



Devon and Severn Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority



Photograph: Start Bay, South Devon

FY 2025/2026

Version 1.0

31st March 2025

ANNUAL PLAN

Contents

D&S IFCA

Brixham Laboratory

Freshwater Quarry

Brixham

TQ5 8BA

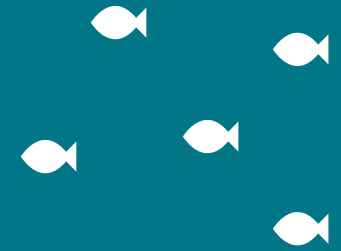
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Version Control

Version 1.0: Key tasks agreed by
Authority Members on 20th March 2025

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”.

Introduction

This is D&S IFCA's 15th Annual Plan, and it sets out the known priorities for the forthcoming year.

Since its inception, the annual challenge presented to D&S IFCA is how best to achieve delivery of its Statutory duties within its Revenue Budget. For the first time, it was formally recognised in the 2024/2025 Annual Report that D&S IFCA had not been able to meet all its Statutory duties and the legitimate expectations of its stakeholders. Despite an increase of 6.75% in the Revenue Budget for 2025/2026, a recruitment freeze remains in place and the delivery of the work set out in the Annual Plan is expected to be achieved by the existing compliment of officers, 12.6 FTEs. When Members approved this Annual Plan, it was recognised that key workstreams were not able to be included and this would result in D&S IFCA continuing to fail to meet all its Statutory duties.

D&S IFCA will continue to support the funding Local Authorities and Defra in seeking changes to its funding structure to allow it to operate on a more sustainable basis.

The Annual Plan identifies the work that can be achieved to support local and national priorities. D&S IFCA recognises the importance of the Fisheries Management Plans (FMPS) that are being introduced through the Fisheries Act 2020. D&S IFCA recognises the importance of its role in shaping the management in draft FMPs and supporting the delivery of the short-term measures identified in the front running FMPs.

D&S IFCA intends to complete the remaking of its Mobile Fishing Permit Byelaw and make progress towards remaking its Potting Permit Byelaw, its Netting Permit Byelaw, and introduce new permit conditions.

The remaking of the Mobile Fishing Permit Byelaw is essential to provide D&S IFCA with the legal framework to consider implementing Remote Electronic Monitoring (REM) on mobile fishing vessels operating in its District. The national roll out of IVMS is welcome and the data provided will help inform future management of static gear activities, but D&S IFCA believes that to effectively monitor and manage the activity of the mobile gear fleet and provide meaningful protection of the Marine Protected Areas in its District, the introduction of REM is essential.

D&S IFCA intends to introduce management through the permit conditions associated to the Potting Permit Byelaw to prohibit the use of larger vivier vessels in its District. The remaking of the Potting Permit Byelaw and the Netting Permit Byelaw are carried forward from last year's Annual Plan. The Authority will use the re-making of the Netting Permit Byelaw to consider bringing it in line with its other permit byelaws by prohibiting commercial fishing from Non-Powered Vessels.



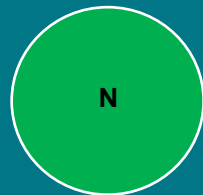
D&S IFCA continues to recognise the importance of its role in supporting the sustainable development of other marine activities including renewal energy and coastal mariculture farms through reviewing marine licence applications and providing expert advice.

Following the completion of the assessments of fishing activities in the Bristol Channel Approaches SAC in 2024, D&S IFCA will consider what management, if any, is necessary. Once Members have made a determination regarding the management of the site and introduced any required measures, D&S IFCA will have met its commitment to have management in place for all fishing activities occurring in coastal MPAs. Estuarine MPAs will require the development of a Hand Working Permit Byelaw but this cannot be achieved due to D&S IFCA's limited resources.

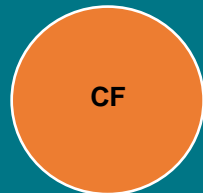
D&S IFCA will prepare a submission to Defra to include all evidence relating to the application of Measures of Equal Environmental Benefit (MEEB) for habitats in the Skerries Banks and Surrounds MCZ and Start Point to Plymouth Sound and Eddystone (SPPSE) SAC. This work follows on from initial discussions with Defra and Natural England in 2024 on the application of MEEB.

This plan highlights the main workstreams for 2025/2026, but it also records the many other areas of work necessary to support the organisation's governance and business as usual functions.

Within this plan, focussed workstreams have been marked with an amber or green system to depict whether the workstream is a new workstream for 2025/2026, or whether the work has been carried forward from the Annual Plan 2024/25, as follows:



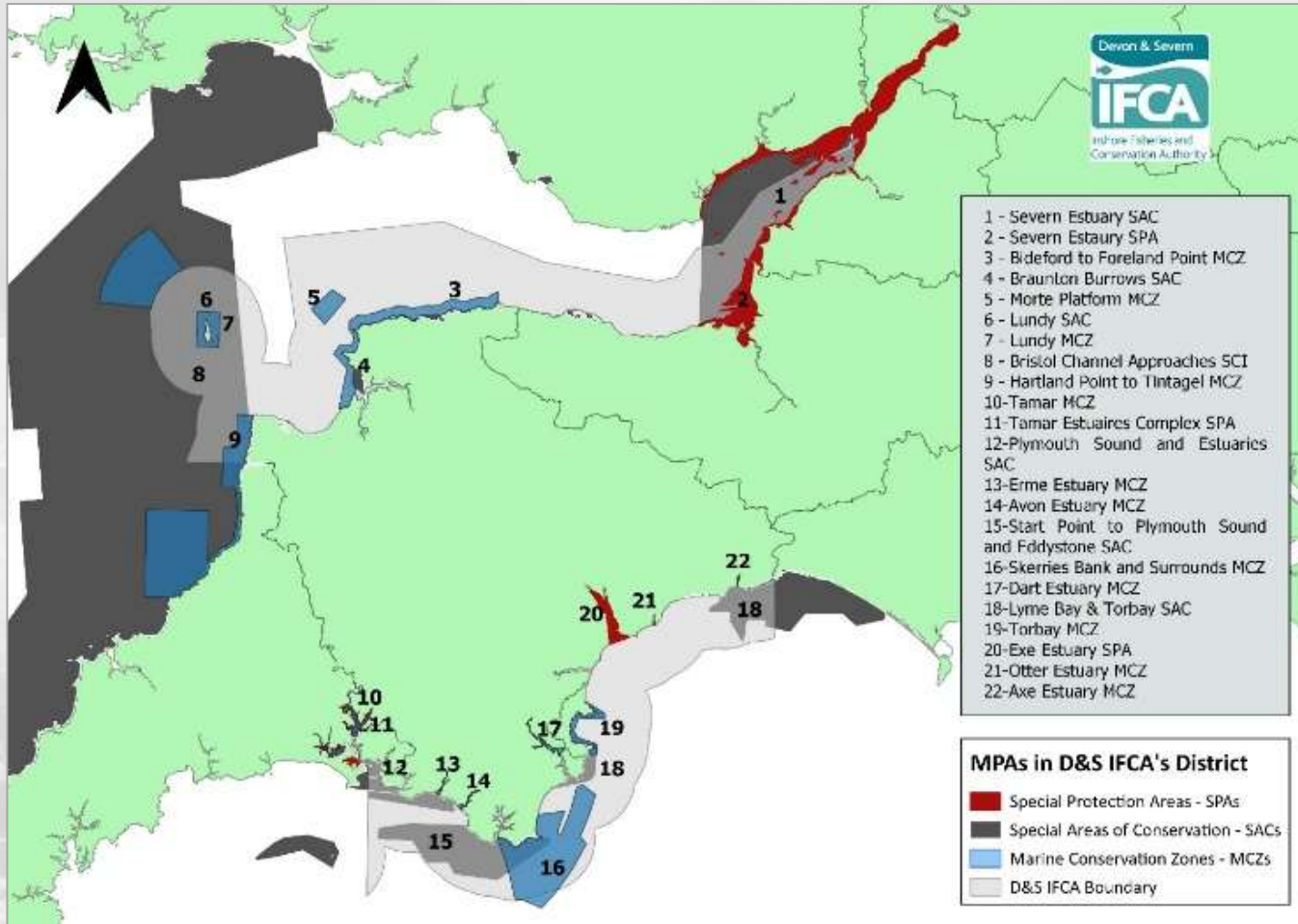
New (N) workstream for the 2025/2026 Annual Plan



Workstream carried over (CF) from the 2024/2025 Annual Plan

Our District

D&S IFCA is the largest IFCA District. D&S IFCA shares boundaries with CIFCA, SIFCA & Welsh Government.



