

Organisational Weakness & Staffing Issues

Introduction

The Authority Members will be expected to set and agree a Revenue Budget for FY2022/2023 in December 2021. There are only six months remaining to this time no meaningful developments have taken place to address the documented shortfall in available funding. The lack of investment and long term financial commitment in the organisation is no longer sustainable or acceptable to Senior Management Team. D&S IFCA simply cannot function without dedicated, trained, and motivated staff. The mental health of Officers must be recognised, and the Authority has a duty of care for staff. It is the view of the Senior Management Team that potential long-term absence due to stress is now the largest risk that faces D&S IFCA, and it has no resilience to function if this situation arises.

Retention of staff has become a major concern with over 50% of the workforce resigning during the last two years. Resignation and subsequent recruitment leave a void for extended periods of time, again adding to pressure on remaining staff. Exit interviews have repeated similar themes associated with excessive workload and remuneration that compares unfavourably with many similar organisations. These factors have a demotivating effect on present staff and hampers recruitment. Difficulties recruiting suitable staff to fill vacant positions is challenging and the same applies for posts funded via reserves for fixed term contracts.

This lack of investment is no longer acceptable without the risk of staff absences/losses due to stress and the inability to meet previous standards of service. Inaction will mean that D&S IFCA Officers will not be able to maintain the level and standard of service that has been provided to date and lead to potential long-term absence due to stress.

Purposes of the Report:

1. Highlight to Members that the current workload on officers which has the potential to lead to stress related mental health issues.
2. Highlight to Members that there is a lack of resilience in the organisation.
3. Highlight funding issues and comparison of IFCAs' salary grading.
4. Highlight to Members the need for a job evaluation for all officers.

Officers' Recommendation

Members agree to the use of General Reserves to fund an independent Job Evaluation exercise for all D&S IFCA Officers, using the Greater London Provincial Council Scheme.

1. Workload, Performance and Delivery

1.1 Officers' Workload

D&S IFCA Officers are dedicated and work hard to endeavour to meet the tasks in the Annual Plan. There is a huge discrepancy in the number of staff D&S IFCA currently employs (12.63 FTE) when the expectation of Defra was to have 25.67 FTE Officers. D&S IFCA Officers have to deliver comparable workstreams that are being undertaken by other IFCAs, which have a higher level of staffing.

The range of tasks that all Officers complete is extensive and extends beyond expectations set out in their current job description. This is in part driven by a necessity to restructure after a senior management team post was made redundant and a lack of operational staff. However, the main factor in D&S IFCA continuing to deliver its function has been due to the desire of staff to avoid failure and to be as flexible as possible in their approach to work.

The range of duties that D&S IFCA Officers perform from a Strategic, Operational and Delivery standpoint is set out in Annex 1. The need for flexibility with a range of tasks is often not fully acknowledged in present job descriptions or criteria that accompanies each job role.

Currently there is an acceptance that the organisation adopts a generalist rather than specialist approach to key aspects of work e.g. Deputy Chief Officer taking the lead on Health and Safety aspects for the organisation rather than having a dedicated officer to fulfil this role. This not only increases the workload for the officer but exposes the Authority to a higher level of risk. A minimal training budget (1.08% of the Revenue Budget for FY2021-2022) compounds this and other risks, and the available time for officers to be trained to an adequate standard is difficult to set aside within the current workloads.

Time taken to train new entrants or for Officers to develop personal skills, as part of their own Continuous Personal Development, has an impact on overall output. The recent recruitment of two new Enforcement Officers in permanent roles (to replace those that had resigned) has led to intensive internal training provided by the two existing Enforcement Officers. A reduced number of staff also has the effect that some elements of individual job descriptions cannot be fully met. Officers are of the opinion that only additional recruitment can resolve this matter satisfactorily and out-sourcing the work to external organisations has its limitation e.g. outsourcing Communication work and Health and Safety Policy development has not alleviated the burden on D&S IFCA Officers.

