



Eleventh Month Progress Report

Reporting on:

- All tasks set out in the Annual Plan FY 2024/2025
- Additional work undertaken in FY 2024/2025

Authority Meeting – March 2025

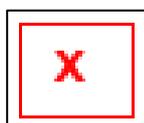
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Key for Reporting



Task completed by 28th February 2025.



Task not completed by 28th February 2025.



Task to be carried forward into the Annual Plan FY 2025/2026.

Success Criterion 1:

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

Workstream & Actions (as per Annual Plan FY 2024/2025)

Task 01 The GWG to review D&S IFCA’s Communication Strategy & Delivery Plan

Following familiarisation with current documentation and establishing a drafting team, which have been completed, the GWG is due to move on to developing a new draft of the Strategy. In 2024/2025, the GWG will additionally consider recent consultations to inform this work. The final objective is the adoption of the Communication Strategy by the Authority, which is not anticipated to be completed this year.

Report



A new draft of the Communications Strategy has not been completed by the GWG. The GWG met on 13th December 2024 to focus on another task in the Annual Plan (the review the Enforcement and Compliance Strategy). The review of D&S IFCA’s Communication Strategy & Delivery Plan has been an ongoing task since 2022. Time constraints for Members have delayed progress; however, the Authority has recognised that the Communications Strategy needs review and therefore the suggestion by Officers is for the task to be carried forward into the Annual Plan FY 2025/2026.



Task 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 database of contacts is updated regularly. The contact details have enabled targeted communications for permit holders, per method of fishing (mobile fishing, potting, netting, or diving for specified shellfish species) or commercial or recreational fishing sectors. Communication, using contact details, can and does include pre-consultation to inform byelaw review and fishing activity surveys that can also inform environmental assessment work. A master database of all stakeholders is used for Formal Public Consultations with Mailchimp email circulars utilising imported contacts from the database. There were 44 direct notifications in 2024/2025. This included (17) direct notifications issued to Members relating to different issues, for example updates on funding, invitations to attend events, or circulation of information, including presentations. Direct communications made possible by the database included pre-consultation and formal public consultation relating to D&S IFCA’s byelaw work, as well as notifying fishers about the opportunities to attend port meetings, with the findings informing discussions on managing pot fisheries in the District. The permit database is maintained every week, with collated information used for a range of work, including informing the B&PSC regarding levels of fishing activity. This is a repeating task as per national IFCA success criteria.



Task 03 Website Review & 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 website provides the platform to display a range of information, and to showcase the achievements of the Authority. The website is reviewed every week. The content of the website library is added to on a regular basis, with additional content that includes, but not limited to, meeting papers, minutes from meetings, consultation publications, environmental assessments, and legislation.

The website Resource Library provides the foundation to hold information that can be used on display pages, and for links in reports and other publications. In 2024/2025 a total of 16 news items were produced in blog and pdf formats, which included supporting Defra (FMP's) and Cefas communications (Tuna Economics survey). The website is used to gather information, relating to applications for permits, persons and organisations seeking authorisations (exemptions), and, with a new page being built in July 2024, now provides an online platform for stakeholders to report suspicious illegal fishing activity,

An audit of the website content (Resource Library) and the display pages was conducted in November 2024, and it has been recognised that some pages contain information that could be updated. Dates on individual pages indicate when content was last updated. Website analytics can help officers and Members consider which areas of the website could be prioritised for updates, or to help determine if there should be consideration regarding reducing the number of display pages that need to be managed.

Some of the imagery spread across the website is corrupted and addressing this fault is outside of the control of officers. To date the external service provider that maintains aspects of the website functionality has been unable to resolve this issue. Improving the website, potentially replacing it, and considering how best to use the website as a communication tool may be discussed during the review of the Communications Strategy by the Governance Working Group. Website Review, communications and information sharing is a repeating task as per national IFCA success criteria.



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Task 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.



Report

Officers have continued important input to TAG and have developed and delivered training for Officers from across other IFCAs as part of the first iteration of the annual Environment, Science and Conservation training course. The training delivered builds on local expertise in assessing fishing activities in MPAs and delivering IFCA duties in relation to Marine Spatial Prioritisation. This course is aimed at Environment Officers in all IFCAs to give consistent

understanding and training in a number of environment and research components which affect all the IFCA's.

Officers attend the South West Regional Fisheries Group organised by the MMO. It provides an opportunity to raise the awareness of the work D&S IFCA is undertaking and learn about the concerns and positions of representatives of the commercial fleet on key national management issues.

D&S IFCA is the lead IFCA at the national recreational sea angling forums and provides feedback to the other IFCA's.



Participation in National and Regional Fisheries and Conservation Activities is a repeating task as per IFCA success criteria.

**Task 05 Hinkley Point C Nuclear Power Station – HPC Marine Technical Forum -
MLA Applications**

This workstream is expected to continue into 2024/2025, mainly focussing on proposed material changes to the Development Consent Order for HPC, and measures proposed to compensate for fish kill associated with the Project. This workstream 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 and interest groups to gather additional evidence relating to relevant fish species in the vicinity of HPC, potential routes to delivery of the Acoustic Fish Deterrent and the need for an appropriate package of mitigation and habitat compensation under the Habitats Regulations. A presentation was given by Senior Environment Officer to the Full Authority updating Members on the Officers' engagement with the HPC development. Officers have also engaged with MMO and Defra to demonstrate the need for the fish kill at HPC to be accounted for in the Celtic Seas and Western Channel Pelagic Species Fisheries Management Plan, and in relation to impacts of prey reductions on Harbour Porpoise in the Bristol Channel Approaches Special Area of Conservation.

The intention is for this workstream to continue into 2025/2026, focussing mainly on proposed material changes to the Development Consent Order for HPC, and measures proposed to compensate for fish kill associated with the Project. This workstream 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.



This task will be carried forward into 2025/2026 as there will be further input required from Officers.

Task 06 Participation in National and Regional Fisheries and Conservation Activities

Review and respond to Marine Licence Applications (MLAs) and Consultations. This is an on-going task which involves several officers. Depending on the applications and consultations this can be time consuming and will be documented in the officers' time recording. This will meet the 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

Twenty-seven MLA consultations have been reviewed for their potential impacts to fisheries, fish and the habitats on which they depend. Officers use a triage process to determine the level of response required, and this has been applied to streamline the work. The MLAs requiring most substantial engagement related to an offshore windfarm with a cable corridor making landfall in North Devon, and aggregate dredging in the Severn Estuary. The former has required Officer input into two further responses following on from the initial D&S IFCA's response to the MLA in 2023. The latter has required several rounds of consultation and ongoing engagement with both the MMO and Natural England.

Officers have provided feedback to MMO consultations on the South and South West Marine Plans and on the King Scallop Dredge Fishery Closures in ICES area 7d and Lyme Bay area of 7e. Officers have also engaged with the Severn Estuary Commission on their scoping for tidal power schemes in the Severn Estuary.

Officers have attended a pre- application meeting with Bristol Port regarding their plans for the Bristol Wind Terminal at Avonmouth Docks and the associated Compensation Habitat Creation Scheme at Steart adjacent to Bridgewater Bay.

Officers held meetings with researchers from the University of Plymouth, who are part of the Centre for Decarbonisation and Offshore Renewable Energy, relating to the ACTOR platform. The ACTOR platform is a testing platform to trial floating wind farm technology. Officers provided information on the possible locations of the testing platform south of Plymouth, by mapping the Mobile Fishing Vessels IVMS data to highlight areas of least impact to the mobile fishing fleet. Officers provided information of the best representatives of the fishing sector with whom the researchers might engage.