District Size:

- 4,522 km² of sea
- 1,314 km² of coastline

Marine Protected Area:

- 22 MPA's
- 42.39% D&S IFCA District is covered by MPAs
- 27.39% D&S IFCA's District is closed to demersal mobile gear
- Currently 81.17 % of the area within MPAs are closed to demersal Mobile gear (excl. BCA SAC)

Fishing activity managed through Four Permit Byelaws:

- Mobile Fishing Permit Byelaw (2014) - 109 Commercial Mobile Fishing Gear Permits
- Potting Permit Byelaw (2015) - 186 Commercial Potting Permits and 452 Recreational Potting Permits
- Diving Permit Byelaw (2015) - 16 Commercial Diving Permits and 356 Recreational Diving Permits
- Netting Permit Byelaw (2018) - 126 Commercial Netting Permits and 59 Recreational Netting Permits

Finance & Income

D&S IFCA's Revenue Budget for 2025/2026 has been set at £956,100. This remains the lowest Revenue Budget of the nine mainland IFCAs. The base levy delivered by the funding Local Authorities has increased by 6.75% from £785,066 in 2024/25 to £838,058 in 2025/26. In addition to the increase in levies of £52,992 on the funding Local Authorities, the Revenue Budget is balanced by taking £118,042 from General Reserves.

Table (1) Levy Funding

	2024/25 Base Budget £	Base Budget Adjustments £	Inflation £	2025/26 Budget £
Employees	746,100	11,600	22,600	780,300
Premises	36,200	3,700	900	40,800
Transport	14,400	(500)	300	14,200
Supplies & Services	76,900	(8,200)	1,100	69,800
Boat Costs	35,600	(1,700)	1,000	34,900
Environmental Research	17,400	(5,200)	300	12,500
Support Services	56,000	(10,000)	700	46,700
Fees, charges, and interest	(45,100)	2,000	0	(43,100)
Revenue Budget	937,500	(8,300)	26,900	956,100
Budgeted use of Reserves	(2,434)	(115,608)	0	(118,042)
Continuation of additional DEFRA Funding (at risk)	(150,000)	150,000	0	0
Funding from Levies	785,066	26,092	26,900	838,058

New Burdens Funding:

The levies on six of the funding Local Authorities are offset by the provision of £409,297 of New Burdens Funding (NBF) from Defra.

However, due to Defra's administration of NBF, D&S IFCA does not receive all the funding. In 2025/2026 this reduces the net NBF to D&S IFCA to £396,161.

In addition to the NBF, for the past three years Defra has provided additional funding through the 2021 Spending Review to deliver three national workstreams. This additional funding had been used to offset the amount levied on the funding Local Authorities for the past two years. With uncertainty over whether this additional funding will be available in the future and to tackle the widening gap between the amount levied and the Revenue Budget it was agreed to close the deficit by raising levies using its Reserves.

Long Term Funding and Organisational Stability

The Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP) presented to the Authority sets out three options to close the gap between the amount levied and the Revenue Budget by 2028/2029. The MTFP forecasts the increase in the Revenue Budget due to inflation over the period and does not provide for an uplift in resourcing to lift the freeze on recruitment. Members have agreed to adopt Scenario 1 in the MTFP. This requires a year-on-year increase in levy contributions of 7% for three consecutive years from 2026/2027 and will mean that for the first time, the five Severn Local Authorities will all need to use local taxpayers' money in addition to NBF to meet their levy contribution by 2027/2028.

D&S IFCA and the Local Authorities will engage with Defra to seek a change in the contributions each Local Authority makes to the Revenue Budget but more importantly seek a way to increase the Revenue Budget above inflation so that D&S IFCA has more resource available to meet its Statutory Duties.

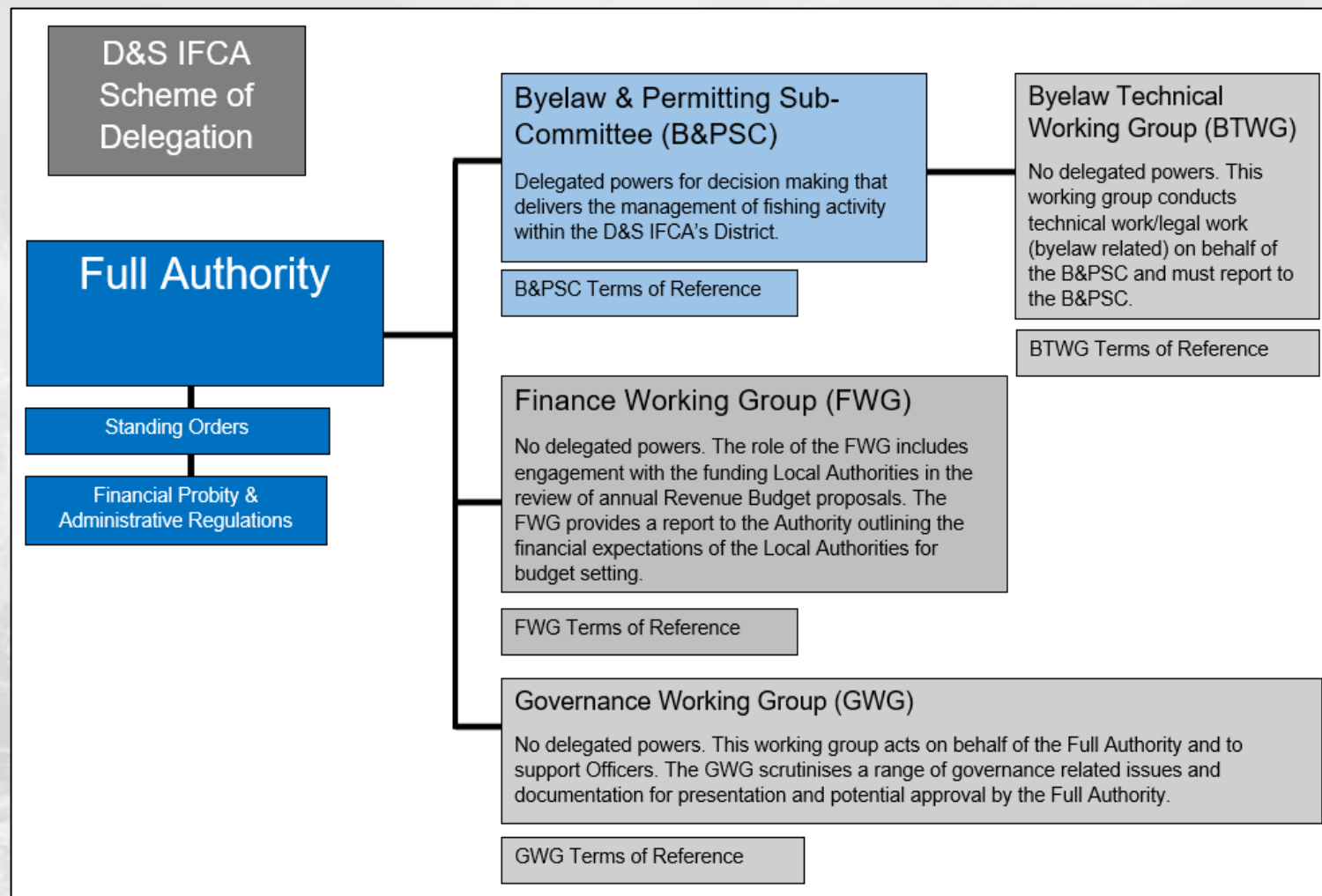
Table (2) Medium-Term Financial Plan

	2025/26 Budget	2026/27 Budget	2027/28 Budget	2028/29 Budget
Scenario 1				
% increase in levy	6.75%	7.00%	7.00%	7.00%
Use of reserves	(£118,042)	(£83,876)	(£46,205)	(£4,740)
Closing balance of reserves	£483,190	£399,314	£353,109	£348,369
Balance % of expenditure budget	51%	41%	35%	34%
Scenario 2				
% increase in levy	3.00%	8.00%	8.00%	8.00%
Use of reserves	(£147,482)	(£107,291)	(£62,527)	(£12,774)
Closing balance of reserves	£453,750	£346,459	£283,932	£271,158
Balance % of expenditure budget	47%	35%	28%	26%
Scenario 3				
% increase in levy	0.00%	10.50%	9.00%	9.00%
Use of reserves	(£171,034)	(£113,103)	(£60,130)	(£729)
Closing balance of reserves	£430,198	£317,095	£256,965	£256,236
Balance % of expenditure budget	45%	32%	26%	25%

Delivery of the Annual Plan

This Annual Plan endeavours to fulfil the Statutory duties of the relevant Funding Local Authorities relating to inshore fisheries and the marine environment and to recognise the additional funding provided by Defra for specific work. The combination of officers and Members working together will progress the Annual Plan.

