings data and IVMS through the national roll out. Officers will also gather information on the different methods of marking gear by the sectors operating in the areas and help disseminate this information to the angling sector who use the site.

X

Report:

Following on from the call for information on the Skerries Bank Angling Zone undertaken in FY 2022/2023, officers have reviewed all responses, and a consultation report was published in April 2023. The surveys to date have identified a greater need to be able to accurately determine the use of the site and the seasonality of activity within the site. The wider (national) rollout of IVMS devices to netting vessels will provide detailed information on the fishing activity in the site and Catch App and landings data can be analysed together with IVMS data in 2024/2025. A long-term plan will then be developed.

Intentionally blank

Success Criterion 4: IFCA's have appropriate governance in place and staff are trained and professional.

Outcomes

The IFCA will demonstrate its long-term strategic approach to sustainable marine management by having appropriate plan-making, review, update, and amendment procedures in place.

33

Annual Plan (and submit to Defra)

To publish a Plan on its website by 31st March, setting out the main objectives and priorities for the next financial year. A copy must be sent to the Secretary of State.



Report:

The Annual Plan for FY 2024/2025 was approved by the Authority at the March 2024 Authority meeting. The Annual Plan for 2024/2025 was published on the website by 31st March 2024. It used the same structure and presentational design as the Annual Plan for FY 2023/2024.

34

Annual Report

To publish a Report after the end of the financial year, on its website describing its activities, performance and a summary of audited financial information in that year, by 30th November. A copy will be sent to the Secretary of State.



Report:

The official Annual Report FY 2022/2023 was published at the beginning of this financial year and sent to the Secretary of State. It was completed well before the deadline of 30th November 2023. An eleven-month report for FY 2023/2024 helped officers prepare the Annual Report for FY 2023/2024 that will be submitted to Defra in November 2024 and published on D&S IFCA's website.

35

Workstream Reporting

To accurately record time spent by Officers in different areas of work to inform the Annual Report and to assist with the Annual Plan.



Report:

All officers continue to report hours worked and this is used to calculate weekly totals and to monitor TOIL accumulated. The recording system has been simplified and is less detailed than originally planned; however, it is the view of officers that the level of detail now obtained from a reduced number of task codes is sufficient for reporting purposes without being overly time consuming for officers.

36

Long Term Funding and Organisational Stability

D&S IFCA will continue to support Defra and its Funding Local Authorities in finding a resolution to its funding crisis. Defra has committed to engaging directly with the Local Authorities to find a way forward to alleviate the financial challenges D&S IFCA faces.

X

Report:

The Chair wrote, on a further two occasions, to the Minister for Farming, Fisheries and Food setting out the financial crisis that D&S IFCA is experiencing. Defra has confirmed that it has engaged with D&S IFCA's funding Local Authorities and that it intends to continue discussion with the Local Authorities in 2024/25 to seek a revised funding structure for D&S IFCA. A three-year financial plan (2025/26 – 2027/28) that identified the scale of the crisis facing D&S IFCA was produced for D&S IFCA Members in January 2024 and provided to the Minister and Defra in February 2024.

37

Staff Performance Planning

To develop and implement annual performance management plans for all staff members. Annual appraisals for all staff will have been completed by 31st May each year.

✓

Report:

All officers have undertaken personal development plan review and appraisals this year. The plans have highlighted where training is required. Environment officers have undertaken additional R statistics training to increase their capability in analysing data. A new assessment method for appraisals has been introduced and used for the Senior Management Team. This is based on the newly updated Job Profiles, resulting from the recent Job Evaluation process (task 38). It is envisaged that this new approach for the appraisals will be rolled out for all Officers.

38

Job Evaluation Exercise for all D&S IFCA Staff

A job evaluation process was undertaken in FY 2022/2023 by Cornwall County Council (CCC). CCC were also tasked to undertake a benchmarking exercise to review current pay scales compared with other organisations. The outcome of the Job Evaluation exercise will be reported to the Authority later in 2023, potentially at the AGM.

