

Devon & Severn Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority

Quarterly Report for the Period Ending February 2018

General Situation

Chief Officer T Robbins

This has been another challenging quarter for the D&SIFCA and the officers. But there have been some notable results which have been the culmination of a great deal of work.

The national programme to have all British registered fishing vessels fitted with inshore Vessel Monitoring Systems (iVMS) continues with a national steering group overseeing the roll out. The D&SIFCA is acting as one of three Pathfinder projects to help assess the issues involved in the roll out. The D&SIFCA has been chosen as it is the furthest ahead of all the IFCAs in terms of its ability to start fitting iVMS onto the fishing fleet and the ability to ensure this is required by implementing a byelaw to ensure that all vessels must have the equipment fitted. The current review consultation for the Mobile Fishing Permit Byelaw is looking to implement a permit condition requiring all fishing vessels fishing within the district to be fitted with an approved iVMS unit. Following completion of the consultation it is hoped to have all vessels between 6.99m and 11.99m with a mobile fishing gear permit to have a fully functioning iVMS unit fitted by the beginning of May this year. This will mean that the fishing activity deemed to be the highest risk in terms of infringements of permit conditions will be fully monitored whilst vessels are fishing within the whole district. The D&SIFCA continues to work with Common Seas, who are acting as project manager, to ensure a trouble free roll out of the iVMS units, the cost of which is fully funded by the European Maritime & Fisheries Fund (EMFF). The grant was successfully bid for by Common Seas on behalf of the D&SIFCA. The amount from the grant was £127,887.00; this is 90% EMFF and 10% from Defra.

A great deal of officer time is being spent on the byelaw review process and ensuring that the mobile fishing gear permit conditions in terms of closed areas are being digitised ready for the roll out of the iVMS. There are currently consultations on three of the D&SIFCA's byelaws. There is a great deal of technical data required from the environment team to support this work.

In January an EMFF grant application was made by the D&SIFCA for the purchase of a replacement rigid hull inflatable boat (RHIB) to replace the current RHIB operated by the D&SIFCA which is over ten years old now. The new RHIB is a significantly larger vessel but still enables officers to launch the vessel from various locations around the district. The new vessel was fully described in the report to the Authority at the last meeting. The bid has been led by IFCO Gavin Mayhew and the D&SIFCA has received £72,755.95 in EMFF money. This is 62% of the overall cost of the vessel which is expected to cost £117,188.63. Gavin will continue to act as project manager during the construction and delivery phase for the new vessel.

Again in January the Government published its new 25 Year Environment Plan.

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/673203/25-year-environment-plan.pdf

This is a very important document for the future work of the IFCAs and a focus to enable planning for the protection of the marine environment within coastal waters. The Plan is very high level but it does focus on various aspects of work that the IFCAs are responsible for and as such must be considered when work is being undertaken for the future. The IFCAs are in a very strong position to be able to deliver the aspirations of the Plan within their work streams to ensure that the marine environment is left in a better condition for future generations whilst balancing the needs of the current users of the seas.

On the 1st January 2018 the D&SIFCA resigned from the Association of IFCAs which is the national body funded by all IFCAs to represent them at national meetings. The resignation was discussed and voted on by the full Authority at the last meeting in December. The matter was raised by the AIFCA at meetings with Defra and as a result of feedback from those meetings the Chair and Chief Officer wrote to the AIFCA and all its members a clarification letter. There has been no response as yet to the letter but meetings are being held nationally to discuss the issues raised. Currently D&SIFCA officers have not attended any national IFCA meetings although there is still an open invitation for the officers to attend IFCA group meetings other than the AIFCA meeting. The D&SIFCA has stated a desire to discuss the issues and to try and find a resolution to this current situation.

With the large amount of work being generated by work on EU Exit, Defra are seeking secondments from partner organisations to bring in colleagues with suitable skill sets to provide support to the current teams. Defra have been seeking out suitable officers amongst their arm's length bodies such as MMO, NE & Cefas and now the IFCAs to work on a secondment basis for an initial twelve month period with a possible extension for another twelve months. An approach has been made to the Chief Officer about the possibility of him being seconded by the D&SIFCA to Defra. It is a good opportunity to gain greater insight into Defra operations but also to help Defra better understand the operation of the IFCAs through a secondment.

IFCOs Kelly Hobson and Adam Walters have both passed their national enforcement training course and will now be able to hold a full enforcement warrant whilst working for the D&SIFCA.

