

## **Quarterly Report Summary - May to July 2020**

### **Overview**

This is the second report updating you on the work that has been achieved by the team since COVID-19 restrictions were imposed. Following Government guidance officers have been carrying out all aspects of the Authority's business set out in the Annual Plan albeit at a slower rate which is to be expected. Officers are conducting survey work and enforcement patrols at sea and on the shore following national guidance and Standard Operating Procedures and Risk Assessments created by the Authority's officers. Officers have prepared individual reports setting out what work they have achieved and are available on request.

Following a gradual easing of the COVID-19 restrictions recruitment processes are underway and the Authority is currently advertising for a Permitting Officer. Concurrently, the Authority is advertising for an Enforcement Officer following the resignation of Rob Dyson. Rob has decided to go to University to continue his studies, I am sure you will want to wish him well. Sarah Curtin is now on maternity leave following the birth of her baby boy - both are doing well despite the premature birth. I am sure you will wish to pass on your best wishes. Arrangements are now being brought forward to cover Sarah's maternity leave.

Nationally there have been initial discussions between Defra and IFCA's regarding a review of the IFCA's funding model. Progress since Defra's announcement has been slow, and no meetings have been held yet. The Evaluation of IFCA's report by ABPMer and RPA has not yet been published and this is seen as an important before funding discussions commence. Chief Officers have had sight of the report to provide feedback on the data used to create the metrics so it is envisaged that the report will be publicly available in the next few weeks.

Virtual meeting via Microsoft Teams and Zoom have taken place. The B&PSC's meeting on 18th June was conducted via Teams, the agenda being topic specific to shorten the meeting and make decision making more focussed. The B&PSC Members welcomed this approach.

### **Policy and Communication Work**

- A consultation on proposed changes to the Live Wrasse permit conditions was undertaken and a consultation response report was produced and presented to the B&PSC.
- Amendments to the Wrasse Policy documentation and amended permit conditions were produced, circulated and posted on the D&S IFCA website.
- A draft report focussing on sand eel trawling as part of the five year review of the Mobile Fishing Byelaw and the use of new permit conditions has been prepared or discussion by B&PSC.
- A report was produced on the findings of a bag limit consultation as part of the development of a Hand Working Permit Byelaw and was submitted to the B&PSC as an information item.
- Following the sign off of the Exemption Byelaw 2019 in April 2020, a new 'Exemptions Display Page' has been created on the D&S IFCA's website, which includes authorisations issued.
- Officers have produced a number of News Items which have been posted on the D&S IFCA's website. Multiple areas of the website have been updated every week and new display pages created
- Other communication work includes contributing to the Exe Estuary Management Partnership's Newsletter.
- Officers have reviewed the D&S IFCA's Standing Orders and developed a draft Scheme of Delegation. These will be presented at the AGM.

### **Permits, Finance and Administration**

- 108 permits were issued in June – mostly recreational Potting and Diving
- Updated Potting Permit Conditions were sent out to permit holders on 10<sup>th</sup> July to include changes to the wrasse fishery.
- Refreshed Mobile Fishing Annexes were issued to Mobile Fishing Permit holders on 10<sup>th</sup> July 2020.
- Recruitment of a Permitting Officer is underway, the role currently being covered by the Finance and Administration Manager.
- PPE has been purchased for all officers as per Covid 19 guidelines.
- IMPREST account and General reserves account are all up to dates and well managed.

### **Enforcement Work**

- An increase in reports of non-compliance has been recorded. At the start of the quarter a limited number of on the ground enforcement patrols has taken place due to the Covid-19 restrictions but the numbers have increased in the latter part of June and July.
- Twelve investigations are on-going from the intelligence reports received. These include operating without a permit, non-functioning IVMS, two spatial incursions into restricted areas within Annex 5, three reports of potting gear loss from within the restricted areas Annex 5.