The Authority also consists of 16 MMO Appointed Members and two representatives of each of the Statutory Agencies - Natural England and the Environment Agency. A list of Authority Members can be viewed on D&S IFCA's website by clicking [here](#)



Funding Authorities' Representation	
Gloucestershire County Council	1 Member
South Gloucestershire Council	1 Member
Bristol City Council	1 Member
North Somerset Council	1 Member
Somerset County Council	1 Member
Torbay Council	1 Member
Devon County Council	5 Members
Plymouth City Council	1 Member
General & Statutory Members	

The Authority also consists of 16 General Members (appointed by the MMO) whose areas of expertise include environment, marine law, commercial and recreational fisheries, angling and charter angling, education, and communications.

The Authority also consists of Statutory Members representing the Environment Agency and Natural England.

Delivery of the Annual Plan – Officers & Staff Structure



D&S IFCA Officers – April 2025

Chief Officer: Mat Mander

Deputy Chief Officer: Sarah Clark

Principal Policy Officer: Neil Townsend

Finance & Administration Manager: Olga Pepper

Senior Enforcement Officer: Gavin Mayhew

Enforcement Officer: Bradley Harris

Enforcement Officer: Ben Mitson

Enforcement Officer: Jon Norman

Enforcement Officer: Callum Bedford

Senior Environment Officer: James Stewart

Environment Officer: Lauren Parkhouse

Environment Officer: Sarah Curtin

Marine Development Officer: Nadine Hanlon

















Contacting Officers

D&S IFCA's website includes a "Contact Us" page.

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

Key Workstreams for 2025/2026

The work of D&S IFCA consists of key workstreams as well as the 'business as usual' workstreams that are undertaken to fulfil Defra High Level Objectives. The key goals for 2025/2026 are summarised below:

-  Formally consulting on potential changes to the Potting Permit Conditions to introduce management measures agreed by the Byelaw & Permitting Sub-Committee.
-  To undertake a range of tasks associated with the re-making of the Potting Permit Byelaw and the Netting Permit Byelaw.
-  To undertake a range of tasks associated with the potential application of Measures of Equal Environment Benefit.
-  Further national FMP work will be undertaken including continued involvement in the first three Tranches of FMPs applicable to the District. Work will include working with Defra, MMO, fishers, NGO's.
-  Hinkley Point C – Marine Technical Forum – to continue undertaking required tasks associated with the development of HPC Power Station seeking to ensure impacts on fish are avoided, minimised and mitigated where possible.
-  To undertake crab tile surveys on the Teign Estuary, utilising drone technology.
-  Tidal and Wind Energy - to undertake a range of tasks, including engagement, associated with avoiding, minimising and mitigating the impacts of developments on the fishing industry, fish and habitats which support sustainable fisheries.
-  Focus on compliance with the Netting Permit Byelaw Permit Conditions will continue as a key workstream for the Enforcement Team.
-  To consider appropriate management measures for the Bristol Chanel and Approaches SAC.
-  To undertake a range of tasks associated with the Taw Torridge Estuary Bivalve Mollusc Stock Assessment.
-  Monitoring of the whelk fishery, including data collection and engagement work.
-  Monitoring of existing and emerging scallop fisheries operating in the District, including analysis of data and evidence gathering which can inform consideration of potential future management requirements.
-  Developing the use of drones, including training for Officers, developing Standard Operating Procedures, and utilising the equipment for a range of IFCA work.
-  Conducting a risk assessment and timeline to review previously undertaken MPA assessments and begin the review process for higher-risk assessments.
-  Spatial monitoring will continue as a key workstream for the Enforcement Team to monitor compliance with access restrictions to the towed gear fleet in MPAs.
-  Waddeton Regulating Order – to undertake a range of tasks associated with site restoration following the end of the lease.

Focus on Governance Workstreams

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. Officers will 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. The Standing Orders of the Authority and the Terms of Reference for the Byelaw and Permitting Sub-Committee and working groups will be reviewed annually.

Officers will continue to provide the secretariat to the Authority and working groups. Planning, organising, and managing different elements of work undertaken by Officers and the Authority will be a time consuming, but necessary requirement if goals are to be achieved. D&S IFCA's Policies and Procedures will be reviewed where appropriate to ensure that they meet legal requirements and ensuring officers remain compliant with these policies. D&S IFCA's Publication Scheme will be updated with more information during 2025/2026. There will be additions to the website Resource Library to allow greater access to information by stakeholders and the general public. D&S IFCA will continue to support Defra and its Funding Authorities in finding a resolution to its funding crisis.

The Governance Working Group

The Authority has created a Governance Working Group, to undertake a range of governance related tasks.

Review of D&S IFCA's Compliance & Enforcement Strategy

CF

The GWG will continue with the review the current Compliance and Enforcement Strategy and further consider introducing new ways of operating. The task includes drafting a new Compliance and Enforcement Strategy which will be circulated to all other IFCA's in 2025/2026 as a basis for developing a national IFCA Enforcement and Compliance Strategy. Officers will assist the GWG, where required, including arranging meetings requested by the Chair of the GWG.

Review of D&S IFCA's Communication Strategy

CF

Following familiarisation with current documentation and establishing a drafting team, both completed to date. The GWG will continue this workstream and complete a draft of the Communications Strategy. Officers will assist the GWG, where required, including arranging meetings requested by the Chair of the GWG. The finalised draft of the Communication Strategy will be presented to the Authority in 2025/2026 for potential approval.

Success Criterion:

Governance related work is relevant to different Success Criteria.

The Authority is supported by an organised, efficient, and effective secretariat.

New members will receive an induction pack and briefing from the Authority.



Focus on Communications

Communications underpin a range of D&S IFCA's work including publications; attendance at local, regional, and national meetings; personal engagement with stakeholders; consulting and responding to consultations; and information dissemination through D&S IFCA's website. The GWG is reviewing D&S IFCA's Communications Strategy in 2025/2026. Until the review is completed, D&S IFCA will continue with its current approach for its communications.

D&S IFCA's Current Approach to Communications

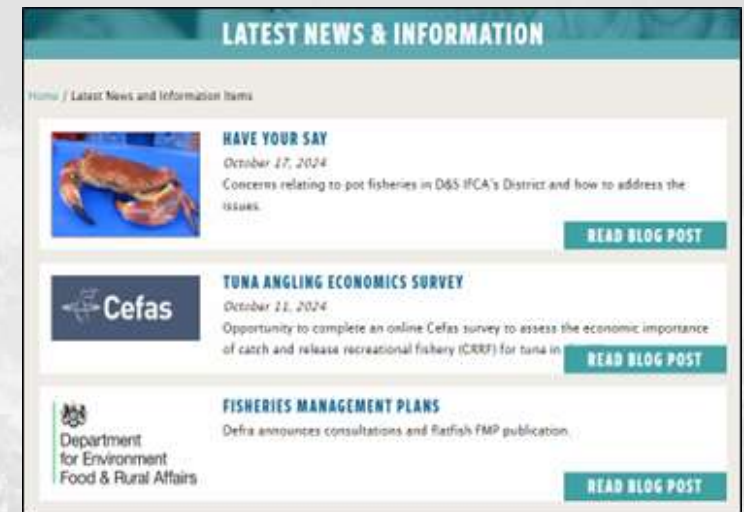
D&S IFCA must recognise its limited resources with its approach to communications. The Authority's website and social media, such as Facebook, remains a key component of D&S IFCA's Communication Strategy.

Electronic engagement, rather than one-to-one communications, is effective and importantly less expensive and less time consuming. D&S IFCA will continue creating news items that can inform a wide audience about different topics, and be used to support communications developed by partner organisations.

- News items are often repeated on Facebook
- <https://www.devonandsevernifca.gov.uk/latest-news-information/>

Success Criterion:

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



Data Base of Contacts and Communication Options

D&S IFCA will continue to maintain a data base of contacts that includes a wide range of stakeholders and targeted messaging will be undertaken where possible and when required. Mailchimp will be used to reach all D&S IFCA stakeholders 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 of information are sent in the post for those with no access to e-mails.

D&S IFCA's website includes display pages dedicated to active consultations/events and completed consultations where a range of information will be found in 2025/2026.