The content of the Annual Plan for FY2021-22 (Key Tasks) represents work needed to drive the organisation forward and to complete tasks carried forward from previous Annual Plans. There are no “nice to do” workstreams as all of these Key Tasks must be delivered. Many of the Key Tasks recognise changing situations and potentially D&S IFCA’s relative contribution to the national expectation for the delivery of “world class fisheries”. Key Tasks and Success Criteria reflect the work that is essential to meet the expectations of Defra and Stakeholders and to deliver sustainable conservation and fisheries management.

Key Tasks reflect work needed to fulfil national policy drivers and changes in approaches to the management of fisheries and conservation. Whilst the Annual Plans reflect these, this does not mean that once the Key Task is completed there is no further work required. The work is absorbed into our daily workstreams and is on-going and will continue to meet the national drivers and Success Criteria. An example of this is Defra’s Revised Approach to the Management of Commercial Fisheries in European Marine Sites. This was an additional burden on D&S IFCA that has become a long term commitment and duty of work. Habitat Regulation Assessments are still being undertaken and reviewed where necessary especially with Permit Condition changes. The Enforcement work of D&S IFCA has changed dramatically since the Approach was implemented as there is a continued need for monitoring of compliance and spatial patrolling. The New Burdens Funding, which was allocated when D&S IFCA was formed, did not include these burdens that have arisen due to more recent policy changes and the development of D&S IFCA’s management approach. The use of Permitting Byelaws, whilst providing flexibility and future proofing D&S IFCA’s management, has not come without an impact on the organisation including increased administration, enforcement and environmental work. The flexibility of the Permitting model allows D&S IFCA to respond to changes in management driven locally and nationally, outside of the mandatory three year

review cycle of Permit Conditions. Another example of how Officers’ work has increased is the introduction of Marine Plans. Whilst these are intrinsic in our duties under MaCAA, the South and South West Marine Plans have identified aquaculture as a key development area and within the D&S IFCA’s District there has been a large increase in communication with mariculture stakeholders and work to inform Marine Licence applications for this developing sector.

The Success Criteria, developed by Defra sets out their expectations of what an IFCA should deliver as a minimum and many are designed to set minimum standards for internal process.

In summary, it is the combination of work required to meet new and on-going Key Tasks and meeting the Success Criteria that provides Defra (and stakeholders) with the means to evaluate the performance of D&S IFCA.

Risks of failing to meet Statutory Duties does exist; and has been the focus of the debate until now. However this is to a degree subjective and is ultimately for Defra to determine. The combination of Key Tasks set out in the Annual Plan, albeit now reduced to a bare minimum, and the need to function to meet Success Criteria places an immense burden and responsibility on available staff.

1.2 Analysis of Officers Work Areas

A new hours recording system, introduced since 1st April 2021, has enabled some initial analysis of the time spent by all officers on different areas of work. Current time allocation to meet Success Criteria is significant when spread across all staff as shown below in the table and overtime the expectations on D&S IFCA to take on additional responsibility and react to changing circumstances will only increase.

Category	Annual Plan Key Tasks	Success Criteria
Percentage of time	22%	78%

When examined in greater detail, the hours recording will demonstrate the range of tasks undertaken by officer/teams and the time taken to complete different elements of work.

1.3 Organisational Weakness

Much of the organisational weakness experienced by D&S IFCA was inherited from the predecessor organisation Devon Sea Fisheries Committee. Despite a decade of effort by Officers, many underlying elements of organisational instability remain partially addressed or incomplete. For many years, Authority Members (and Stakeholders) have been shielded from the full reality of these weaknesses due to the absence of Annual Reports before 2018.

Officers are continually facing challenges with a view to strengthening all aspects of the organisation and welcome the increased contribution by Members (such as the Governance Working Group); however, the reality is that there are insufficient resources (including staff), skills, training, and time available for Officers to address all known weakness as quickly as desired. Out of necessity, a culture of “firefighting” has developed for staff whose daily work is often spread across a wide variety of tasks.