✓

Report:

A report summarising the outcomes of the job evaluation was presented to Members at the AGM on 15th June 2023. Following Members' agreement at the meeting, a further officers' paper was developed with the assistance of the Authority's Governance Working Group. The paper was presented at the September Authority meeting and as a result of the Members' decision, D&S IFCA has adopted a new pay scale, including unsocial payments where relevant. In addition, officers have developed and implemented a policy to cover work undertaken in exceptional circumstances. Updated Job Profiles and Role Information Questionnaires were prepared as part of the Job Evaluation process.

Staff performance management systems will be in place that link to the IFCA success criteria. There will be an induction procedure for new joiners. Staff training and development needs will be identified. Performance will be managed and, where necessary, improvement procedures will be followed.

The IFCA Committee will be supported by an organised, efficient, and effective secretariat. New members will receive an induction pack and briefing from the Authority. There will be a rolling twelve-month schedule of quarterly Authority meetings. Notices of meetings and documentation will be made available in line with Standing Orders.

39

Authority Secretariat

To provide an efficient secretariat of D&S IFCA staff to support Authority meetings which are held quarterly and are quorate. Meeting documentation will meet Standing Orders. To hold Committee meetings in public unless material is either confidential or exempt within the meaning of the Local Government Act 1972.



Report:

Authority meetings have taken place this financial year on 15th June 2023, 21st September 2023, 25th January 2024 and 21st March 2024. All information other than Part 2 information is published on the website – Meetings tab and within the Resource Library. Draft minutes that have been initially reviewed by Members are also published, along with minutes that have been approved at the following meeting.

B&PSC meetings have taken place this financial year on 31st August 2023, 16th November 2023, and 22nd February 2024. All papers and reports for B&PSC are published in the same way as the Authority papers. It is the same process for minutes of the B&PSC meetings as it is for the Authority meeting minutes with both draft minutes and approved minutes being accessible to the public.

The IFCA Committee meetings will be held in public unless material is either confidential or exempt within the meaning of the Local Government Act 1972.

40

Internal Meetings & Communications

To hold internal meetings with Staff and prepare papers for and attend IFCA working group meetings and communicate with Authority Members and staff.



Report:

A mixture of in-person and virtual meetings is now in place, including the monthly staff meeting. Virtual meetings continue to provide flexibility and have been used for team meetings and also working group meetings that have included Members of the Authority. There have been virtual meetings of the Governance Working Group, Byelaw Technical Working Group and pre-meetings (preparation for formal meetings) involving the Chair, Vice Chair, and the Chair of the B&PSC. Virtual meetings have been of use to help prepare the officer papers for the formal meetings.

Success Criterion 5: IFCA's make the best use of evidence to deliver their objectives.

Outcomes

A strategic research plan that contributes to greater understanding of the marine environment and delivery of cost-effective management of sea fisheries resources.

41

Research Planning

To include within D&S IFCA's Annual Plan areas of research that will be undertaken. To develop individual plans for survey work and research workstreams.



Report:

A range of research planning and survey work has been undertaken, including: intertidal mollusc surveys (task 25); on-board crustacea surveys (tasks 29 & 30); and scallop spawning research (task 23). Additional survey planning was carried out for a drop-down video (DDV) and still camera survey in part of the Start Point to Plymouth Sound and Eddystone (SPPSE) Special Area of Conservation (SAC). This survey investigated the location and quality of the coarse sediment in the area. It will also be used to ground truth some of the most recent habitat maps provided by NE for the rock feature. Cornwall IFCA completed 12 of the survey sites with the DDV and still camera on 24th August 2023. Poor weather limited further survey work. Officers have also contributed to the planning of a PhD research programme to fulfil evidence needs on essential fish habitat; this work (led by the University of Plymouth) commenced in October 2023 and focusses largely on the Severn Estuary. Reactive research planning has also been undertaken for emerging research such as linking IVMS and landings data to demonstrate the economic importance of specific areas to the inshore fleet. Planning for the potting and netting activity surveys with fishers has taken place and meetings commenced in January 2024 (task 21), and planning is also underway for delivery of Crustacea research (task 29-31 and intertidal molluscan surveys at sites across the District

42

Research Reporting

The IFCA will publish research reports annually that demonstrate how evidence has supported decision making.