After a really successful Autumn, particularly for the trawling vessels, the winter has been dominated by cold and windy conditions. It was reported that the mean wind speed recorded throughout January was 17knots and mean gust speed was 24 knots.

The level of fishing in the district dropped dramatically with some commercial boats only managing a few days at sea during the reporting period.

Officers have been thankful that they have had the opportunity to continue to use Southern IFCA's RIBCRAFT 7.8 metre RIB patrol vessel. The significantly better sea handling of the larger RIB has meant that many more patrols have taken place than would have been possible on the Authority's smaller 6.4m RIB. The lack of a wheelhouse meant that it was still very cold on board despite the good standard of foul weather gear provided.

At the time of writing the last pieces of the jigsaw were being put in place to allow the Authority to place an order for a RIBCRAFT 7.8 metre RIB with wheelhouse.

The intelligence reports generated by officers and received from other agencies has meant that the focus of enforcement has been on the mobile gear sector and estuary netters. In exploring new ways that the Authority may undertake its enforcement role, officers are hopeful to be in a position to use the Yealm Harbour Master's launch through a formal agreement. An enforcement officer joined an MMO officer in two visits to Weston-Super-Mare to investigate reports of a net being used recreationally to remove bass.

If successful Officers will consider whether it was possible to have similar arrangements in other estuaries. The use of craft already on the estuaries significantly reduces the officers' response time to reports of illegal activity. During the quarter the officers, with the assistance of the Yealm Harbour Master retrieved two nets from the Yealm.

At the end of January 2018, the new Bass regulations were formally introduced. A more detailed update will be given at the meeting but the Regulations would see no recreational take of bass for the first time. This is dependent on a further review by ICES and these findings are expected to be announced in March 2018.

Byelaw Review

On 6th February 2018, the Authority received a signed copy of the Netting Permit Byelaw. This brought to conclusion a process that was started September 2015. The Netting Permit Byelaw will come in to force on 1st March 2018.

In addition, the consultation phase for the Mobile Fishing Permit Byelaw and Potting Permit Byelaw ends on 28th February 2018. This review of the permit conditions may lead to up to 11 changes being made to the Authority's management to reflect the current need of the fisheries and to support conservation. The proposals range from introducing IVMS on mobile gear vessels between 6.99 to 12 metres, protecting spiny lobsters in MCZs, introducing local management for the important whelk fisheries for the first time, revising the management approach to the live wrasse fishery and affording protection to otters.

The use of permitting byelaws does require significant resourcing, reflected most recently with the agreement to employ a part-time permitting officer. It also requires a significant support from the Authority's Members. However, it has been estimated by officers that the same level of potential change in management would have taken numerous new 'traditional' Byelaws and many amendments to existing byelaws to achieve the same outcome at considerably greater cost and in a time frame that would extend to many years.

IVMS

The Authority's national pathfinder project has got underway with Common Seas inviting the relevant 85 mobile fishing vessel owners that they need to have confirmed their preferred IVMS manufacturer by 28th February 2018. To date approximately 50% of vessel owners have made their choice.

At the same time, as part of the consultation on mobile gear, all mobile gear permit holders are able to respond to the draft permit conditions that would see the formal introduction of the requirement for all mobile gear vessel to transmit positional reports up to every three minutes whilst operating in the Authority's district.

Common Seas are drafting contracts that will be required between the Authority and the three manufacturers. Officers have also been working closely with the MMO's national team to develop other necessary processes to enable the project to be completed no later than May 2018.

Training

Officer Hobson successfully completed the coastal skipper Yachtmaster's theory in preparation for taking the advanced powerboat certificate in March 2018. Two enforcement officers completed the mandatory STCW seafarer's courses during January. Two enforcement officers successfully completed the IFCA national enforcement training five day course in February. Successfully completing this course is a pre-requisite to holding an enforcement warrant. It is hoped that the national warrants will be issued again by the end of March 2018. This will allow the enforcement officers to enforce European legislation including the bass Regulations and towed gear requirements. In preparation officers joined an MMO officer in carrying out net inspection on local trawlers working inside the Authority's district.

Working together

Authority's enforcement officers have continued to work alongside Marine Enforcement Officers from the Marine Management Organisation during the quarter. The level of interaction, at officer level, between the two organisations is very good. Officers conducted interviews of the owners of a locally based whelk vessel on behalf of EIFCA. EIFCA were investigating the alleged landings of undersize whelk whilst the vessel was operating in the southern North Sea.

