



Devon and Severn Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority



FY 2023 - 2024

Version 1.0

27th March 2023

ANNUAL PLAN

Contents

D&S IFCA

Brixham Laboratory

Freshwater Quarry

Brixham

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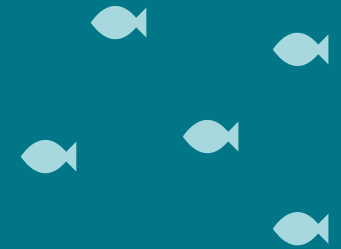
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IFCAs' National Vision

“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 the D&S IFCA's 13th Annual Plan, and it sets out the known priorities for the forthcoming year.

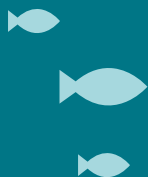
D&S IFCA will face considerable challenges in the next year and some significant opportunities. At the Authority meeting in December 2022, Members agreed to freeze the base levy contribution from Local Authorities for 2023-24. The decision meant that D&S IFCA would need to use £152,000 of General Reserves or find alternative funding streams to balance the Revenue Budget of £914,000. The main mitigation to this financial risk was the expected continuation of additional funding being received from Defra. The additional funding of £150,000 for each IFCA had been secured as part of the successful bid from the Association of IFCAs to Defra as part of the Government's 2021 Spending Review.

This additional funding will only provide a short pause in the accelerated pace at which the financial crisis faced by D&S IFCA has deepened due to global financial pressures and the long-term stagnation of the base levy contributions from the Local Authorities. It will provide a final opportunity to Defra and the relevant Local Authorities to find a solution to the funding structure failures that continue to beset the organisation and risk its ability to deliver its Statutory duties.

The additional SR21 funding from Defra is intended to provide IFCAs with additional financial support so that they can assist with the delivery of three key national workstreams, Fisheries Management Plans (FMPs), Marine Spatial Prioritisation including marine licensing and sustainable development, and Marine Protected Areas (including implementation of necessary management measures).

D&S IFCA's officers have already progressed these workstreams and the Annual Plan sets out the additional work required to deliver Defra's expectations. However, due to its financial situation, D&S IFCA will need to deliver this additional work within its existing team and resources. D&S IFCA intends to continue to contribute to five out of the first six FMP by continuing to participate in the development meetings and provide further evidence. D&S IFCA will continue to respond to all relevant Marine Licence Applications including further engagement in the Hinkley Power Station development and mariculture development. Through the research and governance work, D&S IFCA is on track to introduce the necessary measures to protect MPAs from interactions with fishing gears.

The necessity to prioritise the delivery of national workstreams further restricts D&S IFCA's ability to address issues that are of concern to our Authority Members, local fishers, conservation groups and the wider public.



In addition to delivering the new national workstreams, D&S IFCA intends to review its management approach to the important potting fisheries in the District in response to the concerns raised by commercial fishers regarding the potential increases in fishing effort within the District. This plan sets out the key elements of that work.

A key part of the planned work last year was to commence the review of the netting permit conditions. This did not happen and must be actioned as part of D&S IFCA's work this year. The focus of the review will be to engage with the relevant stakeholders including commercial and recreational net permit holders and recreational sea anglers.

Innovation, including the use of on-board technologies, has been a long standing core value for D&S IFCA. D&S IFCA plans to extend the trial of Remote Electronic Monitoring (REM) on board demersal towed gear vessels following the successful outcome of the initial project last year. D&S IFCA also intends to undertake a pilot project to look at how REM may provide options for management in the potting fisheries.

This plan highlights the main workstreams for 2023-24 but it also records the many other areas of work necessary to support the organisations 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 or whether the work has been carried over from the Annual Plan 2022/2023. The status is as follows:



New Workstream for the
2023/2024 Annual Plan



On-going workstream carried over
from the 2022/2023 Annual Plan

Finance & Income

Financial Overview

D&S IFCA's Revenue Budget for 2023-24 represents a record level of funding required to support the delivery of its Statutory Duties. However, the base levy from the funding Local Authorities, including Defra's New Burden Funding of £409,297, remains unchanged from the 2022-23 Revenue Budget of £762,200. This is the lowest base levy of the nine mainland IFCAs and is only 3.5% higher than the Revenue Budget in 2010/11 of £736,500.