Officers have continued to undertake pre – MLA consultation engagement with an aquaculture business and mobile gear fishers on the possible location of a mussel spat collection farm in Babbacombe Bay. This work has involved Officers analysing IVMS for 2023 and 2024 to show the level of impact to the fishing industry of possible locations. The fishers, who are potentially impacted, have liaised with D&S IFCA and provided further information that will help inform D&S IFCA's response to the MLA once it is on the public register.

Officers also responded to the MMO's consultation on the seasonal closure of the Crawfish Fishery in ICES Area 7 for 2024/2025.

As part of a national IFCA training programme, Officers have shared a document with other IFCAs which outlines D&S IFCA's approach to drafting consultation responses, including a general guide to consultations, and key considerations for IFCA responses such as impacts of proposed activities on fisheries, fish and fish habitats, all with reference to D&S IFCA's core duties and the relevant Marine Plan(s).



Participation in National and Regional Fisheries and Conservation Activities is a repeating task as per IFCA success criteria.

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Task 07 Crustacea Fisheries Engagement

To engage with potting fishers in the District to understand their fishing activity, record their concerns regarding crustacea fisheries and crab and lobster stocks, and their considerations on what further management measures would be appropriate.



Report

Between January and June 2024, D&S IFCA Officers held port meetings with commercial potting permit holders across the D&S IFCA's District. In total 12 meetings were organised with three on the North Coast of Devon and nine along the coast in South and East Devon. All commercial potting permit holders were contacted directly by e-mail, and news items were produced and published on D&S IFCA's website. There was strong engagement and representation from the main ports in North Devon. Representation was received from ports across the south coast, but proportional representation was lower than achieved on the north coast. Of a total of 177 Commercial Potting Permit Holders, 41 fishers attended the meetings and one D&S IFCA General Member attended the Appledore and Ilfracombe meetings.

These meetings had several goals, including to gain a better understanding of the importance of local fishing grounds, and of fishers' concerns around crustacea stocks and fisheries management. Alongside the discussions and notes taken at the port meetings, 30 fishers (mostly those attending the meetings) completed survey forms, annotated charts providing details of their activities, and also detailed concerns relating to their fisheries and suggested potential management measures. The results of this engagement were presented in Agenda Item 10 of the September 2024 B&PSC meeting.

In October 2024, Potting Permit holders were contacted with an informal 'Have Your Say' consultation, encouraging them to raise any concerns relating to pot fisheries in D&S IFCA's District and how to address the issues. In total, D&S IFCA received 29 responses, which were summarised in Annex 1 to Agenda Item 6 of the December 2024 B&PSC meeting.

Following the December 2024 B&PSC meeting, and to inform this work, Officers contacted the 24 permit holders that had been identified to operate more than 1,000 pots in the District. The purpose of the consultation was to understand whether the pot numbers declared on the permit application were correct and whether there was any seasonal variation in the use of the various types of pots.

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Task 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 IFCA's have received additional funding from Defra to undertake work to support the development and implementation of national Tranche 1 and Tranche 2 FMPs.



Report

Officers, who attend the FMP meetings, were requested to disseminate information relating to Defra’s DFMP consultations. This has been undertaken through D&S IFCA publishing a news item on the website on 11th October 2024 relating to consultations on five FMPs including those for Southern North Sea and Channel Skate and Ray FMP and North Sea and Channel Sprat FMP.



This task will be carried forward into 2025/2026 as there is an on-going responsibility for D&S IFCA to be involved in the development and implementation of national FMPs.

Task 09 Re-make Potting Permit Byelaw (engagement)

The Byelaw will need to be advertised in a selection of newspapers. In addition, D&S IFCA will use a range of communications to inform stakeholders and provide the opportunity to respond with objections or supportive responses.

Communications will include direct circulation of information (Mail Chimp), hard copy of information if requested and the posting of news items on the website and Facebook. The process will be documented with relevant information reported to the B&PSC.



Report

Work to remake the Potting Permit Byelaw is dependent on the successful implementation of the new Mobile Fishing Permit Byelaw 2022, which is still in the Quality Assurance phase with the Marine Management Organisation.

It was envisaged that the new Mobile Fishing Permit Byelaw would act as the template for the general structuring of a re-made Potting Permit Byelaw – as the legal framework for the Potting Permit Conditions. Without a new Potting Permit Byelaw being developed, and “made” by the B&PSC, the communication tasks cannot be completed.



The intention is for the task to be carried forward into the Annual Plan FY 2025/2026.

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Task 10 Re-make Netting Permit Byelaw (engagement)

The Byelaw will need to be advertised in a selection of newspapers. In addition, D&S IFCA will use a range of communications to inform stakeholders and provide the opportunity to respond with objections or supportive responses. Communications will include direct circulation of information (Mail Chimp), hard copy of information if requested and the posting of news items on the website and Facebook. The process will be documented with relevant information reported to the B&PSC.



Report

Work to remake the Netting Permit Byelaw is dependent on the successful implementation of the new Mobile Fishing Permit Byelaw 2022, which is still in the Quality Assurance phase with the Marine Management Organisation. It was envisaged that the new Mobile Fishing Permit Byelaw would act as the template for the general structuring of a re-made Netting Permit Byelaw – as the legal framework for the Netting Permit Conditions. Without a new Netting Permit Byelaw being developed, and “made” by the B&PSC, the communication tasks cannot be completed.



The intention is for the task to be carried forward into the Annual Plan FY 2025/2026.

Task 11 Re-make Diving Permit Byelaw (engagement)

The Byelaw will need to be advertised in a selection of newspapers. In addition, D&S IFCA will use a range of communications to inform stakeholders and provide the opportunity to respond with objections or supportive responses. Communications will include direct circulation of information (Mail Chimp), hard copy of information if requested and the posting of news items on the website and Facebook. The process will be documented with relevant information reported to the B&PSC.



Report

Work to remake the Diving Permit Byelaw is dependent on the successful implementation of the new Mobile Fishing Permit Byelaw 2022, which is still in the Quality Assurance phase with the Marine Management Organisation. It was envisaged that the new Mobile Fishing Permit Byelaw would act as the template for the general structuring of a re-made Diving Permit Byelaw – as the legal framework for the Diving Permit Conditions. Without a new Diving Permit Byelaw being developed, and “made” by the B&PSC, the communication tasks cannot be completed.

The intention is for this engagement task to be suspended, as work developing a re-made Diving Permit Byelaw is envisaged to be omitted from the 2025/2026 Annual Plan.

Task 012 Mobile Fishing Permit Conditions (engagement)

When implemented, the Byelaw will include scope for specified equipment to be introduced for the monitoring of sea fisheries resources. This may lead to consultation on any permit condition changes.

D&S IFCA will use a range of communications to inform stakeholders and provide the opportunity to respond. Communications will include direct circulation of information (mail Chimp), hard copy of information if requested and the posting of news items on the website and Facebook. The process will be documented with relevant information reported to the B&PSC.



Report

The new Mobile Fishing Permit Byelaw 2022 is still in the Quality Assurance phase with the Marine Management Organisation. Until it is implemented, any further engagement work, with a view to changes to the associated permit conditions (a potential introduction of REM) cannot be undertaken.

The intention is for this engagement task (relating to permit conditions, not yet implemented) to be suspended.

