

**Devon and Severn Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority**

**Quarterly Report for the Period Ending August 2018**

**General Situation**

**ACO M Mander**

The quarter has had some ups and downs and the most significant of these both related to vessel monitoring systems. On 5<sup>th</sup> July 2018, after a three week trial and a day and a half of deliberation, the Jury at Gloucester Crown Court returned not guilty verdicts on 16 counts and could not reach a decision on the remaining four counts. This signalled the end of a two and a half year process that started back in December 2015.

On 29<sup>th</sup> August 2018, the Authority formally notified the 145 mobile fishing permit holders that, with immediate effect, it was a requirement of their permit to have on board a fully functioning vessel monitoring system unit on board. This was a significant achievement for all those involved and was a great example of partnership working between the public sector and private businesses.

Officers intend to start making much greater use of the vessel monitoring data in its management decisions given the much greater resolution of the vessel's activity that can be determined from the increased reporting intervals across the entire mobile fishing fleet operating in the District. Coupled with the improved catch reporting currently being developed nationally for the under 10 metre fleet, officers anticipate that a much greater understanding of the fishing patterns and where species are caught will be identified.

During the quarter, the staff continued to settle into their new roles and adjust to the situation following the Chief Officer's secondment to Defra. Olga Pepper started in her new role as Permitting Officer and this coincided with the Authority issuing the 1000<sup>th</sup> permit.

Much work was carried out prior to the official launch of the Authority's new website on 21<sup>st</sup> August 2018. The website represents the Authority's key communication tool and there has been criticism of the old website. Although not yet fully operational, officers are confident that when it is it will provide visitors with a much wider and more comprehensive source of information, which importantly will be easier to find. The website is designed to communicate using articles, new stories and blogs reflecting how information is conveyed on other successful websites, Twitter and Facebook accounts.

The visit to the Authority's offices in Brixham by board members from the Marine Conservation Society provided an excellent opportunity for officers to set out the work of both the research and enforcement teams. The officers' reports below again demonstrate the range and quality of the work they undertake. Preparing for the visit helped officers compose their response to the Quadrennial report to Parliament on the Performance of IFCAs.

Officers also responded to Defra's Fisheries White Paper. Whilst acknowledging the additional opportunities that may well be presented once the UK leaves the European Union Officers welcomed an opportunity to review the national approach to fisheries and conservation management. Many of the aims and objectives that were set out to be achieved at a national level in the future had already been adopted or delivered at a local level by the Authority.

This quarter has seen a focus on field work with surveys for both D&S IFCA led work and for important collaborative projects, such as methodology trials for scallop stock assessments with Cefas. Considerable time has been spent on several key work areas: the re-drafting and finalising the Annual Plan in response to comments made by Authority members; the development of the four-year report to Defra on the IFCA's activities; and preparing a response to the Government's fisheries white paper, 'Sustainable Fisheries for Future Generations'. A meeting was held at Brixham for the board members of the Marine Conservation Society to describe the IFCA's activities and vision for the future and improve future joint working for the two organisations

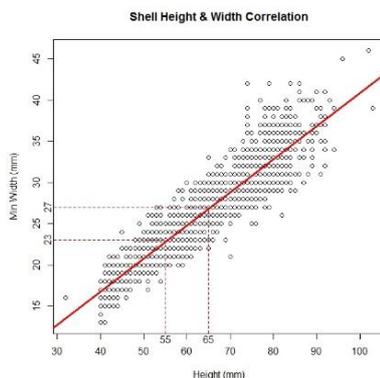
**Shellfish Research and Management**

**Scallops**

D&S IFCA Environment Officer Lauren Parkhouse spent working with Cefas on RV Endeavour, which included using camera technology and tagging scallops to trial new methodologies to carry out scallop stock assessments. D&S IFCA's flying array camera system was used and was very successfully deployed and trialled.