Enforcement

The cases that are listed to be heard at Plymouth Crown Court were adjourned until the week commencing the 19th February 2018. It is expected that the cases will last at least two weeks. A further case from 2016, involving a Plymouth based trawler was set for trial in March 2018 at Plymouth Magistrates' court. The outcome of the Crown Court cases will be reported at the Quarterly meeting.

Another mobile gear case reached a successful conclusion when the Owners of the fishing vessel MORNING STAR pleaded guilty to scalloping in the Authority's district during the closed season. The case against the Master was adjourned until 27th February 2018. The case was brought in conjunction with CIFCA. CIFCA's investigation concerned scalloping within the Start Point to Plymouth and Eddystone SCI. The Owners pleaded guilty to both charges and were fined a total of £25,725.75. The fine included all of the Authority's costs and £4,285.75 to the owner of the reported pots losses during the illegal activity of the vessel whilst in the SCI.

Further cases have been resolved during the quarter. The outcome of the investigations has varied from written warnings for minor breaches through to, formal cautions and Financial Administrative Penalties (FAPs) being offered and accepted.

Investigations (selected)

Offence Date	Investigation complete	Prosecuting Authority	Offence	Location	Outcome/ Current Status
16-23/12/15	Yes	D&SIFCA	Scallop dredging contrary to the Mobile Fishing Permit Byelaw	South of Salcombe	Listed for trial at Plymouth Crown Court on 19/02/18
01 -19/02/16	Yes	D&SIFCA	Scallop dredging contrary to the Mobile Fishing Permit Byelaw	South of Salcombe	Listed for trial at Plymouth Crown Court on 19/02/18
06/09/16	Yes	D&SIFCA	Towing in Start Point to Plymouth Sound SCI	Bigbury Bay	Master owner entered not guilty pleas to 16 charges, case adjourned. Trial in March 2018
12/07/17	Yes	D&SIFCA	Removal of scallop during closed season	Plymouth	Owners pleaded guilty at Plymouth Magistrate's court Fined £25,725.75
10/08/17	Yes	D&SIFCA	Retaining v notched and undersize lobster	Start Bay	FAP £1250 accepted
02/09/17	No	MMO	Recreational fishers retaining too many bass and obstruction	Teignmouth	Summons issued
22/09/17	Yes	D&SIFCA	Recreational potter using too many pots	Tor Bay	Formal Caution accepted
22/09/17	Yes	D&SIFCA	Recreational potter using too many pots	Tor Bay	Formal Caution accepted
08/11/17	yes	D&SIFCA	Use of scallop dive vessel with no permit	Tor Bay	No Further Action
05/01/18	No	D&SIFCA	Vessel exceeding size limit	Lyme Bay	On going
15/01/18	No	D&SIFCA	Scalloping in breach of estuary permit conditions	Salcombe	On going

Overview

This quarter has seen a reduction in staff number within the Environment Team with Stephanie Davies leaving D&S IFCA to take up a position at Cornwall IFCA. Stephanie has always expressed an interest in returning to Cornwall where her family and fiancé live and therefore officers were happy for her achievement in gaining a position at Cornwall IFCA although conversely, she will be missed as she has been a real asset to the team and Authority. Whilst this time of year is sometimes quieter it has proved to be a busy quarter with involvement of the team in many different workstreams.

Surveys and Research

- **Whelks**

During the Byelaw and Permitting sub-committee meeting in November, discussions were had on the Whelk fishery within the district, previous research undertaken and the potential management measures to be consulted on. The lack of samples previously taken during the 2014/2015 winter has highlighted the need to take further samples in December 2017 and January 2018 to determine the spawning period within the district, which may be used to determine a potential closed season in the future. With this in mind whelk samples have been collected from fishermen operating out of Exmouth and Ilfracombe ready for dissection, to further inform the current whelk management work.



- **Wrasse**

D&S IFCA is taking on a MSc student from Plymouth University to undertake her dissertation project on the wrasse fishery in Devon. Her Master's thesis will focus on the pot saturation experiment that D&S IFCA officers have developed over the past few months. This work is now planned for 2018 and is an important addition to the wrasse survey work. Natural England and Exeter University now have a PhD student in place working within the SIFCA district, who will be studying various aspects of the wrasse fishery and wrasse ecology. D&S IFCA is liaising with NE about how the IFCA's and PhD's research can complement each other, and opportunities for the student to work in the D&S IFCA district.