Additional Work Relating to Success Criterion 1:

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

Officers regularly attend meetings of estuary forum groups and management partnerships for areas with protected site designations, including the Association of Severn Estuary Relevant Authorities, North Devon Biosphere Marine Policy Working Group and Partnership Forum, Tamar Estuaries Consultative Forum, and Exe Estuary Management Partnership. Officers work in partnership to further the conservation objectives of such sites, while ensuring fisheries, fish and fish habitats are accounted for in local decision making. Officers also participated in Standing Environment Groups, which are convened to respond to events such as pollution emergencies, with a view to ensuring fisheries are considered in the crisis response.

Officers also attended meetings of the Lyme Bay Fisherman CIC and monthly meetings of the South Devon and Channel Shellfishermen where engagement with the fishing industry has taken place and the work of the D&S IFCA has been discussed. Officers also attend six-weekly meetings with Natural England to discuss MPAs assessments, any concerns relating to MPAs work and D&S IFCA's management of fishing activities in MPAS. These are useful meetings and allow a two-way dialogue of marine conservation matters.

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Success Criterion 2:

IFCAs implement a fair, effective, and proportionate enforcement regime.

Workstream & Actions (as per Annual Plan FY 2024/2025)

Task 013 Review the Compliance and Enforcement Strategy

To review the current strategy and consider introducing new ways of operating. This task is the priority workstream for the Governance Working Group (GWG) in 2024-2025.



Report

The review has begun and the GWG met on 13th December 2024. Members of the GWG examined and commented on the circulated Enforcement and Compliance Strategy that was last updated in October 2019.

Discussion at IFCA Chief Officer Group (COG) meetings has led to other IFCAs recognising that a review of all IFCAs' Enforcement and Compliance Strategies is needed. It has been agreed that a collective review would be the best way forward. D&S IFCA will share its draft review when completed so that it can be used as the basis for developing a national IFCA Enforcement and Compliance Strategy.



It is envisaged that finalising the draft will be a task for the Annual Plan FY 2025/2026.

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Task 014 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 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. Continued monitoring will identify gear conflict between the mobile fishing fleet and other fishing sectors.



Report

Enforcement Officers have continued to prioritise this work. Illegal incursions into Marine Protected Areas and other restricted areas remains the highest risk activity in the D&S IFCA District. In March 2024, Members of the Authority agreed to support the sustainable development of offshore mariculture sites by prohibiting the use of mobile fishing gear in three mariculture sites, one in Torbay and two in Lyme Bay and as a result the Mobile Fishing Permit Conditions were amended in April 2024. Four new spatial incursion investigations were undertaken and four cases of non-reporting IVMS devices. The spatial incursion investigations are often complex and take considerable Officer time to gather the evidence and prepare the case file.



The intention is for the task to be carried forward into the Annual Plan FY 2025/2026.

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Task 015 Emsstrom Monitoring

To conduct increased levels of patrols in this area, record the number of patrols undertaken and monitor the level of compliance and use of the site by the recreational sector, in recognition that it is a new permit condition for both the commercial and recreational netting sectors.



Report

This task reflected the introduction of legislation in the Netting Permit Conditions. IVMS data were interrogated, and no fishing activity was identified. Patrols to the eastern end of D&S IFCA's District in Lyme Bay from Brixham meant that Officers passed close to the site on many occasions throughout the year. Officers did not record any fishing activity on the site or the presence of any static gear. It is known however that the site remains important for both the commercial and recreational rod and line vessels.

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Task 016 Tasking & Co-ordination Group

To hold regular internal 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. Officers will also attend the MMO's South and Southwest TCG meetings and SIFCA's TCG meetings.



Report

Officers held 11 internal TCG meetings and attended 30 external TCGs during the year.



Attending the TCG meetings is a requirement for Enforcement Officers and is a repeating task as per IFCA success criteria.

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Task 017 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



Thirty-one new investigations were undertaken. In addition to four suspected spatial incursions, Officers investigated a complex case involving multiple charges against those suspected of illegal netting in estuaries that involved CIFCA, and the MCA. The investigation took a considerable amount of Officer resource to complete, and the case is to be heard in the Crown Court.



Creation of case files is a requirement of the work undertaken by the Enforcement Officers and is a repeating task as per IFCA success criteria.

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Task 018 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 are published on D&S IFCA's Website ([Investigations Tables Page](#)) which was last updated in February 2025. Records of enforcement activity are provided to AIFCA annually.



Providing the information is a repeating task as per IFCA success criteria.

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Task 019 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 Code of Conduct for IFCO's is available on D&S IFCA's website (Section E of the Resource Library) and can be read [here](#). It has not changed since 2012. However, the Code of Conduct is supported by Standard Operating Procedures that reflect the specific ways in which D&S IFCA Enforcement Officers undertake their work.



Recognising potential changes to the Code of Conduct, and, when required, adapting the Standard Operating Procedures is a repeating task as per IFCA success criteria.

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Task 020 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

Training for Enforcement Officers in FY 2024/2025 included one Officer attending the National IFCA Enforcement training course held in Brixham. In addition to formal training, the Enforcement team have regular debriefings following patrols and inspections to identify further training opportunities.



Undertaking training and gaining accreditation, when required, is a requirement for Enforcement Officers and is a repeating task as per IFCA success criteria.

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Task 021 Collaborate with other Regulators.

To work with other regulators to achieve consistent quality, application, and enforcement of management measures. D&S IFCA intends to engage with Defra on REM and its application on board commercial fishing vessels.



Report

Officers have discussed D&S IFCA's REM project with Defra, MMO and Natural England. In order for D&S IFCA to be in a position to consider whether to formally introduce REM requirements on the mobile gear vessels it needs to amend its Mobile Fishing Permit Byelaw. Officers have engaged with MMO's IFCA Byelaw Quality Assurance team during the year to progress the development of the Byelaw. Officers are awaiting a response from Defra to confirm its position regarding D&S IFCA's potential use of REM.

Officers attended a joint meeting with CIFCA's and the Environment Agency's warranted officers to learn of ongoing issues and any changes to legislation and the use of their cross warranted powers.

D&S IFCA has undertaken a number of joint operations with partner agencies including the Police, Environment Agency, adjoining IFCA's, the MMO and Port Authorities. The majority of the operations related to illegal netting in estuaries and spatial incursions into MPAs.



Working with other regulators is a repeating task as per IFCA success criteria.

Additional Work Relating to Success Criterion 2:

IFCAs implement a fair, effective, and proportionate enforcement regime.

Report:

All IFCAs started to submit intelligence to the national CLUE system. The CLUE system uses investigation and intelligence management software to maximise the use and value of intelligence shared across enforcement bodies. Inspections by IFCA Enforcement Officers continued to be submitted and shared with other agencies through the Monitoring Control Surveillance System (MCSS).

Following notification that D&S IFCA had been unsuccessful with its bid for Defra funding in December, Officers began the process of purchasing a drone using D&S IFCA's Capital Reserve funds and undertaking the necessary training and development of the Safe Systems of Work and Standard Operating Procedures. It is envisaged that most of the cost associated with the purchase of the drone will be offset by the sale of D&S IFCA's RIB 'Enforcer'.

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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.

Workstream & Actions (as per Annual Plan FY 2024/2025)

Task 022 Re-make the Potting Permit Byelaw

The task for 2024/2025 is for the B&PSC to “make” the Potting Permit Byelaw as a replacement for the existing Byelaw; with potential implementation in 2025. This task involves discussion by the B&PSC, leading to drafting work and development of an Impact Assessment. When “made” by the B&PSC, formal consultation will be undertaken on the Byelaw (task 09). The B&PSC will discuss the findings of the formal consultation, potentially amending the Byelaw. The Byelaw Technical Working Group will assist officers with the drafting work.