2. Lack of Resilience

Having some Officers multi-tasking across a range of disciplines masks the impact of under resourcing in the teams to deliver those tasks themselves. There is a clear lack of resilience if any of the current staff are absent from work for extended lengths of time or leave the organisation. Retention of staff has become a major concern with over 50% of the workforce resigning during the last two years. Resignation and subsequent recruitment leave a void for

extended periods of time, again adding to pressure on remaining staff. Exit interviews have repeated similar themes associated with excessive workload and remuneration that compares unfavourably with many similar organisations. These factors have a demotivating effect on present staff and hampers recruitment. Difficulties recruiting suitable staff to fill vacant positions is challenging and the same applies for posts funded via reserves for fixed term contracts. Underspends in the Revenue Budget represent extended periods where D&S IFCA has operated without its full complement of staff. Instead of this being seen that the Revenue Budget is set too high, it is an indicator of the pressures that the remaining officers would have faced in that year.

The lack of Officers has the effect that there is little or no capacity to recognise absence such as leave entitlement, TOIL, training courses, sickness, or new unplanned work.

3. Funding Issues

3.1 Funding Issues

Increased funding for the organisation is essential. The Chair, supported by the Authority, has written¹ to Defra to raise D&S IFCA's funding difficulties. A Financial Situation Report was included in the correspondence that sets out both the history of the funding difficulties as well as highlighting comparable metrics across all IFCA's. Table 1 details the IFCAs' funding metrics for FY2017/2018. The desired outcome of this correspondence is that both Defra and the funding Local Authorities enter into discussions to potentially resolve the financial crisis as soon as possible.

Table 1 2017/18 Funding Metrics

IFCA District	2017/2018 Budget £	Marine Area km ²	Cost per km ²	Cost per 100km ²	coastline km	Cost per km
NIFCA	£868,000	1300	£667.69	£66,769.23	110	£7,890.91
SusIFCA	£1,066,665	1728	£617.28	£61,728.30	140	£7,619.04
NWIFCA	£1,338,459	3353	£399.18	£39,918.25	1280	£1,045.67
NEIFCA	£1,092,450	2884	£378.80	£37,879.68	479	£2,280.69
EIFCA	£1,346,688	3765	£357.69	£35,768.61	1683	£800.31
SIFCA	£905,686	2884	£314.04	£31,403.81	479	£1,890.78
IOSIFCA	£123,185	406	£303.41	£30,341.13	226	£545.07
CIFCA	£1,108,623	4077	£271.92	£27,192.13	1100	£1,007.84
K&EIFCA	£889,600	3412	£260.73	£26,072.68	800	£1,112.00
D&SIFCA	£716,900	4522	£158.54	£15,853.60	1314	£545.59
<i>Mean costs</i>	<i>£945,626</i>		<i>£372.93</i>	<i>£37,292.74</i>		<i>£2,473.79</i>

¹ The correspondence with Defra and the accompanying report (Financial and Operational Assessment of D&S IFCA – March 2021) is posted on the secure Members' Area of the D&S IFCA website

3.2 Defra's Funding Principles

Defra has developed two Principles in the allocation of New Burdens Funding:

First Principle

Defra's first principle of New Burdens allocation was to provide all new Authorities with sufficient funding to cover their contribution to the IFCA Revenue Budget. Defra recognised that those new Authorities had new burdens as a result of becoming a member of an IFCA. D&S IFCA welcomed five new Local Authorities and Defra has provided these five Local Authorities with £387,915 every year since 2011. Only a few additional small Local Authorities joined other IFCAs and Defra's New Burdens money contribution to these Local Authorities was considerably less.

Second Principle

Defra's second principle for allocating New Burdens money to Local Authorities was to recognise the additional work of IFCAs, set out in Ss.153 and 154 of the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009, compared to that of the previous Sea Fisheries Committees. Defra recognised the increased marine conservation responsibilities of IFCAs. Unlike other IFCAs where the majority of New Burdens money was allocated on this principle of funding, D&S IFCA receives only £21,382 (contribution to Devon County Council) or 2.89% of the overall Revenue Budget in 2021/22. This is one of the key factors as to why D&S IFCA's budget falls so far short of what other IFCAs receive (Table 1).