A meeting was held with the Wrasse fishermen and Salmon farm agent in Plymouth to discuss the results of the onboard surveys and fishermen's data collection undertaken last year. This gave an opportunity to show how important the collection of data is as part of the fully documented fishery and how the proposed changes in management have been reached from the evidence gathered. Potential changes to the voluntary closed areas were also discussed as was the voluntary fitting of iVMS to the vessels.

- **Bass PhD**

Planning meetings for the bass PhD have taken place this quarter, to discuss timings for survey work and the thesis structure. A Transfer Report for the PhD has been prepared by Thomas Stamp and reviewed by IFCA officers before being submitted to the University.



It has also been confirmed that a large project looking at regional management of bass, led by Cefas but involving D&S and other IFCAs has been funded. More detail on all of the work related to bass is provided in an additional paper for this quarter.

- **Elasmobranchs**

A meeting of the Elasmobranch Project Steering Group was attended at Defra to discuss ongoing research programmes, including the spurdog avoidance programme and how this could be applied to other species (e.g. bass). A new project in the Bristol Channel may emerge and might offer an opportunity to continue the work started in the North Devon Ray Pilot Project.

- **Severn Finfish**

Development work for new research into finfish use of the Severn Estuary has taken place this quarter, with meetings between Ben Ciotti from Plymouth University and D&S IFCA officers. D&S IFCA officers are going to be helping with survey work at Berrow to collect monthly samples of fish using the intertidal areas. The research will look at seasonal use of the estuary and growth of the fish to determine the nursery function of the estuary for this commercially important fish species.

Marine Protected Areas

D&S IFCA MCZ Assessment 2017	
Marine Conservation Zone Assessment	
Site name:	Hartland Point to Tintagel MCZ UKMO 20160010
Protected feature(s):	Moderate energy infralittoral rock High energy infralittoral rock Moderate energy circalittoral rock High energy circalittoral rock Subtidal coarse sediment Subtidal sand Fragile sponge & anthozoan communities on subtidal rocky habitats Pink sea-fan (<i>Eunicella verrucosa</i>) Honeycomb worm (<i>Sabellaria alveolata</i>) reefs
Fishing activities assessed at this site: <u>Stage 1 Assessment</u>	
Towed (demersal): Beam trawl (whitefish); Beam trawl (shrimp); Beam trawl (pulse/wing); Heavy otter trawl; Multi-rig trawls; Light otter trawl; Pair trawl; Anchor seine; Scottish fly	
Dredges (towed): Scallop; Mussels, Clams, Oysters	

The main focus for this quarter has been the on-going work for Tranche 2 MCZ assessments. There are two Tranche 2 sites; Hartland Point to Tintagel MCZ, and Bideford to Foreland Point MCZ, with a total of 14 assessments which need to be completed. The focus of work has been to complete the towed (demersal) and dredge assessments for both sites using appropriate literature and fishing activity data to conclude whether or not management is needed to ensure the conservation objectives of the site are met. These assessments are currently being quality assured and will shortly be sent to Natural England for formal advice. Telecoms have been attended with MMO, NE and CIFCA to discuss possible

management measures on the Hartland Point to Tintagel MCZ.

The development of a monitoring and control plan for shad have continued this quarter. Development of an HRA for salmon protected by the terrestrial and freshwater Dartmoor SAC is also in the very early stages.

The analysis of bait digging data has continued this quarter and once completed will inform the Bait digging HRAs and



MCZ assessment that will be completed this year and inform the development of possible management options for Hand gathering in the district.

Torbay MCZ trawling on mud project has progressed this quarter. Analysis of samples collected in being carried out by Ocean Ecology and further sampling is planned for early March to collect samples in the test and control sites to investigate recovery from trawling and the natural impacts of storms on the subtidal habitat in Torbay.

A meeting was attended with Natural England and a shellfisherman from the Exe Estuary to discuss the possibility of relaying seed mussels onto Bull Hill to try and rebuild and replenish this wild bed on the estuary. Over the past few years there has been a dramatic decline on intertidal mussel beds on the Exe and the shellfisherman is keen to work with the Authorities to try and re-establish a mussel bed on Bull Hill, not only to provide a food source for overwintering birds but also to help stabilise the beds and help maintain the course of the river.