Following this process a final Impact Assessment will be created, and other information will be prepared for submission to the Marine Management Organisation. This would complete the task set in the Annual Plan for 2024/2025. The Byelaw cannot be implemented without approval by the Secretary of State.

Report



The new Mobile Fishing Permit Byelaw 2022 is still in the Quality Assurance phase with the Marine Management Organisation. It was envisaged and planned that this Byelaw would act as the template for the general structuring of the re-made Potting Permit Byelaw as the legal framework for the issue of Potting Permit Conditions. As the Mobile Fishing Permit Byelaw 2022 has not been implemented, work involved to re-make the Potting Permit Byelaw has not progressed as intended. On 13th June 2024, the B&PSC discussed and agreed to amended principles that underpin byelaw review/development work.



The intention is for the task to be carried forward into the Annual Plan FY 2025/2026, with rationale for the potential inclusion in the Annual Plan FY 2025/2026 being provided to Members at the March 2025 Authority meeting.

Task 023 Re- make the Netting Permit Byelaw

The task for 2024/2025 is for the B&PSC to “make” the Netting Permit Byelaw as a replacement for the existing Byelaw; with potential implementation in 2025. This task involves discussion by the B&PSC, leading to drafting work and development of an Impact Assessment. When “made” by the B&PSC, formal consultation will be undertaken on the Byelaw (task 10). The B&PSC will discuss the findings of the formal consultation, potentially amending the Byelaw. The Byelaw Technical Working Group will assist officers with the drafting work.

Following this process a final Impact Assessment will be created, and other information will be prepared for submission to the Marine Management Organisation. This would complete the

task set in the Annual Plan for 2024/2025. The Byelaw cannot be implemented without approval by the Secretary of State.



Report

The new Mobile Fishing Permit Byelaw 2022 is still in the Quality Assurance phase with the Marine Management Organisation. It was envisaged and planned that this Byelaw would act as the template for the general structuring of the re-made Netting Permit Byelaw as the legal framework for the issue of Netting Permit Conditions. As the Mobile Fishing Permit Byelaw 2022 has not been implemented, work involved to re-make the Netting Permit Byelaw has not progressed as intended. On 13th June 2024, the B&PSC discussed and agreed to amended principles that underpin byelaw review/development work.



The intention is for the task to be carried forward into the Annual Plan FY 2025/2026, with the rationale for potential inclusion in the Annual Plan FY 2025/2026 being provided to Members at the March 2025 Authority meeting.

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Task 024 Re- make the Diving Permit Byelaw

The task for 2024/2025 is for the B&PSC to “make” the Diving Permit Byelaw as a replacement for the existing Byelaw; with potential implementation in 2025. This task involves discussion by the B&PSC, leading to drafting work and development of an Impact Assessment. When “made” by the B&PSC, formal consultation will be undertaken on the Byelaw (task 11). The B&PSC will discuss the findings of the formal consultation, potentially amending the Byelaw. The Byelaw Technical Working Group will assist officers with the drafting work.

Following this process a final Impact Assessment will be created, and other information will be prepared for submission to the Marine Management Organisation. This would complete the task set in the Annual Plan for 2024/2025. The Byelaw cannot be implemented without approval by the Secretary of State.



Report

The new Mobile Fishing Permit Byelaw 2022 is still in the Quality Assurance phase with the Marine Management Organisation. It was envisaged and planned that this Byelaw would act as the template for the general structuring of the re-made Diving Permit Byelaw as the legal framework for the issue of Diving Permit Conditions. As the Mobile Fishing Permit Byelaw 2022 has not been implemented, work involved to re-make the Diving Permit Byelaw has not progressed as intended. On 13th June 2024, the B&PSC discussed and agreed to amended principles that underpin byelaw review/development work.

The intention is for the task to be excluded from the Annual Plan FY 2025/2026, with the rationale for potential omission in the Annual Plan FY 2025/2026 being provided to Members at the March 2025 Authority meeting.

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Task 025 MPA Assessments

To complete outstanding MPA assessments, in particular those relating to the Bristol Channel and Approaches SAC where Harbour Porpoise is the designated feature, and review MPA

assessments as and when required. This is a workstream that continues into the Annual Plan 2024/2025 as assessments are reviewed in light of MPA conditional assessments provided by Natural England and designation of new features.

Defra has provided IFCA's with additional funding to support its expectation that all MPA assessments will be undertaken by the end of 2024.



Report

All MPA assessments have been completed for sites within the D&S IFCA District apart from those relating to the Bristol Channel and Approaches SAC.

Habitat Regulations Assessments have been conducted for all fishing activities in or near to the Bristol Channel Approaches Special Area of Conservation (BCA SAC) and sent to Natural England for informal advice. The BCA SAC is a large site which occupies part of the D&S IFCA and Cornwall IFCA Districts, in addition to an area outside of the 6nm limit which is under the MMO's remit. The BCA SAC is designated for harbour porpoise, a mobile species which depends on a range of fish species for food. The assessments therefore consider direct impacts such as bycatch and noise disturbance as well as indirect impacts such as prey removal and impacts of fishing on key habitats of prey species.

D&S IFCA engages regularly with MMO and Cornwall IFCA regarding this site and suite of assessments, and Officers are currently reviewing the assessments with a view to co-developing management options with these other regulators, for subsequent consideration by Members and stakeholders where appropriate. Discussions relating to the BCA SAC are likely to continue into 2025/26, mirroring the approach of other regulators to this complex site, and to allow time for Members to consider management options, should these be required.

Officers identified the need to undertake an additional MCZ assessment for the Devon Avon MCZ due to a small area (8.75%) of the site that is theoretically open to netting and mobile gear, lying outside of the D&S IFCA's River Avon closing line. This is in draft and will have a final review before being sent to Natural England by the end of February.

Officers have also started to consider the need for future review of previously completed MPA assessments in 2025/26, to ensure that older assessments remain relevant and use the best available evidence on fishing activities, feature condition and gear: feature interactions.



Completion of the BCA SAC assessments will continue into 2025/2026 and review, where appropriate, previously completed MPA assessments.

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Task 026 MPA Monitoring and Control Plans

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 2024/2025 as M&CPs are reviewed annually to inform whether additional management is required. To maintain an Audit trail for three M&CPs reviewed where trigger points have been set but annual reporting is not required unless trigger points are exceeded. New M&CPs may be required for the Bristol Channel and Approaches SAC depending on the conclusions of the HRAs to be undertaken.



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 have reviewed the M&CPs for Lundy and Torbay, and have produced draft reports for these, which will be finalised in March 2025. The review of the M&CP for potting in Torbay MCZ has incorporated new information on the fishing activity within the site. This has triggered a review of the MCZ assessment for this gear: feature interaction. The MCZ assessment review is currently in draft form and has concluded that management is likely to be required for cuttle traps in Torbay MCZ, in order to ensure that D&S IFCA fulfils its duties to further the Conservation Objectives of the site. The evidence gathered and review of the assessment will feed into a paper to be presented to the B&PSC at its next meeting in 2025 to determine the future management of potting for cuttlefish in the Torbay MCZ.

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. An audit trail (Excel spreadsheet) is maintained annually for these trigger point assessments. The Audit trail for 2024/2025 will be completed in March 2025, in line with the existing annual audit timeline.