**Whelk**



The additional whelk samples collected from Ilfracombe and Exmouth in December 2017 and January 2018 have now been dissected. The data will be analysed to determine the breeding/spawning season of whelks in the D&S IFCA district.

Additional analysis was conducted on the data from the 2015 & 2016 whelk studies to look further into the relationship between shell height and shell width. This has been used to develop guidance for the industry on how to determine suitable riddle spacing for the new MCRS.

**Mussels**

The annual mussel stock assessments on the Taw-Torridge estuary, which commenced last quarter, were completed. The stock data will be used both by D&S IFCA to feed into management, and by Natural England to assess food availability for the birds, for which the estuary is designated a SSSI, to determine suitable harvesting limits. The data is currently being analysed and reports being compiled.

**Cuttlefish**

Additional filming work was carried out as part of the ongoing cuttle potting impact study. This will now be analysed.

**Finfish Research and Management**

The launch of the 2018 International Council for the Exploration of the Seas (ICES) advice for UK stocks was attended in London. Notably the bass advice for 2019-2021 no longer

recommends a catch limit of zero, and estimates of bass mortality attributed to Recreational Sea Angling have been hugely reduced. This echoes the opinions of the RSA representatives of the D&S IFCA. The Bristol Channel saw a number of cuts to quotas of roundfish, including cod, for which a zero TAC has been recommended.

### Wrasse

Sampling has now been completed for the pot saturation study as part of the MSc Dissertation. Unfortunately, due to very limited video capture of entries and exits of wrasse into and out of



the traps, it has not been possible to establish if saturation is occurring. Additional data captured will be used to calculate the total number of species and abundance of wrasse around the traps to assess whether this relates to catch. Catch per unit effort will also be compared between 2017-2018 and between the months of May to August. Comparing this data will help the IFCA monitor the fishery to aid future management decisions and determine whether it is sustainable.

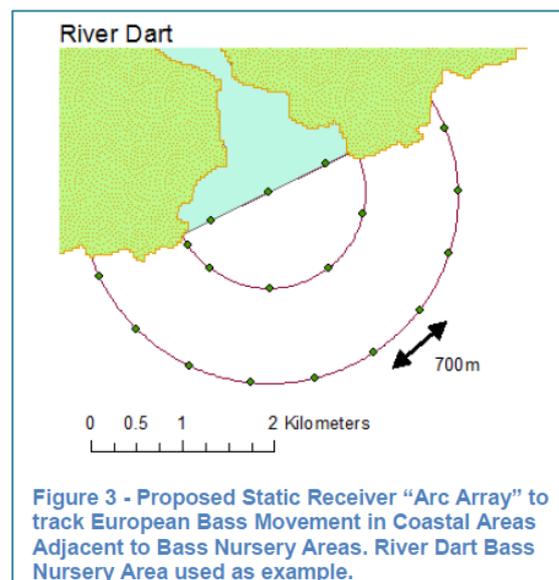
Wrasse fishing in the D&S IFCA district had a slow start this year with fishermen either concentrating efforts on the Cornish side, or not fishing for a number of reasons. Since normal effort has resumed a number of onboard observer surveys for the wrasse

fishery have been conducted, in addition to the surveys carried out during the pot saturation sampling. These surveys are to gather more information including the catch composition, size distribution and breeding season. The surveys will continue throughout the fishery's open season.

### Bass

Bass tagging efforts by Plymouth University for the Immature Bass Acoustic Stock Surveillance (I-BASS) have been supported. Officers assisted with emptying nets and transporting fish between capture sites and tagging sites at Salcombe and the Taw-Torridge. A total of 146 fish have now been tagged and released by the Plymouth University team in the Taw-Torridge, Dart and Salcombe estuaries.

The Cefas-led Bass Fisheries and Conservation UK project has been launched, with D&S IFCA assisting with workshop planning. This project aims to use local stakeholder knowledge to identify local issues with current bass management, and to plan and carry out research to address these issues. A workshop for the South West region will be held in Plymouth in September.