<https://www.devonandsevernifca.gov.uk/engagement-have-your-say/>

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Byelaw Review Related Engagement

The re- making of two byelaws (Potting Permit Byelaw and Netting Permit Byelaw) will include the need to formally advertise in a selection of newspapers. This is a mandatory requirement; however, it is both expensive and less effective than other forms of communication. D&S IFCA will also advertise the making of the two new Byelaws by using a mixture of its own communication initiatives, including direct communication to contacts on its mailing list (Mail Chimp) and news posted on the D&S IFCA website and Facebook.

Consultation work relating to changes to permit conditions will also take place in 2025/2026. Not all potential changes to Permit Conditions can be predicted; however formal consultation will take place with a view to prohibiting potting vessels with an integral tank (specified volume) from operating within the District. Officers will inform the B&PSC of other potential developments that may require changes in management. The need for, and the focus of this type of communication is dependent on the decision making of the Byelaw and Permitting Sub-Committee (B&PSC) as they review existing management measures and changing situations.



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Potting Permit Conditions – Engagement

Formal consultation will be undertaken relating to the potential prohibition of potting vessels fitted with integral vivier tanks (exceeding a specified volume). The findings of the engagement work will be reported to the B&PSC in 2025.

The formal consultation report will be published, along with all B&PSC papers and minutes from meetings to help inform all stakeholders about the outcomes of engagement.

Information

All byelaw review (and permit condition) review work are fully documented. All papers and reports presented to D&S IFCA's Byelaw and Permitting Sub-Committee in 2025/2026 will be published on the D&S IFCA website, along with the minutes from the meetings. The website has a display page to view meeting papers.

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

Focus on Management of Fishing Activities

Byelaw development and reviews of permit conditions are the remit of the Byelaw and Permitting Sub-Committee (B&PSC). In 2025/2026 it is expected that there will be four meetings of the B&PSC. As well as identified tasks, the B&PSC will monitor and consider external developments that may influence management considerations for 2025/2026. The Byelaw Technical Working Group (BTWG), which includes Officers and D&S IFCA's prosecuting solicitor, will support the B&PSC to undertake legislative drafting work.

Success Criterion:

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

Mobile Fishing Permit Byelaw 2022 – Finalising the Task

CF

The Mobile Fishing Permit Byelaw 2022 (and a revised package of required information) is expected to be returned to the Marine Management Organisation, to reach a point where the Byelaw will be submitted for confirmation by Defra.

D&S IFCA Byelaw Technical Working Group will prepare legal advice as part of the letter requesting the process continues. If the Byelaw is confirmed in due course by Defra, other work for D&S IFCA in 2025/2026 will include final drafting of the associated Permit Conditions, finalising the associated Annexes that accompany the permit conditions, and communication and administration work.



To Re-make the Potting Permit Byelaw and the Netting Permit Byelaw

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The on-going task for 2025/2026 is for the B&PSC to “make” each Byelaw. Once made by the B&PSC, formal consultation will be undertaken on each byelaw. The task, as a whole, will involve drafting, creation of new annexes, communication work, development of impact assessments, and decision making of the B&PSC.

The Byelaw Technical Working Group will assist Officers with drafting work. The making of the two byelaws to replace the existing byelaws will require discussion by the B&PSC relating to their scope, potentially including the criteria for fishers to gain a permit.

“Making” the byelaws is not implementation of the byelaws. Byelaws can only be implemented following a quality assurance phase by the MMO and approval by the Secretary of State, neither of which form part of this task for the Annual Plan.



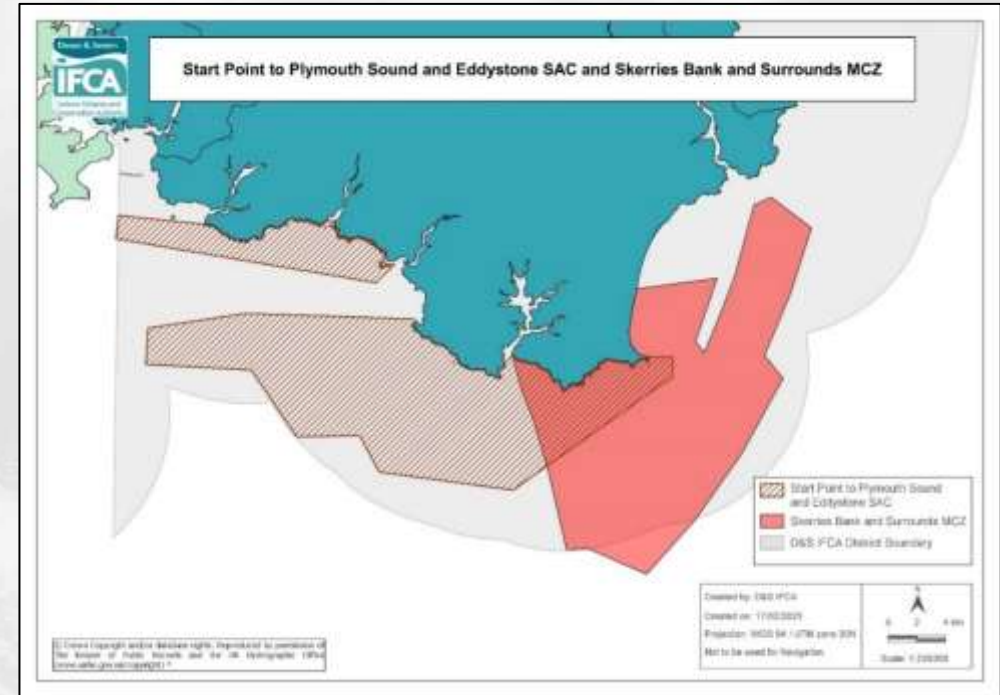
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Measures of Equivalent Environmental Benefit (MEEB)

D&S IFCA will prepare a submission to Defra to include all evidence relating to the application of Measures of Equivalent Environmental Benefit (MEEB) for habitats in the Skerries Banks and Surrounds MCZ and Start Point to Plymouth Sound and Eddystone (SPPSE) SAC.

This work follows on from initial discussions with Defra and Natural England in 2024 on the application of MEEB. Officers will use the results of analysis of the ground truthing of habitats in the two MPAs and look to provide evidence that will support the retention of the seasonal access areas to demersal mobile fishing gear in the Skerries Banks and Surrounds MCZ and maintain the closed areas (to demersal mobile fishing vessels) within the SPPSE SAC that contain a similar habitat (coarse habitat).

This will be the first time MEEB will be considered in relation to fishing and across MPAs that are designated under different legislation.



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Fisheries Management Plans

D&S IFCA Officers will continue to be involved in the first three Tranches of FMPs for those FMPs that are applicable to the District and adjacent waters and will be involved in further Tranches of FMPs as they develop.

D&S IFCA is a key contributor to the development and implementation of FMPs and Officers are increasingly involved in the discussions on management measures that secure the timeframe for interventions set out in the FMPs.

D&S IFCA is the IFCA lead on the Crab and Lobster FMP and 2025/2026 will see Officers work with Defra, MMO, fishers, NGOs and other stakeholders to develop management measures that will be tested in the Western Channel Crab Fishery Unit Trial.

In addition to the two FMPs listed above, D&S IFCA is engaged and supports the delivery of the Channel Non Quota Species FMP, Bass FMP, Whelk FMP, Scallop FMP, Wrasse and Bream FMP and Skates and Rays FMP.

Focus on Enforcement Work

Success Criterion:
IFCAs implement a fair, effective and proportionate enforcement regime.

D&S IFCA operates an intelligence led and risk-based approach to enforcement. The approach meets recommendations set out in the Hampton Review and makes best use of D&S IFCA's limited resources. The approach is delivered through identifying the fisheries that occur in the District that D&S IFCA currently regulates. This is in line with the National Intelligence Model followed by other enforcement agencies and improves the sharing of intelligence throughout the organisations giving a better overview of potential illegal activities. This intelligence feeds into regular Tasking and Control Group meetings from which officers are expected to develop enforcement plans that reflect the predicted risk and also reports of suspicious activity.

Gathering Intelligence:

A new page has been developed for D&S IFCA's website that will help gather intelligence during 2025/2026.

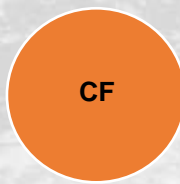
<https://www.devonandsevernifca.gov.uk/reporting-illegal-fishing/>

D&S IFCA also encourages stakeholders to report suspected illegal fishing activity using the incident line **07740 175479** or the intelligence email: intel@devonandsevernifca.gov.uk

The damaging interaction of demersal towed gears with the designated features within D&S IFCA's Marine Protected Area network represents the greatest environmental risk that D&S IFCA has a responsibility to manage. Illegal incursions reduce the natural capital value derived from these important habitats and can significantly impact static gear fishers through the loss of pots and nets towed away by illegal fishing.