Officers have developed a M&CP for demersal trawl activity in the Hartland Point to Tintagel MCZ following decisions made by the B&PSC at its meeting on 5th September 2024. Officers liaised with Natural England and produced the M&CP which will monitor the number of Mobile Fishing Permit holders which could potentially fish in the MCZ and review IVMS data on a weekly basis to identify any activity in the site. Officers had previously reviewed IVMS data from 2018 to December 2024 and no towed gear activity took place in the site during this time. Since January 2025, the weekly IVMS monitoring has not identified any mobile fishing activity in the MCZ.



M&CPs will be reviewed on an annual basis as per the requirements set out in the M&CPs.

Task 027 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/ landings and Catch App data for analysis to measure compliance with the Commercial Diving Permit Conditions during these months. This will be done for years 2022, 2023 and 2024.



Report

This workstream has been delayed by a requirement to focus on other workstreams within the Annual Plan and with limited staff resources the other molluscan and crustacea survey work took priority. The required data are being acquired from the MMO and the online Themis VMS portal in February 2025, with a view to analysing and reporting on this workstream later in 2025.



The intention is for the task to be carried forward into the Annual Plan FY 2025/2026.

Task 028 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. Officers will also engage on the development of the Tranche Two FMPs relevant to the D&S IFCA's District and South West. These include the Skates and Rays FMP, the Celtic Sea and Western Channel Pelagic Species FMP and North Sea and Channel Sprat FMP. All IFCA's have received additional funding from Defra to undertake work to support the development and implementation of national Tranche 1 and Tranche 2 FMPs.



Report

This workstream has received funding from Defra for D&S IFCA's involvement. D&S IFCA's participation in the development and implementation of the FMPs has been an important workstream and has required a great deal of Officers' time. Officers have attended 11 Fisheries Management Plans (FMP) meetings both online and in person for those relating to Skates and Rays FMP, Celtic Sea and Western Channel Pelagic FMP, Celtic Sea and Western Channel Demersal FMP, King Scallop FMP, and Wrasse and Black Bream FMP. Part of the work relating to these FMPs involved contributing to and commenting on management proposals, inputting knowledge and evidence into the workstream relating to these FMPs and disseminating information to other IFCA's and the AIFCA were relevant. Officers provided evidence from the perspective of an inshore regulator, and the knowledge and understanding of the fisheries, both recreational and commercial, and the challenges those fisheries face in the inshore area.

In addition, D&S IFCA is the lead IFCA for the Crab and Lobster FMP and Officers attended 10 meetings including the Crab and Lobster Management Working Group, the Science Group and the Implementation Group. D&S IFCA contributed extensively to these groups providing expertise on the fisheries, the sectors involved and provided both scientific and technical knowledge. Officers have commented on management proposals and brought the South West industry and regulator perspective to these discussions. D&S IFCA in particular has worked on the FMP FISP funded project and reported outputs from the work undertaken by D&S IFCA Environment Officers and the funded research assistant.

D&S IFCA organised an additional Crab and Lobster FMP meeting with Defra, the MMO and six IFCA's to discuss the potential for regional management of the proposed national Minimum Conservation Reference Size of 90mm for the European lobster. Two meetings were held in relation to the proposed Permit Scheme for the Whelk FMP, one of which was a workshop in London.



Continuing to provide evidence and expertise to help the progress of further FMPs is an on-going task for Officers in 2025/2026.

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Task 029 Seasonality of Egg Bearing of the European Lobster, *Homarus Gammarus*

To conduct survey work, on-board fishing vessels operating in the D&S IFCA's District, in order 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.



Report

The survey work conducted in 2024/25 represents the second year of survey work under this workstream. Officers are continuing to try to survey lobsters through the winter to provide more data on the time period in which lobsters are not expected be naturally shedding their eggs, to assist targeting of enforcement effort. As of 14th February 2025, 13 surveys on board fishing vessels have been conducted in 2024/25. Officers have begun to undertake preliminary analysis of the data alongside in-house statistics training, and the analysis will be completed after the survey season ends in April 2025. The outputs of this work will be used to support the chemical testing of the pleopods of lobsters that appear to have been scrubbed of its eggs prior to landing.

Task 030 Measuring the Hardness of the Shell of Edible Brown Crab, *Cancer pagurus*

To develop a methodology to measure the hardness of the shell of the edible brown crab, as part of the Crab & Lobster FMP FISP Project. This will be trialled using a tool called a durometer and to test its application to aid monitor compliance with regulations. D&S IFCA officers, together with a research assistant (funded through the project) and an MSc student from the University of Plymouth, will be trialling the durometers on board fishing vessels in the D&S IFCA's District.



Report

D&S IFCA Officers, together with a research assistant (funded through the Crab and Lobster FMP FISP funded project) and an MSc student from the University of Plymouth, trialled the use of durometers on board fishing vessels in the D&S IFCA's District. Data collection took place on 23 trips across May-August 2024 onboard five commercial potting vessels operating in south Devon during typical fishing operations. The research team worked alongside experienced crab fishermen who shared best practice in determining soft and hard crab at sea. The Officers/researchers used a checklist of physical characteristics observable on the crabs that indicate soft versus hard shells. They also utilised a durometer to quantify the hardness of a crab shell. Finally, the relationship between shell hardness and meat yield was investigated, confirming that hard-shelled crabs have substantially higher meat yield than soft or borderline crabs. Based on the outcomes of the project, a range of recommendations have been made to the Crab and Lobster FMP implementation group which include Defra, MMO, and members of the fishing industry to inform the total prohibition of the landing of soft-shelled crab and how this may be enforced:

- 1) A program of sharing of best practice from experienced fishermen to the wider sector in recognising hard- and soft-shelled crab along with resources such as documents and videos.

- 2) A two-pronged approach to defining and enforcing shell hardness in crabs: Firstly, training of enforcement officers to use the physical characteristics of crab moult stage to determine shell hardness, and then the use of the durometer and a pre-defined hardness threshold on any disputed or borderline individuals.
- 3) The durometer threshold should be co-developed with fishermen, processors, managers and policy makers to determine the appropriate trade-offs around retention of hard crabs over protection of soft crabs.
- 4) A research and development project to manufacture a durometer in the UK that would allow calibration and servicing of durometers without having to ship to the USA, which is the sole supplier currently.

Task 031 Catch, Landings and Effort Data

To gather catch, gear and activity data whilst undertaking surveys at sea 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. This work will provide information on the potting activity and encourage fishers to share their views and concerns regarding the crustacea fisheries in the District. Officers will also be collating data from the Catch App, log books and IVMS to compare with the data gathered from fishers and on-board survey.



Report

This workstream has been negatively impacted by the delayed national rollout of IVMS on board fishing vessels, and by perceived poor reliability of Catch App data. However, Officers engaged with fishers during all onboard surveys to hear their views and concerns regarding crustacea fisheries in the District, which has informed subsequent engagement and papers to the B&PSC. Where possible, Officers collected Catch per Unit (CPUE) data on crab and lobster fisheries during on-board surveys which relate to the catches per strings hauled. These data will be analysed in 2025. Whilst the data collected may help inform future work of D&S IFCA, they are limited to the five vessels surveyed and the limited number of days at sea.