These two projects fulfil major areas of the D&S IFCA bass workplan. It is likely that a review of the workplan will be pertinent following the initial results of the D&S IFCA – Plymouth University PhD (including the I-BASS project).

### Pioneer Programme Projects

A presentation on fisheries and stewardship was given to the conference of the Pioneer Programme, at the WWF headquarters in Woking, and an afternoon workshop was attended. The Pioneer Programme continues to be a major workstream with IFCA officers attending steering group meetings and targeted meetings with fishermen in Clovelly and Ilfracombe as part of the development of individual projects. The Bristol Channel Herring project has now linked up with Swansea University, who will be conducting the genetic analysis of Severn Estuary and Bristol Channel herring from the English side. This complements work they are already undertaking in Wales. The rest of the project is being developed by Plymouth University and may include a PhD project specifically focussing on fish and fish habitat in the Bristol Channel and Severn Estuary. The meetings in Clovelly and Ilfracombe have focused on issues which are limiting inshore fishermen's ability to diversify in a traditional way, such as the spurdog ban, expanding pot fisheries and lack of access to quota.

### Somerset fish surveys

Flatfish surveys using a riley trawl (two-person push net) have taken place on a monthly basis at Burnham-on-Sea and Weston-Super-Mare with a Plymouth University undergraduate, working under Dr Ben Ciotti. Initial results saw 1-year old sole present at both sites in June, followed by an influx of this year's sole in July, concentrated at Burnham-on-Sea. The surveys aim to improve our understanding of the distribution of the sole nursery area in the Bristol Channel in relation to various environmental factors. This will improve the evidence base for D&S IFCA in replying to consultations for developments in the Severn Estuary. It is likely that this nursery area is significant in terms of commercial Dover sole abundance in the Bristol Channel. It is hoped the work will underpin a future PhD project.



Spring-summer sampling of fish was completed at Steart managed realignment with Plymouth University. An MSc project is now working alongside the PhD student to look at the abundance, feeding and growth of sand gobies inside the managed realignment compared to the adjacent natural saltmarsh.

Local fishermen at Minehead invited IFCA officers to observe the fishing of the fish weirs at Minehead which are registered ancient monuments and are fished only every few years and for purely heritage reasons. A wide range of species were called including at least four species of juvenile flatfish, bass, codling, conger eel and pipefish.

### **Marine Protected Area Work**

A meeting with NE was attended to discuss progress and approaches to MPA work. A telecom of the Defra MPA group was attended to discuss latest developments in European Marine Site management, including important new case law which has implications for the inclusion of mitigation in Tests of Likely Significant Effect.



Environment officers have completed a number of bait digging surveys on the Exe Estuary. These observation surveys are focussed on the “Duck Pond” area of the estuary, where there is intertidal seagrass. The main focus is to determine if, and to what extent, digging occurs on the seagrass (as has been reported in the past), to inform the development of a hand-working byelaw.

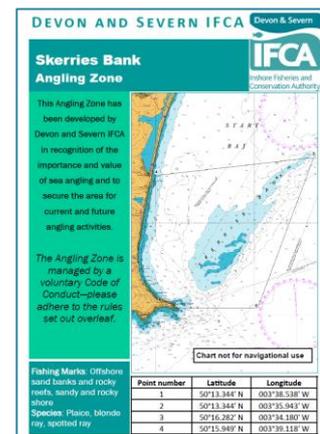
A review of the Exe Estuary handgathering HRA is underway, incorporating the latest results from mussel stock assessments, to evaluate whether management needs to be introduced as the stocks continue to decline. The final HRA assessments were carried out for the Braunton Burrows SAC.

Fishing activity reports for the Bideford to Foreland Point MCZ has been completed. This report will support MCZ assessments for this site which are currently being carried out. A fishing activity report for the Hartland Point to Tintagel MCZ is also being developed.

Work has continued on the development of Monitoring and Control Plans with a new, much shorter format being decided on.