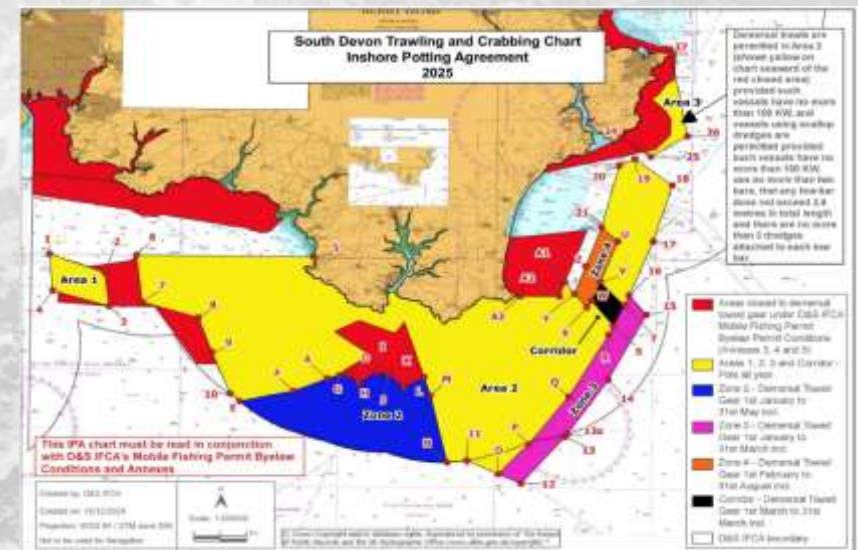


Photograph: FPV David Rowe



In order to provide as much protection as its resources will allow, D&S IFCA plans to continue to monitor, as closely as possible, the activity of the mobile fishing fleet in its District and, when required, will take the necessary enforcement action against vessels fishing illegally.

D&S IFCA will continue to use spatial data from the various sources (IVMS, VMS, AIS) as a component of the evidence used in its investigations.



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Developing the Use of Drones

D&S IFCA has purchased a drone primarily to support delivery of its monitoring and enforcement work but may have environmental mapping applications such as crab tile fishery in estuaries.

Officers have completed their training on the use of the drone and are qualified to fly the drone in an enforcement capacity. Standard Operating Procedures will also be created for the use of the drone. It is intended that the drone will be flown in support of the Enforcement Officers' coastal and estuarine shore patrols.



Illegal Coastal and Estuarine Netting

This continues to pose a high risk to the environment and species of fish that are known to use these areas of D&S IFCA's District.

It poses particular challenges to the Enforcement Team, as the netting is normally undertaken by small, less than six metre vessels, that operate at night, with no lights, and manoeuvre at high speeds.

It is hoped that the expected completion of the national roll out of IVMS to all licensed commercial fishing vessels will provide improved intelligence on this activity and improve detection rates.



CF

Information

D&S IFCA's website is used to publish investigation tables providing an overview of investigations and their status.

<https://www.devonandsevernifca.gov.uk/enforcement-and-legislation/investigation-tables/>

In 2025/2026, the investigation tables will be updated at least every three months.

Focus on Environment Work

Risk Assessment and Timeline on the Review of the Previously Completed MPAs

D&S IFCA has undertaken assessments of the interactions of fishing activities on designated habitats and species in the 22 MPAs in its District, which have been used to inform management measures, where appropriate. A review of previously undertaken MPA assessments relating to fishing activity is crucial to ensure that management measures are effective in protecting sensitive marine habitats and species, in line with D&S IFCA's Statutory Duties.

A review process is particularly important where a long time has elapsed since the last assessment, where fishing patterns have changed, and/or where new evidence is available regarding feature sensitivity and exposure, or compliance. Given the large number of assessments undertaken to date, and the limited resources available, Officers will establish a risk-prioritised timeline and register for review of previously completed assessments and begin the review process for higher-risk assessments.

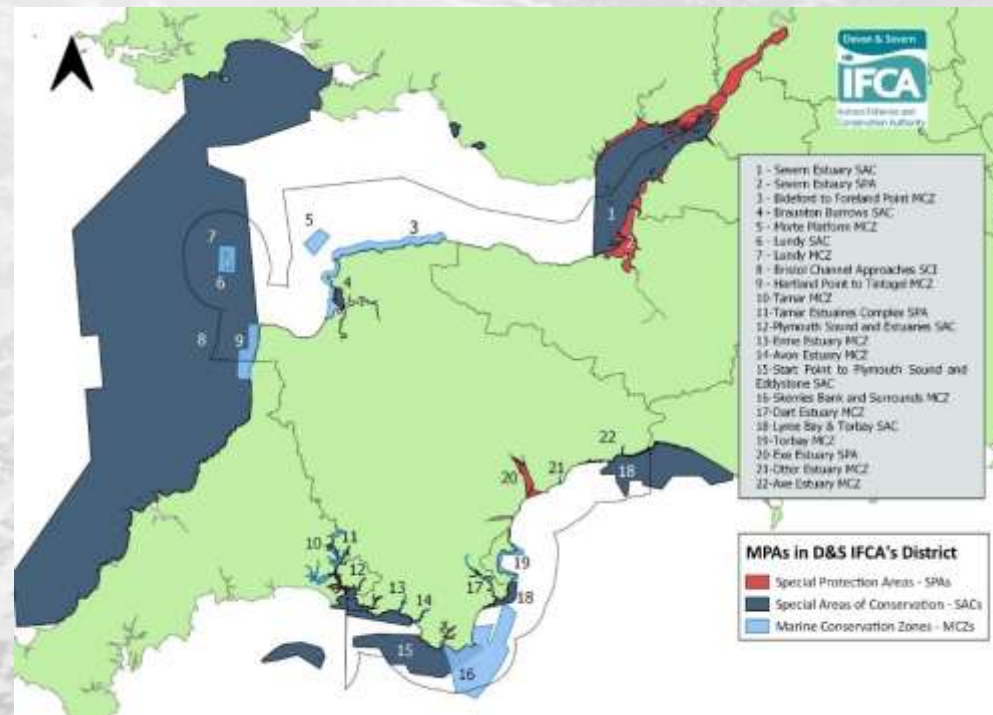
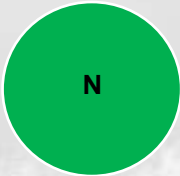
Consideration of Outputs from a review of MPA Assessments

Building on the risk-based prioritisation of MPA review requirements, Officers will undertake a review of the higher-risk assessments; outputs from these assessments will be considered in terms of their relevance to management and raised for consideration by Authority Members as required.

Initial scoping has highlighted a need to consider outputs of a revised MCZ assessment for cuttlefish potting on the seagrass beds in the Torbay MCZ and consideration of a review of management will be presented to the B&PSC in FY2025/2026 ahead of the 2026 fishery.

This scoping has also highlighted other priority reviews of assessments for Plymouth Sound and Estuaries SAC (ring netting) and Skerries Bank and Surrounds MCZ (mobile gear). Other assessment reviews may be necessary depending on the level of risk.

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



CF

Determine Management Measures for the Bristol Channel & Approaches SAC

The Bristol Channel Approaches (BCA) SAC, designated for harbour porpoise, is a complex site which falls within the jurisdiction of the MMO, Cornwall IFCA and D&S IFCA. The size of the site and mobile nature of the designated species presents unique challenges for MPA assessments and potential management of fishing activity. Officers have completed the required MPA assessments and will work with other organisations to determine management options (if required and appropriate) for consideration by Members.

CF

Mariculture – The Waddeton Regulating Order

The Waddeton Regulating Order in the Dart Estuary has been held by D&S IFCA since 2001 and expires in April 2026 and has supported mussel and pacific oyster cultivation by shellfishermen over that time. D&S IFCA leased the Waddeton Order area from the Duchy of Cornwall who own the fundus of the Dart Estuary, and this lease also expires in 2026. D&S IFCA Officers have been in discussions with the Duchy, who have made a decision to no longer support pacific oyster cultivation in the Duchy owned estuaries in the Southwest. With this in mind, and Defra's changes to the granting of Regulating Orders, D&S IFCA will not be renewing the lease. The Waddeton Order area also co-locates with the Dart Estuary MCZ.



Officers will engage with the Duchy of Cornwall, Natural England and Waddeton plot holders (shellfishermen) to agree and undertake appropriate works required to return the site to a clean and proper state in time for the end of the lease, including the potential removal of artificial infrastructure and farmed stock. D&S IFCA will be investigating techniques that could be used to aid the site restoration and how such techniques could be used without significantly impacting the features and conservation objectives of the Dart Estuary MCZ.