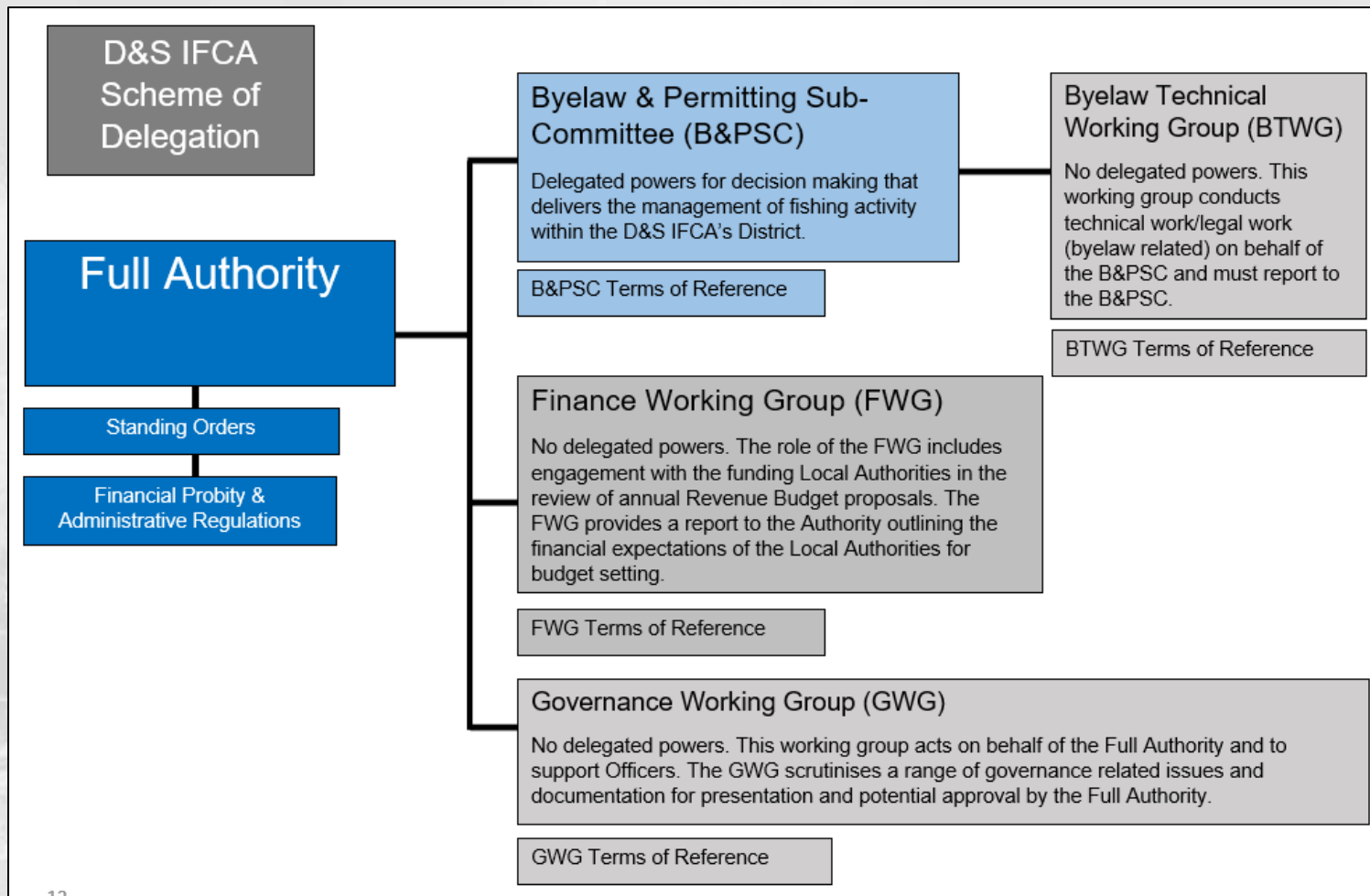
The table identifies that the Revenue Budget is supported by the provision of an additional £150,000 of funding from Defra and a nominal use of General Reserves of £2,400. The freeze in the base levy means that the gap between the required operational Revenue Budget and the funding levied upon the Local Authorities continues to widen. To rely on the base levy contributions rather than use of General Reserves or other external funding sources would require a 20% increase. D&S IFCA expects Defra to engage directly with the funding Local Authorities and introduce a fit for purpose funding structure by the end of the financial year.

	2022/23 Base Budget £	Base Budget Adjustments £	Inflation £	2023/24 Budget £
Employees	644,000	47,800	35,500	727,300
Premises	34,600	0	2,500	37,100
Transport	14,400	(700)	800	14,500
Supplies & Services	70,700	(2,700)	3,100	71,100
Boat Costs	25,800	5,100	1,400	32,300
Environmental Research	17,200	0	0	17,200
Support	62,200	(8,300)	1,200	55,100
Fees & Charges	(41,200)	1,200	0	(40,000)
	827,700	42,400	44,500	914,600
Contingency /Potential Use of Reserves	(65,500)	63,100	0	(2,400)
DEFRA Funding	0	(150,000)	0	(150,000)
Total Funding from Levies	762,200	(44,500)	44,500	762,200

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 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](#)