### Recreational Sea Angling

Further analysis of the angling zone data has been completed and a first draft report is in the process of being put together. This report will help improve any perceived conflict between the Recreational Sea Angling and Commercial angling sectors as well as inform the IFCA on any additional management required for the zone<sup>1</sup>.



### Advocacy & Governance

#### *Hinkley*

Hinkley has remained a major workstream this quarter with attendance at several meetings and significant technical input has been necessary, with several major documents requiring review and comments. Unfortunately, a planned meeting of the D&S IFCA Nuclear Working Group had to be postponed. Substantial technical input is likely to be required for the next few months.

#### *Tidal Lagoons*

With the government decision not to subsidise Swansea Bay Tidal Lagoon, no further requests for technical advice have been received from Tidal Lagoon Cardiff. However, consultants have requested information on fish distribution in West Somerset in relation to early discussions for a lagoon being discussed that would stretch from Watchet to Minehead.

#### *Other consultations*

Further technical input has been required for scoping reports for aggregate dredging in the Severn Estuary. D&S IFCA is in the early stages of discussion with the Environment Agency and Porlock Oysters about some planned work to sewage works in Porlock to ensure the ‘Grade A’ rating of the oyster beds is not jeopardised by the planned works.

### *Emergency planning*

D&S IFCA joined the Devon Maritime Emergency Exercise run by the Dart Harbour Authority. Several scenarios were run through focussed on various ports in Devon, to establish the proper protocol to follow for each hypothetical situation.

### *Dispensations*

Numerous dispensation requests have been processed this quarter for organisations and individuals wishing to undertake scientific research within the D&S IFCA district.

### **Meetings**

- An all-day meeting was held at the Brixham office with members of the Marine Conservation Society. This was an extremely useful meeting where the IFCA was able to demonstrate the work that it undertakes including the use of innovative technologies, flexible permitting byelaws and the breadth of research being undertaken.
- IFCA officers continue to attend the South Devon and Channel Shellfishermen's Association on a monthly basis updating this large group of fishing industry members on D&S IFCA workstream that may be relevant to them.
- The inaugural Dart Estuary Forum was attended. Discussions focused on the structure, coordination and themes of the forum going forward.
- A workshop for the Plymouth Marine Park, hosted by Luke Pollard MP for Plymouth, was attended. The aim of the workshop was to recommend geographic boundaries and governance structure for the proposed park.
- An update was given at TECF on the new Netting Permit Byelaw.
- The bi-annual TAG meeting was attended in London.
- The Inshore MPAG meeting was attended in London. This meeting was attended by Cefas, EA, and NE to discuss the survey plans for inshore MPAs for the coming year, two of which are within the D&S IFCA district.
- The IFCA participated in a meeting of the Defra family Impacts and Evidence Group (IEG) where an update was given on the results of the BACI survey of mobile gear on mud in the Torbay MCZ.
- A meeting of the Crustacea Committee of Shellfish Association of Great Britain (SAGB) was attended in London. DCO Clark has been the Chair of the Crustacea Committee for four years and at this meeting the chairmanship was transferred to another member.
- A meeting of the South West Shellfish Liaison Group was attended. This is where member of the Mariculture industry, public Health Officers, Port Health Authority Officers, Cefas and Defra come together to discuss issues for the Mariculture and shellfish industry in the South West.

### **Policy input**

Several major consultations on policy have required input from the IFCA this quarter. Four-year reporting of D&S IFCA activities to Defra required substantial work as did assisting with developing the IFCA's response to Government White Paper on Sustainable Fisheries for Future Generations. D&S IFCA's 2018-2019 Annual Report was finalised this quarter. Comments made by the Authority's Chair and Vice Chairs were incorporated into the final product. The Annual Plan is now on the D&S IFCA's website.

## **Training**

EO Lauren Parkhouse undertook her RYA Professional Practices and Responsibilities online course and exam, marking the completion of the Advanced Powerboat certificate and gaining her commercial endorsement.