Task 032 Taw Torridge Estuary Bivalve Mollusc Stock Assessments

To assess the intertidal mussel and cockle stocks in the Taw Torridge Estuary. Officers will survey, through walking the beds and drone survey (where appropriate) 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



Cockle and mussel surveys in the Taw-Torridge were undertaken in May and August 2024. The first drafts of these reports are near completion as of 14th February 2024. The conclusions of these assessments will feed into the food availability model to determine the quantity of mussels that are available for removal by shellfish operators whilst ensuring that there is sufficient food available to the overwintering birds that rely on the estuary for their food.



This workstream will be repeated in 2025/26 to monitor the mollusc stocks, and to utilise the new model developed by Bournemouth University under the Marine Natural Capital and Ecosystem Assessment Project (see additional workstream) in determining the feasibility of a local mussel fishery

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Task 033 Exe Estuary and Teign Estuary Bivalve Mollusc Stock Assessments.

To assess the intertidal mussel and cockles stocks on the Teign and Exe Estuaries. The Exe and Teign Estuary currently have temporary closures in place, prohibiting the removal of mussels from public beds in both estuaries. Surveys of the intertidal mussels and cockles on the Teign and Exe Estuaries will be undertaken in 2024. The Exe Estuary is a SPA, designated for its overwintering birds and shellfish on this estuary are an important food source. The results of these assessments will feed into food availability models and inform the ongoing closure of the estuary to the removal of mussels. Surveys will be undertaken on the Teign Estuary in the area outside of the Teign Regulating Order. Survey results will be used to assess if the recreational gathering of cockles is having a detrimental effect on the stock and inform the closure of the public beds to the removal of mussels.



Reports

Mussel Surveys:

Mussel surveys were conducted on 8th April 2024 for the Exe Estuary and on 24th July 2024 for the Teign Estuary. Initial reports have been drafted for both estuaries, but the reports are not yet finalised, which represents completion of the task.

The density and tonnage of mussel on the Exe Estuary’s Bull Hill mussel bed has declined since 2022 and remains very low compared to historic levels. Mussel tonnage on the Salty (Teign Estuary) appears to have increased since 2022 but is also very low compared to historic levels.

It is recommended that stock assessments continue to be carried out on at least a biennial basis to monitor any future changes and inform the ongoing need to continue with the current closures of mussel beds in the Exe and Teign Estuaries; these closures have been in place since 1st May 2019 under D&S IFCA’s Byelaw 9 – Temporary Closure of Shellfish Beds.



Cockle Surveys:

The Teign Estuary and Exe Estuary cockle surveys were undertaken on 20th September 2024 and 17th October 2024 respectively. Initial reports have been drafted for both estuaries, but the reports are not yet finalised, which represents completion of the task.

Cockle densities remain low but relatively stable at both sites, and beds still do not appear to have recovered substantially since large-scale mortalities in 2011 and 2014. Officers are grateful to local stakeholders for providing information on local hand-gathering activities, which has provided useful context for the research into these beds.

Future Work:

It is recommended that stock assessments for both mussel and cockles continue to be carried out on at least a biennial basis to monitor any future changes and inform future work on a

potential Hand Working Byelaw if resources allow in future years. The surveys will not be undertaken in FY 2025/2026. When all mussel and cockle stock assessment reports relating to FY 2024/2025 are finalised, potentially by 31st March 2025, they will be published on the D&S IFCA website.

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Task 034 Pacific Oyster Removal Trials in Exe Estuary and in the Waddeton Order on Dart Estuary

To trial a low impact methodology for the removal of pacific oysters from estuaries in Devon. Pacific Oysters, *Magallana gigas*, are an invasive non-native species. In the Exe Estuary there has been a large settlement of wild pacific oysters and there is concern from Natural England regarding the impacts to the intertidal beds. Offices will work with fishers and Natural England to trial the removal of pacific oyster on the Exe Estuary and if successful this could also be rolled out on the Dart Estuary. D&S IFCA holds the Waddeton Regulating Order which lies within the Dart Estuary MCZ and expires in 2026 and is responsible for the removal of all equipment and wild pacific oysters that may have settled within the Order areas a result of pacific oyster cultivation.



Report

This task was contingent on external stakeholder project partners receiving funding to carry out key aspects of the work. Delays in funding decisions have temporarily postponed this task, which is proposed to be carried forward to FY 2025/26.



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Task 035 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 Permit Byelaw permit condition and MMO Licence Variation.



Report

D&S IFCA continues to chair the IPA meetings and provide secretarial support in the task of arranging the meeting, liaising with Members, producing minutes, updating the Annual IPA chart. The minutes of the meetings since 2020 have been published on D&S IFCA website.



In September 2024, the IPA Committee made the decision to re-open an area within the IPA known as 'the Corridor'. D&S IFCA has in place Mobile Fishing Permit Conditions that align with the management of areas with the IPA. The change agreed by the IPA Committee was recognised by D&S IFCA's Byelaw and Permitting Sub-Committee who agreed to D&S IFCA going out to formal consultation on this change.

A formal consultation commenced on 9th January to the end of February 2025 and proposed the re-opening of Area C (Annex 5a), also known locally as the "corridor". Seven objections

were received and documented in a report for the B&PSC. On 27th February 2025 the B&PSC considered the objections and information set out in an Officers' paper (Agenda Item 6). Members agreed with the Officers' recommendation to re-open the area for demersal mobile fishing gear (1st March to 31st March inclusive). Following the meeting Officers amended the Category One Mobile Fishing Permit Conditions and Annexes to reflect the B&SPC decision. The amended information was circulated to permit holders on 28th February 2025.

Task 036 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. Officers have worked to streamline this process while maintaining protection for protected area features. Eighteen authorisations have been issued since the beginning of April 2024. An up-to-date table of authorised exemptions can be viewed on D&S IFCA's website.

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



Work required relating to Exemptions Authorisations is an annual recurring task for Officers.

Task 037: Trailing New Technologies

Officers intend to engage with the mobile gear sector to discuss the introduction of REM on towed gear vessels as a mandatory requirement. Officers will explore external funding opportunities to procure and install the equipment on all mobile gear vessels but also to support the ongoing costs associated with the automated monitoring of the system, the warranty and maintenance of the hardware and the airtime. Officers may be in a position to put forward REM recommendations to Authority Members in 2024/2025.

In partnership with Southern IFCA, Officers intend to test similar REM technology to monitor potting effort in the static gear fleet. The project will evaluate if REM technology, in combination with a simple application of Artificial Intelligence, can be used to automate the counting of pots being hauled and deployed. The project intends to support and inform the management consideration in the Crab and Lobster FMP and Whelk FMP.

To trial the use of durometers to measure the hardness of the shell of edible crab as part of a Crab and Lobster FMP FISP funded project.

Report



REM

The REM project that started in 2022, continued through 2024. The available FASS funding in 2023 had funded the purchase of four additional REM systems. The ongoing airtime costs were met by D&S IFCA and additional time for meetings with suppliers was provided free of charge. The delay in progressing the remade Mobile Fishing Permit Byelaw meant that further

development work with the suppliers was not progressed as had been anticipated. Officers continued to seek potential sources of funding to support the ongoing costs of REM systems, but this was not prioritised because of the delay with the Byelaw.

D&S IFCA's officers did reach out to the commercial potting permit holders to seek volunteers to trial REM on their vessels. No volunteers were identified but some feedback was received. In at least some cases, the reluctance to trial REM was based on the sense that the inshore commercial fleet was over regulated particularly when compared to the offshore fleet. It was understood that the use of REM would be to monitor the number of pots hauled and deployed and many felt this was better suited to trialling on the vessels that fish offshore. D&S IFCA Officers will be promoting the inclusion of REM on potting vessels as part of the Crab and Lobster FMP Western Channel crab fishery unit trials.