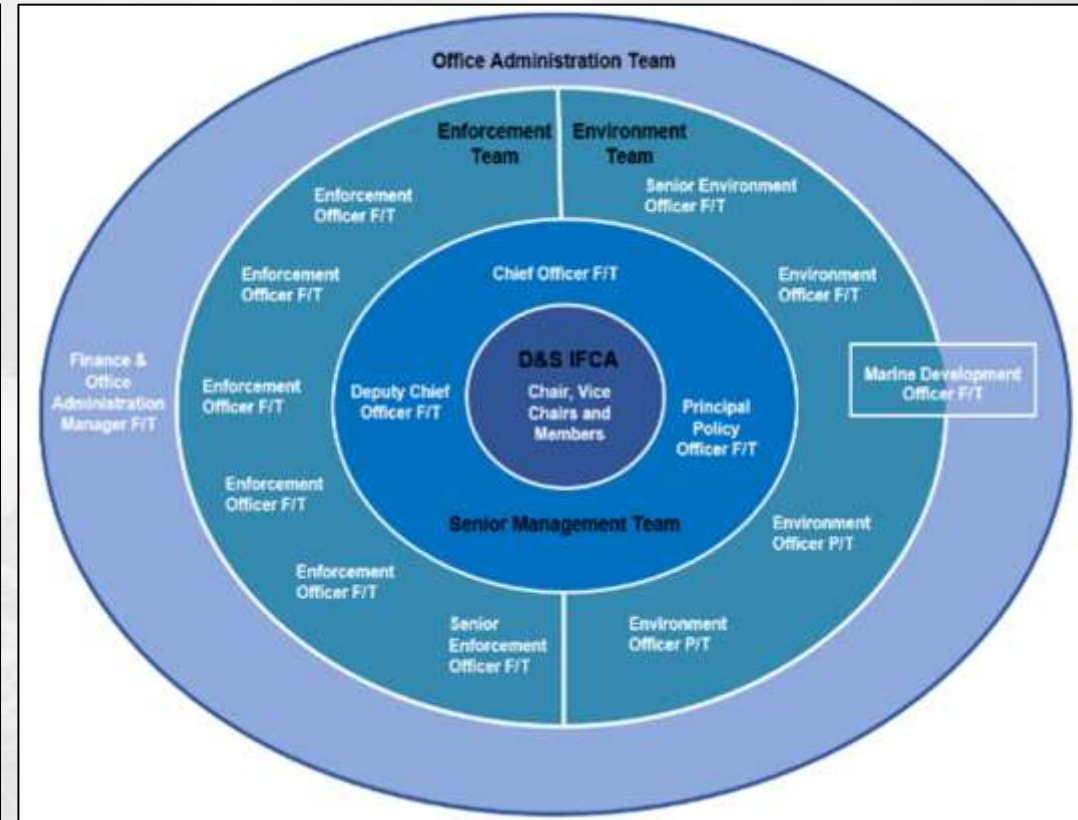


Funding Authorities' Representation	
Gloucestershire County Council	1 Member
South Gloucestershire Council	1 Member
Bristol City Council	1 Member
North Somerset Council	1 Member
Somerset County Council	1 Member
Torbay Council	1 Member
Devon County Council	5 Members
Plymouth City Council	1 Member
General & 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 2023

Back row – left to right – Sarah Curtin (Environment Officer – Part Time), James Stewart (Senior Environment Officer), Lauren Henly (Environment Officer – Part Time), Dan Cresswell (Enforcement Officer), Gavin Mayhew (Senior Enforcement Officer), Jon Norman (Enforcement Officer), Nadine Hanlon (Marine Development Officer), Lauren Parkhouse (Environment Officer), Neil Townsend (Principal Policy Officer), Ben Mitson (Enforcement Officer).

Front Row – left to right – Sarah Clark (Deputy Chief Officer), Callum Bedford (Enforcement Officer), Olga Pepper (Finance & Administration Manager), Chris Mills (Enforcement Officer), Mat Mander (Chief Officer).

Key Goals for 2023/24

The work of D&S IFCA consists of key task or projects as well as the 'business as usual' workstreams that are undertaken to fulfil Defra High Level Objectives. The key goals for 2023/2024 are summarised below:

-  To review the Netting Permit Byelaw Permit Conditions and undertake consultation to gather information and evidence that will be considered and may lead to changes in management.
-  For the Governance Working Group to continue and complete the review of D&S IFCA's Communication Strategy.
-  To roll out the trial of REM (cameras and gear sensors) on 10 Mobile Fishing Vessels operating in the District.
-  To extend the REM trial onto potting vessels in the District to assess the suitability of this technology on these vessels.
-  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.
-  To engage with potting fishers in the District to listen to their concerns about crab and lobster stocks and consider what further management measures would be appropriate.
-  To gather data on crustacean catches, fishing effort and gear used and to determine the seasonality of egg bearing of lobsters.
-  To introduce a reviewed Mobile Fishing Permit Byelaw and Size of Vessel Byelaw.
-  As part of the national Crab and Lobster FMP, D&S IFCA will be undertaking FISP funded research in the crustacea fisheries in its District, working with University of Bangor, Seafish and South Devon and Channel Shellfishermen. A key part of this research will be to test a methodology to determine the hardness of the shell of brown crab.
-  Further national FMP work will be undertaken through involvement in the FMP working groups, provision of evidence, and dissemination of information to stakeholders in the District to aid engagement.
-  To engage with Marine Spatial Prioritisation programme by providing evidence on the impacts of co-location of developments and licensable activities in relation to fishing activity and MPAs. Stakeholder engagement will be undertaken to identify key fishing areas; and the impacts of co-location and displacement of activities should prioritisation occur.
-  To complete the few outstanding MPA assessments for commercial fishing activities operating within MPAs in the D&S IFCA's District.