## **Joint Working with Enforcement**

Environment officers have participated in a number of weekend enforcement operations.

## **General**

This summer we have been lucky enough to receive some of the hottest spells on record. The good weather was early on in the season and seems to have run out as we are approaching the tail end of the season. Activity levels within the fishing sector have been busy, with the pleasant conditions encouraging high levels of recreational activity.

The Inshore cuttlefish season came and went, although this year's catches were significantly lower. The issue of the lack of gear marking is being discussed to identify a suitable course of action to reduce the amount of unmarked gear next year's season. The fine weather has allowed a good amount of time at sea for all the inshore fleet.

After a long wait the new Statutory Instrument (SI) 2018 no 849 came into force on the 20<sup>th</sup> August. All Enforcement officers have now been issued with new warrants under that SI, including cross – warranting for the flanking IFCA's. This will enable more effective enforcement of all legislation, national and European, outside of the D&SIFCA Byelaws.

All officers have spent a significant amount of time working on modernising administration practises with the Enforcement team. This was instigated by new GDPR 2018 regulations, and has led to a much improved system of recording and accessing information. This has also been running alongside the construction of a new website.

## **Training**

Kelly Hobson has now received a commercially endorsed Certificate of Competence after successfully completing all the pre-requisite courses. This enables Kelly to skipper all of the Authority's vessels when required. Having more ticketed skippers eases the strain on existing skippers and will lead to increased days at sea for the Authority's vessels.

IFCO Adam Walters has successfully completed the B&E entitlement on his driving licence. This will enable him to tow the Authority's RIB on a trailer. Adam is also making good headway towards achieving his commercially endorsed Certificate of Competence. Having now completed both the Day Skipper and Yachtmaster Theory, arrangements are being made around the Advanced Power Boat certificate and any other pre-requisite courses required.

## Enforcement Work

This quarter, aided by the period of fine weather a total of 25 sea patrols have taken place which resulted in the recording of 12 offences. Most of these have been potting and netting offences. On the 13<sup>th</sup> August a joint operation was undertaken involving multiple agencies



looking at the issue of large groups collecting quantities of shellfish from estuaries. This operation was a result of collaboration between agencies including Devon & Cornwall Police, Gangmaster and Labour Abuse Authority, Environmental Health and immigration. Although there is currently no management measures in place for this activity it was considered a worthy operation as other agencies had interests in the operation and given the sheer number of reports that D&S IFCA regularly receives during the summer season. Although no shellfish offences were identified, important information was gained around the collectors which could assist other agencies. It was also a good opportunity to educate the collectors on their impacts. During the operation however, the use of an unpermitted net was identified.

With the introduction of the Netting Byelaw in March, there have been increased patrols in the North Devon area of the district. This was due to the likely heightened risk of offending in this area. With this issue we have been supported by Paul Carter (EA Fisheries Officer) who holds a D&SIFCA warrant. This is a very useful arrangement given Paul's vast amount of local knowledge around the areas and the activities undertaken. D&S IFCA have recently issued an Official Written Warning to a fisher from that area, as a direct result of Paul's assistance.

The reach of D&SIFCA was tested during this quarter when two officers travelled to Ireland in order to conduct a PACE interview in relation to an ongoing investigation. Although the investigation concluded with a decision of no further action, this was not only a good exercise but illustrated to the industry that all investigations are completed in a fair and thorough manner despite the outcome, or potential outcome of the investigation.

Reports have been received around the activity of netting high up the River Severn, this activity is now prohibited through the recently introduced Netting Byelaw. Given the remoteness of these areas this issue is a challenge to enforce. Any patrol to this area requires a significant input of officer hours and planning. Although several reports have been received, it is believed the activity is fairly sporadic, meaning that careful management of officer time is required.

IFCO Kelly Hobson has now been appointed as the Intel Officer. This change was made not only to improve distribution of the workload among officers, but to provide a good oversight of the activities and associated risks throughout the district. It is anticipated this role will cycle through the Enforcement Team to ensure equal exposure and experience. Kelly has quickly learned the process of the role and is continuing to improve process with her own input.