Durometers

As part of the Crab and Lobster FMP FISP funded project officers together with a researcher from Bangor University trialled a durometer to test if this methodology could quantify the hardness of a crab shell. This trial of technology was part of the wider project to also identify the characteristics of the different moult stages of crab, record the physical characteristics of the softness of the shell as identified by fishers and to look at the meat yield of crab with different hardness of the shell. A range of recommendations have been made to the FMP based on the outcomes of the project which include the use of a durometer as a potential enforcement tool. Defra will now decide on how the prohibition of soft-shelled crab will be enforced and compliance monitored.

A research and development project to manufacture a durometer in the UK has been suggested as one of the outputs of the project which would allow calibration and servicing of durometers within the UK.

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38: 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.



Report

Effective delivery of this task requires extensive data showing use of the site by fishing vessels across the year, and Officers had planned to use IVMS data, particularly from Netting Permit holders, to inform this work. However, the delay to the national rollout of IVMS across this part of the fleet has delayed this work, is likely to cause continued delay in this workstream and is not achievable in the foreseeable future.

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Additional Work Relating to 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).

Report:

Marine Natural Capital and Ecosystem Assessment Programme

Additional work was undertaken by Officers feeding into a partnership project which seeks to improve the evidence base for management of a local mussel fishery. The partnership project involves work with ornithologists from EAD Ecology, Richard Stillman of Bournemouth University, AIFCA and Natural England, and is funded under the marine Natural Capital and Ecosystem Assessment programme. This project uses D&S IFCA's data on the mussel and cockle beds, new observations on use of the beds and other feeding habitats by oystercatchers (collected by EAD Ecology), and a model of oystercatcher food requirements (developed by Richard Stillman) to define the ecological requirements of overwintering oystercatchers, which use the Taw-Torridge SSSI, and then outline the remaining mussel that may be available for a fishery. Bournemouth University will be producing a project report in March 2025 which will be presented at a cross-partnership workshop on 26th March 2025 to embed the approach in future fisheries management. The outputs of the project will be utilised by D&S IFCA and Natural England to inform future management of the shellfisheries on the Taw Torridge Estuary.

Potting for Scallops

D&S IFCA has liaised with a company called FishTek on their project to trial pots with lights used to catch scallop, known as scallop potting, in South Devon. Following an initial on-line meeting, Officers attend a meeting with FishTek, who have developed this type of pot, and fishermen from Salcombe, to discuss the potential locations of pots, what data will be collected and what interest there is by the industry to start to use these pots in earnest and for the long term. D&S IFCA has been asked to join the Scallop Potting Project Advisory Group, and the first meeting is planned for 6th March 2025. The uptake of potting for scallops by D&S IFCA Potting Permit Holders will be monitored in 2025/2026.

Measures of Equal Environmental Benefit (MEEB)

In addition, D&S IFCA had discussions with Natural England and Defra relating to the use of Measures of Equal Environmental Benefit which D&S IFCA is looking to apply in the Skerries Banks and Surrounds MCZ and Start Point to Plymouth Sound and Eddystone SAC.

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Success Criterion 4:

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

Workstream & Actions (as per Annual Plan FY 2024/2025)

Task 039 Annual Plan

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



Report

The Annual Plan FY 2025/2026 is being discussed at the Authority meeting in March 2025. This Eleventh Month Progress Report has helped to inform the proposed Annual Plan presented to Members in March 2025. Subject to potential amendments requested by Members, the presented Annual Plan will be finalised, published on the D&S IFCA website by 31st March 2025 and sent to the Secretary of State.



This is a repeating task as required by Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009.

Task 040 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 Eleventh Month Progress Report presented to Members in March 2025 will help to inform the finalised Annual Report. It is envisaged that the finalised Annual Report for FY 2024/2025 will be similar in style to that produced for FY 2023/2024. The Annual Report for FY 2024/2025 will be sent to the Secretary of State before 30th November 2025, with Officers anticipating completion in April or May 2025. When finalised the Annual Report will be published on the D&S IFCA website.



This is a repeating task as required by Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009.

Task 041 Workstream Reporting

To accurately record time spent by Officers in different areas of work to inform the Annual Report, to assist with the Annual Plan and to establish the accumulation of TOIL and un-social working hours.



Report

This workstream has been delivered by all D&S IFCA Officers and help monitor the officers work including those workstreams funded by Defra. It supports working from home and allows monitoring of TOIL and un-social hours worked.



Task 042 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.



Report

The Chair and Chief Officer have had regular meetings with the Defra team responsible for reviewing the funding of D&S IFCA since August. The Chair and Chief Officer have been asked to fact check information used by Defra in their communications with the funding Local Authorities. The Chief Officer attended two meetings with Defra and Local Authorities to discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the current structure of D&S IFCA ahead of sharing options for change. The Chair and Chief Officer stressed that whatever funding options were to be considered it is vital that the changes resulted in more funding being made available.



Work, including meetings, to find a potential resolution to D&S IFCA's funding crisis will continue in FY 2025/2026.

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Task 043 Familiarisation & Training for Members

Officers will host multiple virtual training and familiarisation sessions for Members. The sessions will set out the role of Members in the decision making and overall governance of the Authority. This will also include the provision of an overview of current management byelaws and how permitting byelaws function as a legal framework for the introduction of management measures (permit conditions). In addition, the sessions will explore how pre-consultation, and formal consultation can be used to inform decision making relating to changes in management measures.



Report

The Byelaw related module was conducted in April 2024. A booklet and presentation slides were circulated to all Members and posted on the Members Area (Training for Members page) of the D&S IFCA website. Two virtual sessions were organised for by Officers and all Members of the Authority were invited to attend the presentations and discuss the content of presentations with officers. The two on-line sessions were attended by a total of five Members.

Unless requested by Members, Officers are not expecting more familiarisation and training sessions to be prepared and delivered in 2025/2026.

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Task 044 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

The process for the annual appraisals of all officers began before 31st May 2024. New appraisal forms that reflect updated job descriptions, introduced as part of the job evaluation process completed in 2023, were circulated to officers. The appraisals included one to one

meeting with Line Managers. Time constraints prevented completion of all aspects of the appraisal process by 31st May, with appraisals for Senior Management Team completed in June 2024.



Conducting annual appraisals is a requirement of the IFCA success criteria and the task will be carried forward into the Annual Plan FY 2025/2026.

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Task 045 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 were held on 20th June 2024, 19th September 2024, and 12th December 2024. B&PSC meetings were held on 13th June 2024, 5th September 2024, 5th December 2024, and 27th February 2025. All agendas, officers' papers and the minutes of both Authority and B&PSC meetings are published on the D&S IFCA website.



This is a repeating task as per IFCA success criteria. The task will be carried forward into the Annual Plan FY 2025/2026.

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Task 046 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

This is a repeating task, needed for effective working by staff and Members and the need to be aware of differing issues. There were 17 direct notifications issued to Members relating to different issues, for example updates on funding, invitations to attend events, and circulation of information, including presentations. Officers have regular meetings, some in person, but most are on-line.



The task will be carried forward into the Annual Plan FY 2025/2026.

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Additional Work Relating to Success Criterion 4:

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

Report:

Environment Officers have undertaken additional in-house R statistics training to increase their capability in analysing data. Officers have undertaken STCW update training where required.