N

Crab Tiles on the Teign Estuary

Crab tiles (artificial shelters such as roof tiles) are used by recreational and commercial fishers to target common shore crab that are preparing to moult (known as peeler crabs) and that release a hormone that acts as an attractor to fish. Peeler crabs are therefore seen as a good bait for rod and line fisheries. D&S IFCA Officers undertake crab tiles surveys in its estuaries approximately every four years. D&S IFCA published a report in 2020 following mapping of crab tiles in nine estuaries within the D&S IFCA's District. Between 2016 and 2020 there has been a slight increase in total number of crab tiles in all estuaries of 2,668 tiles.



The majority of this increase was in the Teign Estuary which, in 2020, had 16,412 crab tiles. Due to resource limitations of D&S IFCA, Officers will be focussing on the Teign Estuary to undertake a crab tile survey in FY2025/2026 and will be trialling the use of the recently purchased D&S IFCA drone to undertake the survey in-house (previous years surveys have chartered a drone operator to undertake this work).

CF

Monitoring of Commercial Scallop Fisheries

This task will involve the monitoring of existing and emerging scallop fisheries operating in the D&S IFCA District.

- 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 to 2025 inclusive. This is a task carried forward from the Annual Plan FY 2024/2025.
- The 'potting for scallops' fishery (using new light technology) will be monitored to evaluate the uptake of new opportunities. Evidence gathering regarding the emerging fishery for trap-caught scallops will seek to inform the potential additional pressure on scallop and crustacea stocks, understand how existing fishers may switch or diversify from existing activities, and inform consideration of future management requirements.



N

Monitoring of the Whelk Fishery

Between 2018 and 2020, D&S IFCA adopted a phased approach to increasing the Minimum Conservation Reference Size of whelk from 45mm to 65 mm. This was undertaken in order to better protect the spawning capacity of whelk stocks in the District, following on from D&S IFCA's research on the size of sexual maturity of whelk in the D&S IFCA's District.

It is important for Officers to now establish what impact that this change may have had on industry and whelk stocks. Officers will engage with industry and scope the available data sources. This workstream will include gathering data on effort, catches, and the populations of whelk around the District. D&S IFCA is aware that there is some shift towards the whelk fishery from other shellfisheries and this workstream will help to monitor changes in the fishery.

N

Taw Torridge Estuary Bivalve Mollusc Stock Assessments

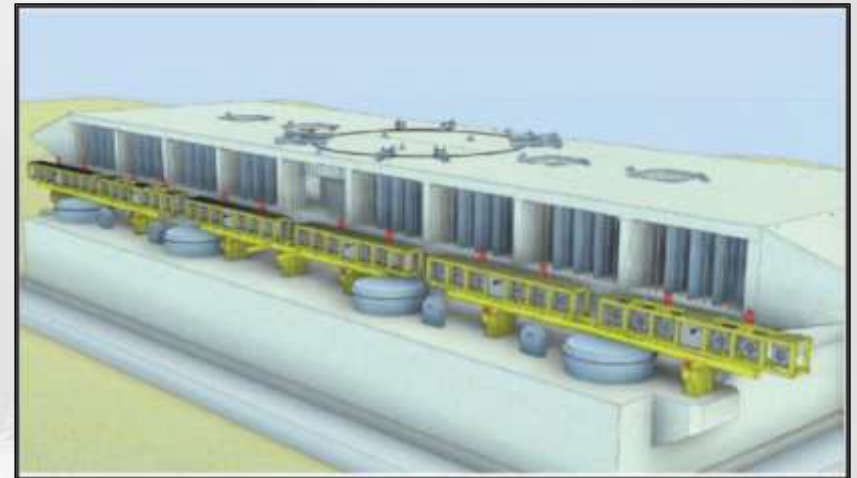
The Taw Torridge Estuary is an SSSI, and its intertidal mussel and cockle beds are important for the overwintering birds that frequent the estuary. Stock assessments of these shellfish are used alongside a bird food availability model to establish the amount of mussel that may be commercially harvested without impinging on bird survival and the health of the mussel beds. The bird food model was updated in 2024/2025, and the new outputs will be used alongside site-specific surveys during 2025/2026 to inform ongoing management of a commercial mussel fishery. Tidal constraints have limited Officers' ability to survey mid-channel mussel beds in the estuary; following several trials, it has not been possible to circumvent these survey constraints using drone technology, so Officers will also explore other access options for these important shellfish beds, in line with health and safety requirements.

Focus on Sustainable Development

CF

Hinkley Point C Nuclear Power Station – Development Permissions - HPC Marine Technical Forum

This workstream is expected to continue into 2025/2026, using a range of evidence to ensure that impacts from HPC on fish and fisheries are avoided, minimised and mitigated where possible. Where this is not possible, Officers will seek to ensure that any compensation measures introduced to offset harm (under the Habitats Regulations) are meaningful and evidence based. This work is likely to focus on the developer's proposed material changes to the Development Consent Order for HPC. 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.



Drawing of initial design of water intakes including Acoustic Fish deterrents (yellow)

CF

Considerations of Tidal and Wind Energy Developments

The South West of England has significant potential for tidal and offshore wind energy, including floating offshore wind in the Celtic Sea and tidal generation in the Severn Estuary and Bristol Channel. Following the Crown Estate's Areas of Search consultation in 2022 for floating wind energy developments in the Celtic Sea, D&S IFCA has been and will continue to review and respond to Marine Licence Applications.

This work will also relate to proposals within ports to aid and support these renewable energy developments and also licences submitted by developers wishing to trial technologies for floating wind farms. Tidal Stream Energy is gaining traction in the Bristol Channel and Severn Estuary e.g. Welsh Government are introducing Strategic Resource Areas for Tidal Stream Energy, and D&S IFCA Officers will keep abreast of any applications and developments that are proposed in relation to tidal stream energy and respond accordingly in relation to D&S IFCA's duties.

This increasing interest from developers in these opportunities is likely to increase work for Officers, who will seek to ensure that developers avoid, minimise and mitigate the impacts of such developments on the fishing industry, fish and fish habitats which support sustainable fisheries. This will include direct engagement with developers, facilitating engagement channels between developers and the fishing industry, contributing to marine spatial planning and responding to consultations on marine licences and development consents.

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:

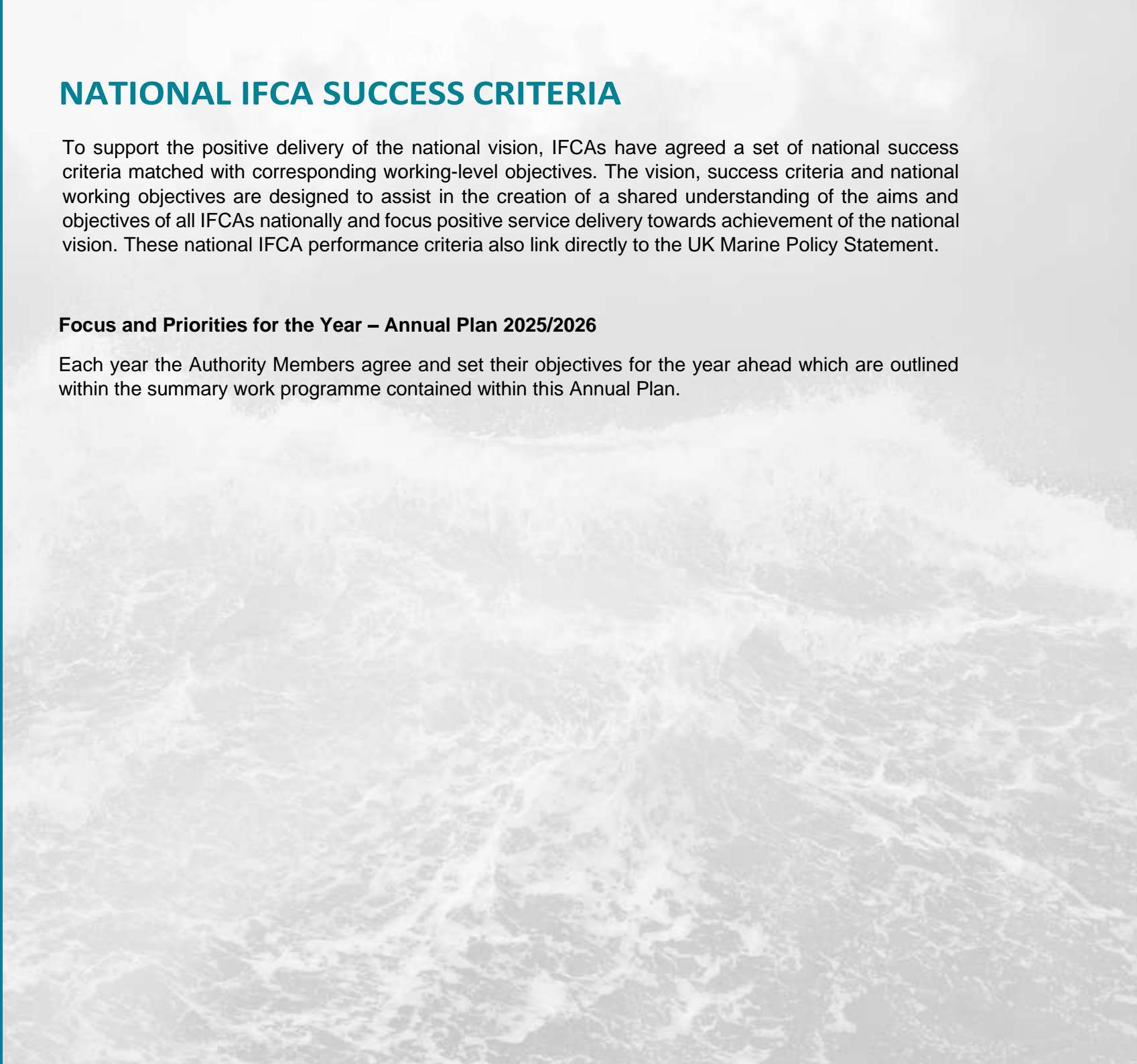
IFCAs make the best use of evidence to deliver their objectives.