Focus on Governance Workstreams

There will be a rolling twelve-month schedule of quarterly Authority meetings. 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 2023-24. 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

This working group has been established by the Authority and has immediate and longer-term goals that translate into tasks for FY 2023/24 that reflect the list of work set out within the GWG catalogue.



Review of D&S IFCA's Communication Strategy

This review continues into FY 2023/24 and will examine all aspects of D&S IFCA's communications.



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

This is a new task for FY 2023/24. The GWG will review the current Compliance and Enforcement Strategy.

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. 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.



Focus on Management of Fishing Activities

Byelaw development and reviews of permit conditions are the remit of the B&PSC. In FY 2023/24 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 2023/2024.

The Byelaw Technical Working Group (BTWG), which includes Officers, will support the B&PSC to undertake legislative drafting work.

A Review of the Netting Permit Conditions

The Netting Permit Conditions were due for a formal review in 2021. Stakeholder expectations are that this review will be undertaken; however, it is advantageous that relevant information to inform the review is available at key phases of discussion and decision making, otherwise momentum is lost.

The task of reviewing the Netting Permit Byelaw and Permit Conditions will begin and involve different phases, which will all be documented. There will be an “open” phase of informal consultation to enable all stakeholders to provide their views on current management and to submit any additional evidence. The findings, along with relevant and collated evidence, both from the informal exercise and research (such as findings from the Bass survivability study) will be discussed by the B&PSC. From those discussions, there is potential that appropriate changes to the Permit Conditions will be identified and, if so, formal consultation will be undertaken.

Introducing the Size of Fishing Vessels Byelaw 2022

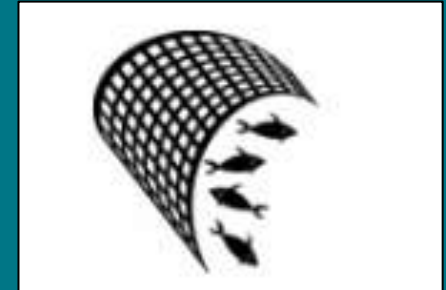
Following additional quality assurance from the BTWG, Officers will prepare a final Impact Assessment that recognises the formal consultation response (discussed by the B&PSC in February 2023). A package of information will be sent to the Marine Management Organisation (MMO) for quality assurance prior to submission to the Secretary of State for potential confirmation. Depending on the feedback provided by the MMO, the B&PSC may decide to undertake further decision making.

Introducing the Mobile Fishing Permit Byelaw 2022

Following additional drafting work by the BTWG to recognise the objections submitted during the formal consultation (discussed by the B&PSC in February 2023), Officers will prepare a final Impact Assessment that recognises the formal consultation response and the adjustments to the Byelaw (and Permit Conditions) as proposed in the formal consultation. A package of information will be sent to the Marine Management Organisation (MMO) for quality assurance prior to submission to the Secretary of State for potential confirmation. Depending on the feedback provided by the MMO, the B&PSC may decide to undertake further decision making.

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.



Pressures & Risks to Static Gear Fisheries

In 2022, members of the potting sector raised concerns regarding the level of effort on crab and lobster stocks and the potential displacement of more efficient 'offshore' vessels from EU waters into UK waters (including those within D&S IFCA's District) due to the NQS tonnage set in the Trade and Co-operation Agreement between the EU and UK. These concerns are still current and although the Crab & Lobster FMP is now drafted and will go out to consultation this year, it is unclear if any management measures relating to capping effort will be introduced in the six-year life of the plan. D&S IFCA Officers will keep updated on the rollout of the FMP and the early intervention management measures and will consider the outputs from the Crustacean research projects outlined in this Annual Plan. These will be presented to the B&PSC for consideration.

Marine Spatial Prioritisation

D&S IFCA Officers will continue to review and respond to MMO Marine Licence Applications (MLAs) for developments and other proposals, such as disposal at sea, planned in the District and that may impact the existing use of the area or the habitats and species that are present in the proposed location. As part of this work, Officers may engage with the developers prior to an MLA being submitted, to provide information on the existing use of the D&S IFCA's District and the level of fishing activity that is taking place. Stakeholder engagement will take place, where appropriate, to identify key fishing grounds that may be impacted by a marine development. Officers will continue to respond to developments at Hinkley Point C Power station, in particular in relation to applications to remove Acoustic Fish Deterrent from the cooling water intake system (Material Change to DCO, variation to WDA Permit, variation to Marine Licence). 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.

MPA Assessments

D&S IFCA has completed MPA assessments for almost all the fishing activities taking place in MPAs in its District and assessed whether the activities will impact site integrity and prevent conservation objectives being met. Those assessments outstanding will be completed in FY 2023/2024. Over 60 management measures have been introduced specifically for MPAs and further consideration of the formal advice from Natural England on the MPA assessments will determine whether any further management measures need to be considered.