New permit conditions for both the Potting and Mobile gear byelaws have been issued to permit holders. The most significant change to them is the Mobile Fishing Permit conditions that include;

- New spatial restrictions including the adoption of the South Devon Inshore Potting Area into the Mobile Fishing Byelaw conditions. This will optimise enforcement of spatial restrictions in this area and enables D&S IFCA officers to act under their own warrants to conduct and complete any investigations.
- A requirement for all vessels between 6.99m - 15.24m LOA to have fitted an electronic reporting device, transmitting the required information at a minimum of 10m intervals.

Both the Mobile and the Potting permit conditions include an increase to the minimum size of Whelk from November 2018 to 55mm (length of shell). A further increase to 65mm is in place to come in to force from November 2020.



The Enforcement team have also been involved with several Environmental projects including the i-Bass project, Cuttlefish trap surveys and Wrasse surveys. This has mainly been assisting with the transportation and manning requirements of the Authority's vessels to enable completion of the surveys.

## Investigations (selected)

Offence date	Offence	Location	Outcome if complete
05/01/2018	Vessel exceeding size limit	Lyme Bay	Insufficient evidence, No further action
11/04/2018	Netting without a Permit	Plymouth	FAP Offered
17/04/2018	Potting without a permit	Torbay	FAP Offered
23/04/2018	Potting without a permit	Torbay	Ongoing
30/05/2018	Scallop Dredging within restricted area	IPA	Ongoing
01/06/2018	Netting and Potting without permits	Torbay	FAP Offered
23/06/2018	Netting without a permit	Lyme Bay	Ongoing
28/06/2018	Scallop curfew	Off Exmouth	Ongoing
21/06/2018 & 06/08/2018	Netting without a permit, Netting in restricted area	Taw Torridge Estuary	Official Written Warning issued
08/07/2018	Unlicensed commercial potting	Budleigh	
12/07/2018	Crab less than MCRS	Torbay	Ongoing
13/07/2018	No escape gap in pots	Off Budleigh	Official Written Warning issued
13/07/2018	No escape gap in pots	Ladram Bay	Official Written Warning issued
19/07/20108	Gear not marked	Torbay	Official Written Warning issued
16/08/2018	Netting without a permit	Off Teignmouth	Ongoing

## Projects

With the forthcoming implementation of the new mobile fishing byelaw conditions, all permit holders with vessels between 6.99m – 11.99m LOA were invited to select a type approved Vessel Monitoring unit from two suppliers. The supply and installation costs for up to 87 vessels were funded by a grant from EMFF. 73 units have now been installed and their operation confirmed prior to claiming costs involved from the EMFF grant. A lot of time has been spent around the administration of this project.

After months of preparation and heavy involvement from IFCO Cresswell D&S IFCA has launched its new website. The new website, along with the new permit conditions for both

Potting and Mobile Fishing Byelaws has led to a large amount of new information required on the website and the shop. The online shop has had to temporarily closed to allow these changes to take place. IFCO Cresswell has also been involved in the modernisation of the Authority's server systems. The new server system is required to manage the IVMS data and with the new GDPR regulations increased security of the Authority's data was required.

Work has been progressing on the build of the new 7.8m Patrol vessel. Regular visits are being made to the factory. This is giving officers a good insight to the construction of the boat and ensuring speedy resolutions to any questions around the specification being asked by the builders. This also allows grater input from the officers into the build, particularly with the layout of the console and location of all the equipment. A plywood mock-up console has been constructed and instruments have been let in, to give it some perspective. Officers have then had a chance to make any necessary modifications.



The main body of the hull has now been laid into the mould, with the bulkheads scheduled for installation during the last week in August. This will then take approximately two weeks to cure before the hull can be lifted from the mould and the final assembly process can then commence.



*Pie Chart of Hours spent by D&S IFCA Officers*