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 2025/2026

Each year the Authority Members agree and set their objectives for the year ahead which are outlined within the summary work programme contained within this Annual Plan.



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.

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.

Workstream & Actions

1

The GWG to Complete the Review of D&S IFCA's Communication Strategy & Delivery Plan

Following familiarisation with current documentation and establishing a drafting team, both completed to date. The GWG will continue this workstream and complete a draft of the Communications Strategy. Officers will assist the GWG, where required, including arranging meetings requested by the Chair of the GWG. The finalised draft of the Communication Strategy will be presented to the Authority in 2025/2026 for potential approval.

2

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.

3

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.

4

Communication Element: To Re-Make the Potting Permit Byelaw

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.

5

Communication Element: To Re-Make the Netting Permit Byelaw

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.

6

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.

7

Support Sustainable Development

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. D&S IFCA will respond to a range of MLAs from inshore pontoons and sea wall developments to offshore aquaculture, capital dredging and renewable energy developments.

8

Hinkley Point C Nuclear Power Station – Development Permissions - HPC Marine Technical Forum

This workstream is expected to continue into 2025/2026, using a range of evidence to ensure that impacts from HPC on fish and fisheries are avoided, minimised and mitigated where possible.

- a) Officers will continue to engage with the developer on development proposals.
- b) Officers will seek to ensure that any compensation measures introduced to offset harm (under the Habitats Regulations) are meaningful and evidence based. This work is likely to focus on the developer's proposed material changes to the Development Consent Order for HPC.

9

Considerations of Tidal and Wind Energy Developments

- a) Officers will continue to review and respond to Marine Licence Applications in relation to Tidal and Wind Energy. This work will relate to proposals within ports to aid and support these renewable energy developments and also licences submitted by developers wishing to trial technologies for floating wind farms.
- b) D&S IFCA Officers will keep abreast of any applications and developments that are proposed in relation to tidal stream energy and respond accordingly in relation to D&S IFCA's duties.
- c) This workstream will require direct engagement with developers, facilitating engagement channels between developers and the fishing industry

10

Fisheries Management Plans

- a) D&S IFCA Officers will continue to be involved in the first three Tranches of FMPs for those FMPS that are applicable to the District and adjacent waters and will be involved in further Tranches of FMPs as they develop.
- b) Officers will contribute to the development and implementation of FMPs
- c) Officers will be involved in the discussions on management measures that secure the timeframe for interventions set out in the FMPs including the development of management measures that will be tested in the Western Channel Crab Fishery Unit Trial.

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

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.

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

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.

Workstream & Actions

11

Review the Compliance and Enforcement Strategy

The GWG will continue with the review the current Compliance and Enforcement Strategy and further consider introducing new ways of operating. The task includes:

- a) drafting a new Compliance and Enforcement Strategy;
- b) circulated to all other IFCA's in FY 2025/2026 as a basis for developing a national IFCA Enforcement and Compliance Strategy.

Officers will assist the GWG, where required, including arranging meetings requested by the Chair of the GWG.

12

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.

13

Monitoring of Illegal Netting in Estuaries

Illegal coastal and estuarine netting continues to pose a high risk to the environment and species of fish that are known to use these areas of D&S IFCA's District. It poses particular challenges to the Enforcement Team, as the netting is normally undertaken by small, less than six metre vessels that operate at night, with no lights, and manoeuvre at high speeds. It is hoped that the expected completion of the national roll out of IVMS to all licensed commercial fishing vessels will provide improved intelligence on this activity and improve detection rates. The use of a drone will also assist with the detection of this activity as it is expected that the licensed vessels netting illegally will not have functioning IVMS devices.

14

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.

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

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.

16

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.

17

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. The investigation tables will be updated at least once each quarter.

18

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.

19

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.

20

Developing the Use of Drones

D&S IFCA has purchased a drone primarily to support delivery of its monitoring and enforcement work but may have environmental mapping applications such as crab tile fishery in estuaries. Officers have completed their theory training on the use of the drone. Tasks for FY 2025/2026 include:

- a) Develop Standard Operating Procedures for the use of the drone;
- b) To fly the drone to support of the Enforcement Officers' coastal and estuarine shore patrols.

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.

Workstream & Actions

21

Mobile Fishing Permit Byelaw 2022:

The Mobile Fishing Permit Byelaw 2022 (and a revised package of required information) is expected to be returned to the Marine Management Organisation, to reach a point where the Byelaw will be submitted for confirmation by Defra. D&S IFCA Byelaw Technical Working Group will prepare legal advice as part of the letter requesting the process continues. If the Byelaw is confirmed in due course by Defra, other work for D&S IFCA in 2025/2026 will include:

- a) Final drafting of the associated Permit Conditions;
- b) Finalising the associated Annexes that accompany the Permit Conditions;
- c) Conducting relevant communication and administration work.

22

To Re-Make the Potting Permit Byelaw

The continuing task for 2025/2026 is for the B&PSC to "make" the Potting Permit Byelaw as a replacement for the existing Byelaw; with potential implementation in 2026. The task for 2025/2026 involves:

- a) Providing the B&PSC with any required Officer's paper/s to inform development;
- b) Drafting work by Officers with assistance of the Byelaw Technical Working Group (BTWG);
- c) Development of an Impact Assessment (for consultation);
- d) When "made" by the B&PSC, formal consultation will be undertaken on the Byelaw (communication task 4);
- e) The B&PSC to discuss the findings of the formal consultation, potentially amending the Byelaw;
- f) 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 2025/2026.

The Byelaw cannot be implemented without approval by the Secretary of State, and this is not expected in FY 2025/2026.

To Re-Make the Netting Permit Byelaw

The continuing task for 2025/2026 is for the B&PSC to “make” the Netting Permit Byelaw as a replacement for the existing Byelaw; with potential implementation in 2026. The task for 2025/2026 involves:

- a) Providing the B&PSC with any required Officer’s paper/s to inform development;
- b) Drafting work by Officers with assistance of the Byelaw Technical Working Group (BTWG);
- c) Development of an Impact Assessment (for consultation);
- d) When “made” by the B&PSC, formal consultation will be undertaken on the Byelaw (communication task 5);
- e) The B&PSC to discuss the findings of the formal consultation, potentially amending the Byelaw;
- f) 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 2025/2026.

The Byelaw cannot be implemented without approval by the Secretary of State, and this is not expected in FY 2025/2026.