Acoustic Fish Deterrent



Activity	Fishing Method	Impact	Red Risk
1.1.1.1	Towed demersal	High	High
1.1.1.2	Towed demersal	High	High
1.1.1.3	Towed demersal	High	High
1.1.1.4	Towed demersal	High	High
1.1.1.5	Towed demersal	High	High
1.1.1.6	Towed demersal	High	High
1.1.1.7	Towed demersal	High	High
1.1.1.8	Towed demersal	High	High
1.1.1.9	Towed demersal	High	High
1.1.1.10	Towed demersal	High	High
1.1.1.11	Towed demersal	High	High
1.1.1.12	Towed demersal	High	High
1.1.1.13	Towed demersal	High	High
1.1.1.14	Towed demersal	High	High
1.1.1.15	Towed demersal	High	High
1.1.1.16	Towed demersal	High	High
1.1.1.17	Towed demersal	High	High
1.1.1.18	Towed demersal	High	High
1.1.1.19	Towed demersal	High	High
1.1.1.20	Towed demersal	High	High
1.1.1.21	Towed demersal	High	High
1.1.1.22	Towed demersal	High	High
1.1.1.23	Towed demersal	High	High
1.1.1.24	Towed demersal	High	High
1.1.1.25	Towed demersal	High	High
1.1.1.26	Towed demersal	High	High
1.1.1.27	Towed demersal	High	High
1.1.1.28	Towed demersal	High	High
1.1.1.29	Towed demersal	High	High
1.1.1.30	Towed demersal	High	High
1.1.1.31	Towed demersal	High	High
1.1.1.32	Towed demersal	High	High
1.1.1.33	Towed demersal	High	High
1.1.1.34	Towed demersal	High	High
1.1.1.35	Towed demersal	High	High
1.1.1.36	Towed demersal	High	High
1.1.1.37	Towed demersal	High	High
1.1.1.38	Towed demersal	High	High
1.1.1.39	Towed demersal	High	High
1.1.1.40	Towed demersal	High	High
1.1.1.41	Towed demersal	High	High
1.1.1.42	Towed demersal	High	High
1.1.1.43	Towed demersal	High	High
1.1.1.44	Towed demersal	High	High
1.1.1.45	Towed demersal	High	High
1.1.1.46	Towed demersal	High	High
1.1.1.47	Towed demersal	High	High
1.1.1.48	Towed demersal	High	High
1.1.1.49	Towed demersal	High	High
1.1.1.50	Towed demersal	High	High
1.1.1.51	Towed demersal	High	High
1.1.1.52	Towed demersal	High	High
1.1.1.53	Towed demersal	High	High
1.1.1.54	Towed demersal	High	High
1.1.1.55	Towed demersal	High	High
1.1.1.56	Towed demersal	High	High
1.1.1.57	Towed demersal	High	High
1.1.1.58	Towed demersal	High	High
1.1.1.59	Towed demersal	High	High
1.1.1.60	Towed demersal	High	High

Extended Trials of New Technology

Following the successful trial of Remote Electronic Monitoring (REM) on board a D&S IFCA permitted scallop dredging vessel, D&S IFCA intends to extend the trial of the onboard camera and gear sensors to:

- demonstrate the robustness of the technology;
- identify improvements in the monitoring of fishing activity including the automation of remote monitoring;
- demonstrate value for money compared to other monitoring approaches;
- identify potential changes to the management of the towed gear fleet; and
- identify the benefits to fishers and vessel owners.

As part of the extended trial, the use of machine learning (Artificial Intelligence) will be introduced to further automate the monitoring of fishing activity. To deliver the extended trial external funding will be sought.

D&S IFCA also intends to trial the use of REM on potting vessels to explore how technology can provide the opportunity to consider potential approaches to management, including gear restrictions. Similar to its approach to the mobile gear project, it is likely that only one or two vessels will be required to determine the applicability of the technology. It is likely that machine learning will be a necessary part of the REM system when applied to the potting sector.

To deliver the initial trial, D&S IFCA will fund the project through to the allocation to Research from the Revenue Budget.

D&S IFCA will be trialling the use of Durometers to define and measure the hardness of the shell of edible crab. Durometers are used in North American crab fisheries to measure compliance with fishing regulations. This trial forms part of a FISP project (partners include the University of Bangor, South Devon and Channel Shellfishermen and Seafish) to gather evidence to inform the Crab and Lobster FMP objectives. The use of durometers and readings associated with different shell hardness will also help investigate the crab meat yield compared to hard shelled crab.



A Durometer

Focus on Enforcement

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 is monitored by an appointed Intel Officer and fed 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.

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.

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 fishers 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.

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. D&S IFCA may consider its own requirements for use of IVMS on netting vessels, similar to the approach it has taken with the mobile gear fleet.

Success Criterion:

IFCAs implement a fair, effective and proportionate enforcement regime.