- Reports of surface nets being deployed during the hours of darkness led to several patrols at sea on the FPV David Rowe and also patrols from the shore.
- Patrols have been conducted following reports of fishing within bass nursery areas, and illegally set wrasse pots during the closed season and within a sensitive habitat in a voluntary closed area of the Plymouth Sound.
- Reports have been received regarding large organised groups of commercial anglers fishing at Hope's Nose and Berry Head. The groups are camping overnight and reported using inflatable boats to hauling commercial fishers' pots.
- Reactive patrols have taken place in the north of the District to recover illegally set nets. One such patrol on the Taw Estuary has led to a multiagency operation, involving Police, EA, GLAA, which will take place over the next two spring tides.
- Large increase in number of reports of hand gathering of shellfish from estuary beds have been received. The Temporary Closure of beds in the Teign and the Exe Estuaries has appeared to have little impact on the intensity of this activity with gatherers targeting other species. Officers have undertaken reactive patrols to gather further information.
- Enforcement website pages have been produced by officers to provide detailed information and explanation of D&S IFCA's management measures and hopefully reduce non-compliance
- Risk assessments and standard operating procedures have been updated as more guidelines from Government have been issued in relation to Covid-19.
- Officers have refreshed the Mobile Fishing Permit Annexes, providing clearer illustration and information.
- Officers have maintained the FPV Enforcer which is stored on a trailer in Salcombe and have undertaken a patrol in the estuary on this vessel. Servicing of the trailer has taken place.

### **Environment Work**

- Reports drafted this quarter, which are currently being QA'd include: Shore Angling reports for D&S IFCA Angling zones; plaice and ray landing relevant the Skerries Bank; and reports on bait digging activity in areas of the Severn, close to Sabellaria High tide roost sites.
- Comments and responses were produced on the response by DWT on Wrasse consultation response, Marine licence applications across the district, discussion regarding Hinkley C and production of an Otter protection poster with DWT.
- The draft Mariculture Strategy is being reviewed and additional information is being included as requested by the Authority members. Discussions regarding seaweed farm developments in Torbay have been had and data to help inform locations have been provided. Several virtual meetings and workshops relating to Mariculture have been attended and a presentation given.
- The Fisheries Research and Management Plans have been developed, with literature reviews completed for all five initial species, and information on fishing effort, landings and stock status for each species is currently being sourced and collated. Fishers' interview questions, to incorporate fishers' knowledge into the plans, have been developed and tested for ethical approval.
- Crab tiles surveys have been completed for most of the estuaries and data are being analysed.
- Bait digging activity surveys have commenced in the Tranche 3 MCZs and continue for the Hinkley area.
- A Monitoring and Control plan for shad is being developed following questionnaires to fishers and a shad bycatch scheme had been implemented. Data to inform the M&CP for Torbay have also been analysed.
- Feedback and statistical advice have been provided to the D&S IFCA's co-funded PhD student journal manuscripts.
- Officers have worked with external organisations on project proposals for Sustainable Management of UK Resources; impact of Covid on fishers, supply chain and mariculturists; Marine Pioneer lessons learned documents; and a position statement on water abstraction for power stations. Many local fora and national group meetings have been attended, including SIAG, Whelk Working Group, Project UK FIP.
- Requests for exemption from IFCA Byelaws have been dealt with, some involving HRAs being undertaken.
- HRAs were revisited and reviewed for fish traps in Plymouth Sound EMS in light of the Three Year Comprehensive Review of the wrasse fishery. T3 MCZ assessments have commenced and evidence gathering has started to feed into these.
- Planning for a sidescan sonar survey and other associated surveys for Torbay MCZ seagrass and the interactions of pots has commenced and quotes have been received.
- Liaison with fishers and a response to the EA's Shellfish Protected Waters consultation was produced.
- Survey planning for the wrasse fishery has commenced with the production of a new sampling methodology (due to Covid-19 restrictions) and discussions with fishers.
- A meeting was held with Taw Torridge mussel fishers to discuss additional surveying of the sub-tidal resource and suggestions for future management of the fishery.

### **Background papers:**

Officers' quarterly reports.