Report:

Additions to Sections H (Research) of the website Resource Library since 1st April include:

- Understanding Mortality of European Sea Bass (*Dicentrarchus labrax*) in Small-Scale Inshore Netting (August 2023)
- Supplementary data for above report (Aug 2023).
- Understanding Mortality of European Sea Bass (*Dicentrarchus labrax*) in Small-Scale Inshore Netting (updated Version 1.1 November 2023)
- Erme Estuary. Devon Avon Estuary & Otter Estuary MCZ Assessments (mixed assessments) & Fishing Activity Reports.
- Timing of King Scallop Spawning in D&S IFCA's District (April 2023)
- Skerries Bank Angling Zone – Call for Information (2022) - Consultation Response (published April 2023)

Officers have contributed to mariculture research undertaken by Exeter University and fed into a publication 'Positive tipping points for sustainable growth of bivalve shellfish mariculture in England and Wales' in the journal Marine Policy.

43

TAG & National Evidence Need

D&S IFCA Officers will attend TAG meetings and contribute to the progress of national evidence programme requirements. Officers will give presentations on relevant workstreams to TAG members. Work undertaken will be reported in D&S IFCA's Annual Report.



Report:

A virtual TAG meeting was attended in May 2023. The MMO gave an overview of their proposed MPA management progress project. AIFCA gave an update on the Marine Natural Capital and Ecosystem Assessment programme. Cefas gave an update on their One Health Project and some IFCA's gave updates on various projects including permitting systems. Officers also attended an in-person TAG meeting in London in November 2023 and a virtual meeting in February 2024. These meetings provide the forum for all IFCA's and other agencies, such as Natural England, Environment Agency, Cefas, Welsh Government and the MMO, to provide updates and share their expertise and research needs, developments in methodologies for research and discuss training needs. Presentations are also given by academic institutes who have worked closely with IFCA's to help gather evidence and inform the IFCA's' research role. TAG members share research and developments undertaken through a national mapping tool which provides the opportunity to learn from each other.

44

Standard Operating Procedures

To review and develop Standard Operating procedures (SOPs) as required and share with other IFCA's and partner organisations.



Report:

Officers continue to review and develop SOPs as and when required. D&S IFCA fed into a national inventory of all IFCA's' Health and Safety policies, procedures, and SOPs. Risk assessments continue to be reviewed when necessary and a new accident reporting procedure has been developed. All Health and Safety policies, procedures and risk assessments are shared with officers and are available on the Members part of the website so are accessible to all officers in the field. The IAuditor system is used to undertake vessel checks, vehicle checks and accident, incident and near misses reporting.

45

MEDIN

To collect research/ survey meta data and upload it to the Marine Environmental Data and Information Network (MEDIN) using nationally agreed formats.



Report:

MEDIN is updated to reflect updated data availability from relevant D&S IFCA habitat and mollusc surveys. Relevant data for surveys undertaken during 2023 are yet to be uploaded, but officers are working towards integrating MEDIN metadata uploads into the usual reporting workflow to improve efficiency in the future.

Standard Operating Procedures describe how data is captured and shared with principal partners.

Non-confidential meta-data collected through the IFCA research programme should be recorded in a database available to the marine research community.

A strategic research plan that contributes to greater understanding of the marine environment and delivery of cost-effective management of sea fisheries resources.

46

Respond to Research Enquiries and Information Provision

To engage with academic institutions, Cefas and other research programmes, respond to enquiries and share information and data, where appropriate, to further marine research and evidence gathering.



Report:

D&S IFCA officers worked with many universities including Plymouth, Exeter and Bangor to provide data and research information and letters of support for research funding opportunities. D&S IFCA has also received enquiries from fishers, scientists, students, and other stakeholders and provided relevant fisheries and conservation information.

47

Research Databases and Literature Review

D&S IFCA gathers and uses a wide range of literature to undertake and inform its research work. This is maintained in the internal filing system within the relevant topic specific folders. Officers also catalogue all the literature used in a portal called Zotero, which is a data repository for science outputs, allowing researchers to preserve and share their science research. Where appropriate databases of research and stakeholders inputting into the research are kept and maintained.



Report:

Officers use a wide range of evidence in their work; all reports list the research papers and other evidence sources used.