Focus on Environment – Research

Crustacea Research

1. Seasonality of egg bearing of the European Lobster, *Homarus gammarus*.

Officers will undertake surveys on board fishing vessels operating in the D&S IFCA's District, throughout the year, 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. This evidence will help inform the use of the enforcement tools that may be used to identify if a berried lobster has been scrubbed of its eggs.

2. Measuring the Hardness of the shell of edible Crab, *Cancer pagurus*

As part of the Crab and Lobster FMP evidence gathering needs, D&S IFCA, together with Seafish, South Devon and Channel Fishermen and the University of Bangor applied for Fisheries Industry Science Partnership funding to develop a methodology to measure the hardness of the shell of the edible brown crab. This will be trialled using a tool called a Durometer that is used in North America fisheries for this purpose and to monitor compliance with regulations. D&S IFCA Officers together with a Researcher (funded through the project) will be trialling the durometers on board fishing vessels in the D&S IFCA's District.

3. Catch/Landings Data

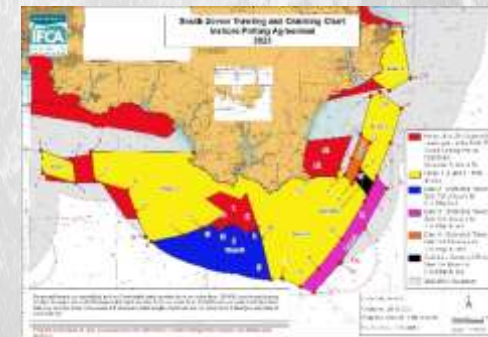
As part of the on-board surveys D&S IFCA Officers will gather catch, gear and activity data to feed into other Crab and Lobster FMP FISP projects and to provide data on catch and landings per unit effort and potentially provide evidence to support considerations in the management of pot fisheries in the District. D&S IFCA officers will work with permit holders in its District and Members of the Authority who have expertise in this area of work.

Habitat Mapping

In 2014 D&S IFCA's Mobile Fishing Permit Conditions prohibited the use of demersal towed gear in the Start Point to Plymouth Sound and Eddystone SAC to protect the designated reef feature. Between 2013 and 2015, D&S IFCA Officers undertook on-board survey work to ground truth the habitats in part of the SAC, which lies within Zone 2 of the Inshore Potting Agreement Area. The results of this work have been used to challenge the habitat map and the location and extent of designated reef of the SAC. The closure to demersal towed gear has also protected other habitats such as coarse sediment and sand which are not designated features. Following on from discussions with Natural England and the potential to instigate the use of 'Measures of Equal Environmental Benefit (MEEB)', D&S IFCA Officers will deploy under water survey equipment (flying array camera system and ROV) to identify any changes/recovery of the habitat in this area since its closure to demersal gear vessels nine years ago.

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.



Molluscan Research

Taw Torridge Estuary Mussels and Cockles

The Taw Torridge Estuary is an SSSI and its intertidal shellfish beds are important for the overwintering birds that frequent the estuary for food. The intertidal mussel beds, and areas where cockles have been identified, will be surveyed to assess, not only the bivalve molluscan stocks that are available for the birds, but also to estimate the amount of mussels that can be taken commercially by shellfish operators. This information will help inform the monitoring and potential management of the shellfish resource.

King Scallop Scallops

- 1. Scallop Spawning Season:** Officers will continue the scallop spawning research that was undertaken in 2022/2023 to gather further information on the seasonality of spawning and compare this to the results from the 2022 work. This research will involve collecting samples from commercial diving permit holders targeting scallops and will be focussed on the Torbay area of the District, from April through to October. Analysis undertaken will determine the gonadosomatic index which is used to calculate spawning activity and is an indicator of spawning condition. Visual assessment will also be undertaken.
- 2. Monitoring of the Commercial Scallop Dive Fishery:** through D&S IFCA Commercial Diving Permit Conditions, scallop divers are able to remove scallops from specified areas (MPAs) in the District in the months of July, August and September subject to additional restrictions. D&S IFCA Officers monitored the activity in 2022, and will continue to do this by analysing:
 - IVMS data to identify areas fished and time spent in those areas; and
 - landings/sales notes to determine the landings of each vessel, the number of scallops landed and the value of these landings.

Officer will continue to engage with scallop divers and gather their opinions on D&S IFCA's management of the fishery.

Skerries Bank Angling Zone

Officers will investigate the use of the Skerries Bank Angling Zone and gather data on the fishing activity taking place and the level of catches/landings by the different sectors. This will involve the use of the MMO Catch App and landings data and IVMS through the national roll out. Officers will also gather information on the different methods of marking gear by the sectors operating in the areas and help disseminate this information to the angling sector which uses the site.

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.



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 the Communications Strategy which currently focusses on the use of the website and electronic communications.

Fisheries Management Plans



D&S IFCA sits on the national FMP groups and has input into the development of five FMPs. Officers will continue to provide evidence and expertise to help the progress of further FMPs. As part of this work D&S IFCA disseminates information to stakeholders in its District so that they can engage with the FMP process through in person and on-line events. Officers will also provide updates to the Authority Members.