3.3 Efficiencies

In response to the lack of funding available to date, this organisation has demonstrated adaptiveness and innovation and taken key strategic decisions to find cost savings, improve efficiency and to continue functioning.

Examples include:

- The operational budget has been reduced by 74% to £39,100 in FY2020/2021.
- Senior Management Team redundancy.
- The increased use of technology for the management of fishing activity and protection of marine conservation areas.
- The sale of assets including vessels.
- The use of intelligence led enforcement.
- Focussed environment work that excludes a range of activity considered by other IFCAs to be essential.

3.4 Non-delivery of Workstreams

Although New Burdens Funding only covers 2.89% of the overall Revenue Budget, national drivers dominate D&S IFCA Officer's workstreams meaning that less time is devoted to local fisheries, issues and management. Officers estimate that at least 60% of the work carried out by D&S IFCA supports the delivery of national drivers and commitments. Officers mainly work on the delivery of management and monitoring of Marine Protected Areas (Research, HRAs, management through Byelaws and enforcement of spatial incursions). The level of work increased significantly following Defra's Revised Approach to the management of commercial fisheries in European Marine Sites. Officers are aware of the increasing workloads relating to Marine Plans and delivery of the Fisheries Act – Fisheries Management Plans and Highly Protected Marine Areas (HPMAs).

Officers have delivered some key workstreams to support local issues such as those relating to the development of Hinkley Point C power station; research and management of the whelk fishery, and the introduction of recreational and commercial fishing permits to balance the

local needs of fishers. However, Officers have not developed Recreational Sea Angling as intended with delayed progress in the review of the Angling Zones. The development of the Hand Working Permit Byelaw and the Taw Torridge Mussel Fishery Strategy has not been developed at the pace needed or within reasonable expectations of stakeholders. In addition, Officers are not able to provide the level of enforcement of the Potting, Diving or Netting Permit Byelaws that local fishers anticipated.

The combination of reduced Revenue Budget and lack of staff resources has led to D&S IFCA not undertaken other areas of work that other IFCA's deem to be essential.

Relative to other IFCA's, areas of work where D&S IFCA's delivery is lower include:

- Personal engagement with stakeholders.
- Number of quayside and premises inspections.
- Number of boardings of fishing vessels at sea.
- Coverage of enforcement across the District.
- Stock assessments of vulnerable sea fish resources.
- Habitat ground truthing surveys.
- Collaboration with other IFCA's and agencies.
- Attendance at stakeholder fora, conferences and seminars.
- Data collection on catches, landings and fishing activity levels and analysis of data, to feed into species stock assessments and the development of Fisheries Management Plans.

3.5 Budget Pressures

The Revenue Budget for FY2021-22 was set at £740,000; however, a potentially significant increase in the Revenue Budget for FY2022/2023 will be required. An Officers' paper will be presented to the September Authority meeting to identify the need for a high Revenue Budget, additional staffing resources to address the workload of Officers and the non-delivery of important workstreams.

4. Job Evaluation

D&S IFCA has not undertaken a job evaluation since the formation of the IFCA in 2010. Most Officers' job descriptions are outdated and do not reflect the work of the Officers. There are several drivers that indicate a job evaluation process is essential:

- Initial job evaluation was based on DSFC job descriptions and duties undertaken by officers at that time.
- Since 2010 the range of duties undertaken by Officers is not captured in these job descriptions.
- Policy changes have led to increased work e.g. Defra's Revised Approach to the management of fishing activities.
- Officers feel that their work is not recognised in remuneration received.
- Continued turnover of staff and the motivation of change.
- Findings of exit interviews suggest that employment outside of the IFCA is more attractive.