Environment Team members also attended the national IFCA Officer training that took place in February 2025. This was the first year that Environment Officers have been involved in this

National training as part of the first iteration of the annual Environment, Science and Conservation training course. The training delivered builds on local expertise in assessing fishing activities in MPAs and delivering IFCA duties in relation to Marine Spatial Prioritisation. This course is aimed at Environment Officers in all IFCAs to give consistent understanding and training in a number of environment and research components which affect all the IFCAs.

Two officers took part in the Habitat Regulations Assessment Masterclass with Derogation, provided by Footprint Ecology, over two days in November 2024. The training will help D&S IFCA ensure that the Habitat Regulations are correctly applied to its assessments of fishing activities in MPAs and help inform consultations on developments in MPAs.

All D&S IFCA employees undertook Conflict Resolution Training which is undertaken every two years and provides the tools to deal with various types of conflict Officers may be faced in their work. A recently employed Enforcement Officer undertook all the Health and Safety Training modules that all Officers are required to undertake. The Health and Safety Duty Holder also produced a Staff Induction Handbook Checklist which details all Health and Safety requirements and policies that new officers are required to read, understand and follow.

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Success Criterion 5:

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

Workstream & Actions (as per Annual Plan FY 2024/2025)

Task 047 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

The Annual Plan for FY 2024/2025 set out areas of research that were undertaken, with individual plans developed relating to those workstreams.

A range of research planning and survey work has been undertaken, including: intertidal mollusc surveys and the partnership project informing mussel fishery management in the Taw-Torridge; on-board crustacea surveys; fishing activity surveys to inform pot fisheries management; and a range of research required to inform MPA assessments and D&S IFCA's contribution to marine spatial prioritisation work such as that required for Hinkley Point C. Officers have also contributed to the planning of a PhD research programme to fulfil evidence needs on essential fish habitat, in addition to a PhD research programme on the restoration of mussels to south west estuaries. Planning is also underway for research activities in FY 2025/2026.



This is a repeating task, as required by national IFCA success criteria. The task will be carried forward into the Annual Plan FY 2025/2026.

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Task 048 Research Reporting

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



Report

Additions to applicable areas of the website since 1st April (to 28th February 2025) include:

- Monitoring & Control Plan – Hartland Point to Tintagel MCZ (published Nov 2024)
- Five HRA Assessments – Plymouth Sound & Estuaries – relating to fish traps (published in Dec 2024)

Substantial research reporting has been included in Officers papers to Members, including for example:

- Information on potting activity in the District to inform B&PSC agenda items on Potting Permit Conditions (B&PSC meeting February 2025)
- Updated information on Torbay MCZ seagrass beds, supporting a recommendation to reduce access to demersal towed gear in the site (Agenda Item 9, B&PSC meeting December 2024)

- Information on concerns and suggestions for management of pot fisheries (Agenda item 10a, B&PSC meeting September 2024).

Officers have contributed to a peer-reviewed publication on the ecology of wrasse, titled 'Low trophic redundancy among temperate wrasse species implies ecosystem risks associated with a multi-species inshore fishery', published in the journal *Marine Ecology Progress Series*.



Publishing research reports is a requirement of the national IFCA success criteria. The task will be carried forward into the Annual Plan FY 2025/2026.

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Task 049 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

Two in-person TAG meetings have been attended in the last year. These meetings provide the forum for all IFCAs and other agencies, such as Natural England, Environment Agency, Cefas, Welsh Government and the MMO, to give 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 IFCAs to help gather evidence and inform the IFCAs' research role. TAG members share research and developments undertaken through a national mapping tool which provides the opportunity to learn from each other.

A TAG meeting was attended at the Cornwall IFCA offices in June 2024. This was a two-day meeting with TAG business being carried out on day one and the AIFCA hosted a meeting focussed on the Cefas Coastal Health and Livelihoods (CHLE) project on the second day. Another two-day TAG meeting was attended in Bristol in November 2024. This venue was organised by a D&S IFCA Environment Officer as it was held within the D&S IFCA District. The first day was attended by IFCA officers only and was used to develop the IFCA Environment, Science and Conservation Course which would run in parallel with the IFCA Competent Officer Course which is aimed at Enforcement Officers. The second day was attended by IFCA officers and other organisations for general TAG business.

An outcome of TAG this year was the development of the IFCA Environment, Science and Conservation Course which two D&S IFCA officers had a role in developing. Two modules were run by D&S IFCA Environment Officers, the Fishery/Feature Interactions in MPA module and the Marine Licensing and Planning module. The course was run in February 2025.



Attending TAG is a requirement of national IFCA success criteria. The task will be carried forward into the Annual Plan FY 2025/2026.

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Task 050 Standard Operating Procedures

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



Report

SOPs were reviewed and updated where necessary. Officers completed an IFCA national database of the SOPS, risk assessments and Health and Safety Policies developed by D&S IFCA.



This is a repeating task, as required by national IFCA success criteria. The task will be carried forward into the Annual Plan FY 2025/2026.

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Task 051 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 and 2024 have been uploaded, and officers are integrating MEDIN metadata uploads into the usual reporting workflow to improve reporting efficiency.



This is a repeating task, as required by national IFCA success criteria. The task will be carried forward into the Annual Plan FY 2025/2026.

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Task 052 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.

Officers provided evidence to consultants including information on the D&S IFCAs management of the Lyme Bay MPA, potting and netting activity within the D&S IFCA's District as part of an impact study commissioned by the MMO. Officers provided evidence to Seafish to aid their analysis of the potting fleet in relation to effort of viviers and provided Natural England with information on fisheries displacing from MPAs. Other work included a meeting with a researcher looking at alternatives to plastic in fishing and provided information to Blue Marine Foundation on bottom towed gear impact in MPAs.



The task will be carried forward into the Annual Plan FY 2025/2026, reflecting the importance of time spent engaging with a range of stakeholders interacting with D&S IFCA's remit.

Task 053 Research Databases and Literature Review

D&S IFCA officers gather and use a wide range of literature to undertake and inform D&S IFCA research work. This is maintained in the internal filing system within the relevant topic specific folders. Officers will continue to 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



This is a repeating task which forms an important part of all evidence gathering and reporting. Officers use a wide range of evidence in their work; all reports list the research papers and other evidence sources used.

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Additional Work Relating to Success Criterion 5:

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

Report:

Officers engage in a range of webinars, workshops, working groups, estuary forum events and stakeholder discussions, as well as reading scientific literature, in order to build the evidence base available to D&S IFCA for decision-making. An Officer represented the views and interests of D&S IFCA at the ICES conference in Newcastle in September 2024 and gathered information on fisheries and marine science that is relevant to the work of Officers. D&S IFCA collaborated with two PhD students to improve the evidence base around flatfish habitat in the Severn, and mussel restoration in southwest estuaries; both projects aim to deliver outputs relevant to management of fisheries and the marine environment. Officers worked with regulators and scientists to secure external funding to support research into oystercatcher use of the Taw-Torridge Estuary SSSI which, combined with D&S IFCA's ongoing research into intertidal mollusc stocks, will inform sustainable fisheries management in the estuary.

Officers were also involved in the Ropes to Reefs Project partnering with University of Plymouth, Shellfish Association of Great Britain, Offshore Shellfish and other aquaculture businesses. An Officer took part in a live panel discussion as part of the final project outcome webinar. Officers were also involved in meetings relating to the proposed closure for crawfish in ICES sub-area 7 for 2024-2025. Officers also attended the ICES multi-species stock advice meetings held earlier in the year, the Cefas Science briefing and a meeting organised by Cefas to discuss fish moving north.

End.