Measures of Equal Environment Benefit (MEEB)

- a) D&S IFCA will prepare a submission to Defra to include all evidence relating to the application of Measures of Equal Environmental Benefit (MEEB) for habitats in the Skerries Banks and Surrounds MCZ and Start Point to Plymouth Sound and Eddystone (SPPSE) SAC. This work follows on from initial discussions with Defra and Natural England in 2024 on the application of MEEB.
- b) Officers will use the results of analysis of the ground truthing of habitats in the two MPAs within the submission to Defra to support the retention of the seasonal access areas to demersal mobile fishing gear in the Skerries Banks and Surrounds MCZ and maintain the closed areas (to demersal mobile fishing vessels) within the SPPSE SAC that contain a similar habitat (coarse habitat).
- c) Officers will liaise with Natural England on what the equivalence looks like in terms of the habitats that are being considered.
- d) Officer will submit the findings of this workstream to the Byelaw and Permitting Sub-Committee for Members to decide the appropriate management once Defra has provided its conclusion on D&S IFCA’s use of MEEB.
- e) Officers will discuss the output from this work stream with the Members of Inshore Potting Agreement Committee.

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.

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.

25

Seasonality of the Egg Bearing of the European Lobster, Homarus Gammarus

Officers collected data throughout 2024/2025 on the seasonality of egg bearing of the European lobster through survey work, on-board fishing vessels operating in the D&S IFCA's District.

- a) Officers will analyse the 2024/ 2025 data together with data gathered in 2023/2024 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.
- b) Once the data are analysed a report will be produced which will help provide an evidence base to inform the use of the enforcement tools that may be used to identify if a berried lobster has been scrubbed of its eggs.

26

Monitoring of Commercial Scallop Fisheries

This task will involve gathering information on both existing and emerging scallop fisheries operating in the D&S IFCA District, as follows:

- a) 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 to 2025 inclusive.
- b) The 'potting for scallops' fishery (using new light technology) will be monitored to evaluate the uptake of new opportunities. Evidence gathering regarding the emerging fishery for trap-caught scallops will seek to inform the potential additional pressure on scallop and crustacea stocks, understand how existing fishers may switch or diversify from existing activities, and inform consideration of future management requirements.

27

Monitoring of the Whelk Fishery

Between 2018 and 2020, D&S IFCA adopted a phased approach to increasing the Minimum Conservation Reference Size (MCRS) of whelk from 45mm to 65 mm.

- a) Officers will investigate the impact that the increase in MCRS may have had on industry and whelk stocks.
- b) Officers will engage with industry and scope the available data sources. This workstream will include gathering data on effort, catches, and the populations of whelk around the District. D&S IFCA is aware that there is some shift towards the whelk fishery from other shellfisheries and this workstream will help to monitor changes in the fishery.

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.

28

Risk Assessment and Timeline on the Review of the Previously Completed MPAs Assessments

D&S IFCA has undertaken assessments of the interactions of fishing activities on designated habitats and species in the 22 MPAs in its District, which have been used to inform management measures, where appropriate.

- a) Officers will undertake a review process of previously completed MPA assessment which will be determined by the date of the previous completed assessment, whether fishing patterns have changed and where new evidence is available regarding feature sensitivity and exposure, or compliance.
- b) To aid this process, Officers will establish a risk-prioritised timeline and register for review of previously completed assessments and begin the review process for higher-risk assessments.

29

Consideration of Outputs from a Review of MPA Assessments

- a) Officers will undertake a review of the higher-risk assessments building on the risk-based prioritisation of MPA review requirements.
- b) Outputs from these assessments will be considered in terms of their relevance to management and raised for consideration by Authority Members as required.
- c) Officers will present the outputs of a revised MCZ assessment, undertaken in 2024, for cuttlefish potting on the seagrass beds in the Torbay MCZ and consideration of a review of management will be presented to the B&PSC in FY2025/2026 ahead of the 2026 fishery.
- d) Officers have already highlighted other priority reviews of assessments for Plymouth Sound and Estuaries SAC (ring netting) and Skerries Bank and Surrounds MCZ (mobile gear). Other assessment reviews may be necessary depending on the level of risk.

30

Determine Management Measures for the Bristol Channel & Approaches SAC

The Bristol Channel Approaches SAC, designated for harbour porpoise, is a complex site which falls within the jurisdiction of the MMO, Cornwall IFCA and D&S IFCA. The size of the site and mobile nature of the designated species presents unique challenges for MPA assessments and potential management of fishing activity.

- Officers will work with other organisations to establish management options (if required and appropriate) for consideration by Members.

MPA Monitoring and Control Plans

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.

- a) Officers will collect data and evidence regarding fishing activity within five MPAs in the D&S IFCA's District to inform the review of the Monitoring and Control Plans for these MPAs.
- b) Officers will use Monitoring and Control Plan (M&CP) findings to review MPA assessments as appropriate. M&CPs are reviewed annually to inform whether additional management is required.
- c) The review of M&CPs includes looking at permits issued by D&S IFCA, IVMS data and any further evidence gathered on impacts to assess whether activity levels have increase and trigger point exceeded.
- d) Reports will be produced for M&CPs for towed demersal gear in Torbay MCZ.
- e) Reports will be produced for M&CPs for towed demersal gear in Lundy SAC.
- f) For the other four M&CPs in place i.e for netting vs shad in Severn Estuary SAC; netting vs shad in the Plymouth Sound and Estuaries SAC; potting vs seagrass in the Plymouth Sound and Estuaries SAC; and demersal mobile fishing gear in the Hartland Point to Tintagel MCZ, an annual audit will be undertaken to determine if trigger points, in relation to the number of permits issued, have been met and whether the Habitat Regulation Assessments (HRA) need to be reviewed. Annual reporting is not required unless trigger points are exceeded.
- g) New M&CPs may be developed for the Bristol Channel and Approaches SAC depending on the conclusions of the HRAs to be undertaken.

Exemption Authorisations

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

Mariculture Waddeton Regulating Order

The Waddeton Regulating Order in the Dart Estuary has been held by D&S IFCA since 2001 and expires in April 2026 and has supported mussel and pacific oyster cultivation by shellfishermen over that time. Officers will engage with the Duchy of Cornwall, Natural England and Waddeton plot holders (shellfishermen) to agree and undertake appropriate works required to return the site to a clean and proper state in time for the end of the lease. This work will include:

- a) the potential removal of artificial infrastructure and farmed stock.
- b) investigating techniques that could be used to aid the site restoration and how such techniques could be used without significantly impacting the features and conservation objectives of the Dart Estuary MCZ, which with the Waddeton Order area co-locates.

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.

35

Crab Tiles on the Teign Estuary

D&S IFCA Officers undertake crab tiles surveys in its estuaries approximately every four years. D&S IFCA published a report in 2020 following mapping of crab tiles in nine estuaries within the D&S IFCA's District, the survey was mostly undertaken through use of a drone.

- a) Due to resource limitations of D&S IFCA, Officers will undertake a crab tile survey on the Teign Estuary only in 2025/2026 as this estuary showed the highest increase in crab tiles from the 2020 report.
- b) Officers will trial the use of the recently purchased D&S IFCA drone to undertake the survey in-house

36

Taw Torridge Estuary Bivalve Mollusc Stock Assessments

The Taw Torridge Estuary is an SSSI, and its intertidal mussel and cockle beds are important for the overwintering birds that frequent the estuary. Stock assessments of these shellfish are used alongside an updated bird food availability model to establish the amount of mussel that may be commercially harvested without impinging on bird survival and the health of the mussel beds.

- a) Officers will use the new model alongside site-specific surveys during 2025/2026 to inform ongoing management of a commercial mussel fishery.

Tidal constraints have limited Officers' ability to survey mid-channel mussel beds in the estuary; following several trials, it has not been possible to circumvent these survey constraints using drone technology, so Officers will:

- b) explore other access options for these important shellfish beds, in line with health and safety requirements.

37

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 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 Conditions and MMO Licence Variation.

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.

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.

Workstream & Actions

38

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.

39

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.

40

Workstream Reporting

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

41

Long Term Funding and Organisational Stability

The Medium-Term Financial Plan presented to Members at the December 2024 Authority meeting set out that without significant change to the funding structure it is forecasted that D&S IFCA will have reduced its Reserves to 34% of its Revenue Budget based on achieving uplifts of 7% in the Revenue Budget for each of the next three years.

D&S IFCA and the Local Authorities will engage with Defra to seek a change in the contributions each Local Authority makes to the Revenue Budget but more importantly seek a way to increase the Revenue Budget above inflation so that D&S IFCA has more resource available to meet its Statutory Duties.

42

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.

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.

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.

43

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.

44

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.

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.

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.

Workstream & Actions

45

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.

46

Research Reporting

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

47

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.

48

Standard Operating Procedures

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

49

MEDIN

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

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

50

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.

A list of research databases held by the IFCA and the frequency of their review.

51

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.



Photograph: Start Point, South Devon

D&S IFCA Annual Plan 2025/2026

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31st March 2025: Version 1.0