4.1 Salary Comparison

D&S IFCA has obtained information from other IFCA's on the salary scales paid to comparable post within each organisation. The salary ranges have a starting salary and top of the scale salary for each post. Table 2 provides data of these salary ranges for five IFCA's including

D&S IFCA. D&S IFCA, Cornwall IFCA, Kent & Essex IFCA and Eastern IFCA all pay an unsocial hour’s allowances for sea going officers and where applicable these are included in the table. NE IFCA do not pay an unsocial allowance but pay time plus a third between the hours of 6pm and 6am when working (therefore making it difficult to directly salaries with NE IFCA). Annex 2 shows graphs comparing the salary ranges. For most of the positions compared cross the five IFCAs the top of scale salary for D&S IFCA Officers is lower than the other IFCAs. For example for Enforcement and Environment Officers the top of their salary scale is £29,745 which is between 5.4% and 11.4% lower than the other four IFCAs. Apart from E IFCA, who employ a Head of Finance (on a salary of £43,857 to £48,005), and their Office Manager role does not have that financial element, the starting salary and top of the scale is lower for D&S IFCA’s Office Manager than other IFCAs compared. The top of the salary scale for the D&S IFCA’s Office Manager is 14.5% lower than C IFCA and NE IFCA, and 22.4% lower than that of K&E IFCA. For the Deputy Chief Officer the starting salary scale is the same as NE IFCA and slightly more than K&E IFCA, but the top of the salary band is between 4.9% and 13.6% lower than the other IFCAs. For the Chief Officer role, D&S IFCA is the only IFCA that has one spinal salary point for this position. For other IFCAs the top salary for the Chief Officer can be as high as £73,291 which is 29% higher than the single scale for D&S IFCA’s Chief Officer at £56,820.

Table 2: Comparison of salary ranges for Staff positions across Five IFCAs.

Position	D&S IFCA		CIFCA		NEIFCA		EIFCA		K&E IFCA	
	<i>*includes 10% U/S</i>		<i>* includes 5% U/S</i>		<i>*time +1/3 U/S not incl.</i>		<i>*includes 7.5% U/S</i>		<i>*includes 10% U/S</i>	
	Salary range £		Salary range £		Salary range £		Salary range £		Salary range £	
Office Manager	28,672	32,234	29,395	36,921	32,910	36,922	24,012	25,991	29,181	39,452
IFCO (Enf/Env)*	24,410	29,745	25,266	32,234	27,742	31,346	30,036	33,134	24,618	32,098
Senior IFCO (Enf/Env)*	31,539	36,214	29,395	36,921	32,910	36,922	31,795	35,378	32,099	43,397
DCO	43,857	47,841			43,857	50,196	49,229	54,350	39,454	53,179
CO	56,820	56,820	52,614	63,280	57,635	66,177	56,433	73,291	53,180	68,337

4.2 Financing the Job Evaluation Exercise

Officers have been informed that NE IFCA undertook an independent Job Evaluation process using the Greater London Provincial Council Scheme carried out by Cornwall Council in 2020. Changes to remuneration of Officers has been implemented as a result of this. The cost, to NE IFCA, of this Job Evaluation process was approximately £5,000 covering 14 roles. D&S IFCA Officers recommend that General Reserves are used to fund an independent evaluation of all officer roles undertaken by the same organisation appointed by NE IFCA.

However, it must be recognised that any increases in salaries or salary ranges identified in the recommendations of the Job Evaluation process, and agreed by Authority, will not be financed by General Reserves.

5. Supporting Documents

Officers have produced two documents (Annexes) to support the above recommendation and to add context to the narrative as follows:

Annex 1: Organisational Workstream Allocation (Strategic, Operational and Delivery Leads)

Annex 2: Salary Comparison Data (Selection of Job Roles)

6. List of Background Papers

(Local Government Act 1972 - Section 100 E)

- Allocating New Burdens Funding to Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authorities and their funding local Authorities
- D&S IFCA's Annual Plan 2021-22
- Defra's Revised Approach to the Management of Commercial Fisheries in European Marine Sites
- Financial and Operational Assessment of Devon and Severn Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority (March 2021)

End.