Crustacea Fisheries



Engagement will take place through meetings with fishers from different areas within the District. These engagement events will involve discussions on what potential measures that they think would be appropriate to manage the crab and lobster fisheries in the District. These events will discuss those measures suggested by fishers as part of the Project UK South West Workshops and highlight any other measures that may be appropriate.

Netting Consultations



Consultations will take place as part of the review of the Netting Permit Conditions. The first phase will be an informal open consultation with all stakeholders held on D&S IFCA's mailing list and permit holders. This will provide the opportunity for views and evidence to be submitted, which can then be considered by the B&PSC with regards to any potential changes to management. Formal consultation may then take place.

Website Upgrade



The current website is running on old technology. Boost Digital, the website host, have recommended upgrades to the internal function and Content Management system of the website. This will replace Eezee Publish with WordPress. Although this work will benefit the functionality of the website there will not be a noticeable difference to the front facing pages of the website.



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 2023/2024

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



The GWG to review D&S IFCA's Communication Strategy & Delivery Plan

This work will involve familiarisation with current documentation, establishing a drafting team, developing robust drafts, and attending GWG meetings to review drafts. The final objective is the adoption of the Communication Strategy by the Authority.



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.



Website

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.



Website – Communications and information sharing

Producing and uploading news items on the work of D&S IFCA and other relevant information to the website.



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.



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

Work relating to this workstream is expected to continue into FY 2023/2024 in particular in relation to the development & proposed material changes to the water intakes at Hinkley C. This 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.



Participation in national and regional fisheries and conservation activities

Review and respond to Marine Licence Applications (MLAs) and Consultations. This is an on-going task which involves several Officers. Depending on the applications and consultations this can be time consuming and will be documented in the Officers time recording. This will meet the Defra ask of IFCA's to participate in Marine Spatial Prioritisation.



Crustacea Fisheries Engagement

To engage with potting fishers in the District to listen to their concerns about crab and lobster stocks and consider what further management measures would be appropriate.



Netting Permit Conditions Review

As part of the Netting Permit Conditions review, there will be an "open" phase of informal consultation to enable all stakeholders to provide their views on current management and to submit any additional evidence. The findings, along with relevant and collated evidence, both from the informal exercise and research (such as findings from the Bass survivability study) will be discussed by the B&PSC. From those discussions, there is potential that appropriate changes to the Permit Conditions will be identified and, if so, formal consultation will be undertaken.



Fisheries Management Plan Engagement

As part of the national FMP work D&S IFCA will engage with the FMP groups and provide information and expertise to help inform the FMPs. D&S IFCA will also disseminate information to stakeholders in its District so that they can engage with the FMP process through in person and on-line events. All IFCA's have received additional funding from Defra to undertake work to support the development and implementation of national Tranche 1 and Tranche 2 FMPs.

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 and/or offences.

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



Review the Compliance and Enforcement Strategy

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



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 workstreams 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.



Tasking & Co-ordination Group

To hold bi-weekly 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.



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.



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.

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.



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.



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.



Collaborate with other regulators.

To work with other regulators to achieve consistent quality, application, and enforcement of management measures.

D&S IFCA has led IFCA representation on the MMO IVMS project for an extended period of time and provided experience gained from the rolling out of IVMS on all D&S IFCA's Mobile Fishing vessels since 2018. It is envisaged that completion of the MMO's roll-out and D&S IFCA's involvement in the project will continue throughout 2023/2024 to provide consistency in IFCA support.

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



Review of the existing Netting Permit Conditions

The Netting Permit Conditions were due for a formal review in 2021. Stakeholder expectations are that this review will be undertaken; however, it is advantageous that relevant information to inform the review is available at key phases of discussion and decision making otherwise momentum is lost.

The task of reviewing the Netting Permit Byelaw and Permit Conditions will begin and involve different phases, which will all be documented. There will be an “open” phase of consultation to enable all stakeholders to provide their views on current management. The findings, along with relevant and collated evidence (such as findings from the Bass survivability study) will be discussed by the B&PSC. From those discussions, there is potential that appropriate changes to the Permit Conditions will be identified. If so, further consultation will be undertaken including setting out what the changes would look like as amended Permit Conditions. The review includes communications, administration, and potential drafting of Permit Conditions.



Introducing the Size of Fishing Vessels Byelaw 2022

Following additional quality assurance from the BTWG, Officers will prepare a final Impact Assessment that recognises the formal consultation response (discussed by the B&PSC in February 2023). A package of information will be sent to the Marine Management Organisation (MMO) for quality assurance prior to submission to the Secretary of State for potential confirmation. Depending on the feedback provided by the MMO, the B&PSC may decide to undertake further decision making. Additional work will include communications and administration.



Introducing the Mobile Fishing Permit Byelaw 2022

Following additional drafting work by the BTWG to recognise the objections submitted during the formal consultation (discussed in February 2022), Officers will prepare a final Impact Assessment that recognises the formal consultation response and the adjustments to the Byelaw (and Permit Conditions) as proposed in the formal consultation. A package of information will be sent to the Marine Management Organisation (MMO) for quality assurance prior to submission to the Secretary of State for potential confirmation. Depending on the feedback provided by the MMO, the B&PSC may decide to undertake further decision making. Additional work will include communications and administration and changes to the on-line permit application facility.

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.



Bass Survivability

To continue to investigate the survival of bass tagged in 2022/2023 after being caught by nets and to maintain the acoustic monitoring of the use of the Salcombe estuary by tagged bass. The acoustic and vitality data collected will be analysed and a report published on this work which will be presented to the B&PSC.



EMS/MCZ Assessments

To complete outstanding MCZ assessments and review MPA assessments as and when required. This is a workstream that continues into the Annual Plan 2023/2024 as assessments are reviewed in light of MPA conditional assessments provided by Natural England and designation of new features.

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



EMS / MCZ Assessments

To review data and evidence collected regarding fishing activity within four MPAs in the D&S IFCA's District to inform the Monitoring and Control Plans for these MPAs. To use Monitoring and Control Plan (M&CP) findings to review MPA assessments as appropriate. This is a workstream that continues into the Annual Plan 2023/2024 as M&CPs are reviewed annually to inform whether additional management is required.



Monitoring of Commercial Scallop Dive Fishery

To monitor the commercial dive vessels operating in D&S IFCA's District during July, August and September using IVMS and to gather catch and landings data for analysis to measure compliance with the Commercial Diving Permit Conditions during these months.



Fisheries Management Plans (FMPs)

D&S IFCA sits on the national FMP groups and has inputted into the development of six FMPs. Officers will continue to provide evidence and expertise to help the progress of further FMPs. As part of this work D&S IFCA disseminates information to stakeholders in its District so that they can engage with the FMP process through in person and on-line events. All IFCA's have received additional funding from Defra to undertake work to support the development and implementation of national Tranche 1 and Tranche 2 FMPs.

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.

Taw Torridge Bivalve Mollusc Stock Assessments

To assess the intertidal mussel and cockle stocks in the Taw Torridge Estuary. Officers will survey and assess the bivalve mollusc stocks on the intertidal beds of the Taw Torridge SSSI. The SSSI is designated for its over-wintering birds and the mussels and cockle are an important food for the birds. The results of these assessments will feed into the food availability model and will be used to determine the amount of mussels that can be removed by shellfish operators.

Inshore Potting Agreement Areas

To chair the South Devon Inshore Potting Agreement (IPA) Committee, produce minutes of the meeting, produce an annual chart of the IPA area, disseminate any changes in management of the IPA to permit holders and to the MMO for licence variation purposes.

D&S IFCA, MMO and fishers from the potting and mobile gear sectors meet to discuss co-management options for the IPA. This fisheries conflict resolution management system has been in place for decades and allows for fishing opportunities for both sectors through a combination of D&S IFCA's Mobile Fishing Byelaw permit conditions and MMO Licence Variation.

Exemption Authorisations

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

Trialling New Technologies

 To secure external funding to continue the trial of REM and cameras and sensors on 10 scallop dredgers operating within the D&S IFCA's District to further test its success and application. This is with a view to potentially use these technologies to further manage the exploitation of sea fish resources in Marine Protected Areas in the District and protect sensitive designated features.

To extend the REM trial onto potting vessels in the District to assess the suitability of this technology on these vessels.

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

Skerries Bank Angling Zone

Officers will investigate the use of the Skerries Bank Angling Zone and gather data on the fishing activity taking place and the level of catches /landings by the different sectors. This will involve the use of the MMO Catch App and landings data and IVMS through the national roll out. Officers will also gather information on the different methods of marking gear by the sectors operating in the areas and help disseminate this information to the angling sector who use the site.

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.

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

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.

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.

Workstream Reporting



To accurately record time spent by Officers in different areas of work to inform the Annual Report and to assist with the Annual Plan.

Long Term Funding and Organisational Stability



D&S IFCA will continue to support Defra and its Funding Local Authorities in finding a resolution to its funding crisis. Defra has committed to engaging directly with the Local Authorities to find a way forward to alleviate the financial challenges D&S IFCA faces.

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.

Job Evaluation Exercise for all D&S IFCA Staff



A job evaluation process was undertaken in FY 2022/2023 by Cornwall County Council (CCC). CCC were also tasked to undertake a benchmarking exercise to review current pay scales compared with other organisations. The outcome of the Job Evaluation exercise will be reported to the Authority later in 2023, potentially at the AGM.

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.



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.



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



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.



Research Reporting

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



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.



Standard Operating Procedures

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



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.

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



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.



Research Databases and Literature Review

D&S IFCA gathers and uses a wide range of literature to undertake and inform its research work. This is maintained in the internal filing system within the relevant topic specific folders. Officers also 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.

D&S IFCA Annual Plan 2023-2024



Version Control

27th March 2023: Version 1.0 – D&S IFCA Annual Plan 2023-2024