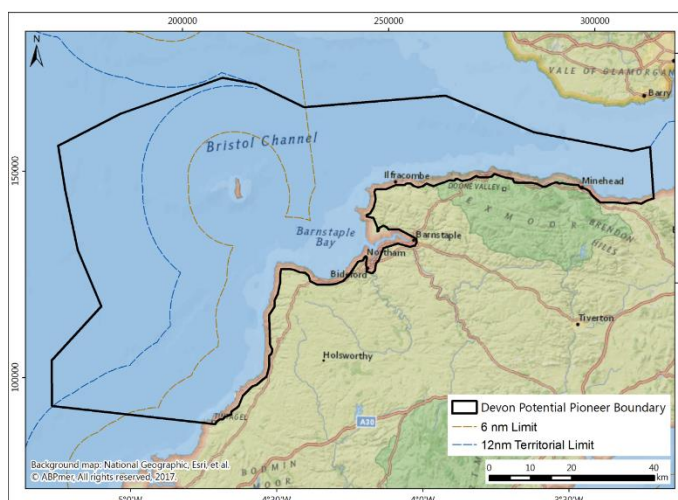


Projects

- **Marine Pioneer**

As part of the IFCA's work under the Marine Pioneer Programme, two project outlines have been developed. The first project will develop Research and Management Plans for finfish in the Pioneer area. These plans will draw together existing research, policy and management and review any gaps in these areas which may allow D&S IFCA to improve the sustainability of a local stock by filling these gaps. These will form the foundation on which to develop regional management within the Pioneer area and be explicit in what potentially is achievable. The second is a project looking at Ecosystem Based Fisheries Management focused on herring in the Severn Estuary and Bristol Channel. This project would include a scientific element looking at genetics and morphometrics to investigate whether this area has a separate stock of herring and habitat mapping to look at the occurrence of potential herring spawning habitat. It would also include an element looking at improving the shoreside facilities to improve the value of herring locally – such as a smoker. D&S IFCA is working with the Blue Marine Foundation and Plymouth University on the latter project, and is hoping to receive EMFF funding to recruit a short-term candidate to assist on the first project. The output and achievement from the North Devon Marine Pioneer will help fulfil some of the aims set out within the 25 Year Environment Plan and the Pioneer offers an opportunity to test the delivery of the Plan at a local level.

A Pioneer Steering group meeting was attended at the end of November along with several planning meetings for a stakeholder workshop. The workshop was held by the Pioneer programme in North Devon and an afternoon session on sustainable fisheries was run jointly between D&S IFCA and the Blue Marine Foundation. This included an exercise with fishermen to identify the main barriers to viable sustainable fisheries in North Devon and their vision for regional management. This was then followed up by a meeting between



Pioneer programme team, D&S IFCA officers and Defra to discuss regional management and how the Pioneer programme can help Defra to deliver the 25 Year Environment Plan.

- **EUROHAB**

Several meetings both in person and through web portal telecons have been attended this quarter as part of the EUROHAB Interreg project. A Kick Off plus 3 months meeting was attended in November and since then follow up meetings to organise a stakeholder workshop in May for those stakeholders who may be impacted by or have an interest in Harmful Algal Blooms and water quality problem. D&S IFCA is currently organising the location of the workshop, the outcome of which will help develop a web-based tool to aid early detection of harmful algal blooms in the English Channel. Those stakeholders involved in mariculture along the coast and in estuaries will be invited along with other shellfish sectors.

Meetings, Advocacy and Stakeholder Engagement

- A **collaboration day was hosted by Cefas** in Weymouth. The aim of the meeting was to bring together the different IFCAs, Cefas, Defra and NE to discuss potential collaborations for future work each organisation is undertaking, in order to avoid duplications and save resources.
- A **marine non-native species workshop** was attended which was hosted by Cefas in Weymouth. There were presentations given on the different work which is being carried out for non-natives, and demonstrations of identifying the different species. There was an interactive aspect to the meeting for IFCAs to map where they carry out survey work which may be able to tie in with non-native reporting. Discussions were had as to how the IFCAs can help Cefas with this work without adding any extra burden to the different IFCAs.
- Libby West, Senior Environment Officer, gave a **presentation** at the National Oceanography Centre, Southampton on the work of the IFCA, the permitting byelaw approach and how research informs management with examples from MPAs, bass and wrasse work.
- Officers attended the **Wyvern Division of the Angling Trust's** annual presentation night. Verbal updates were given on the new byelaws, recent enforcement action, and research into bass, wrasse and the IFCA's upcoming work on **Recreational Sea Angling**, such as the analysis of the Skerries Bank data which will be taking place next quarter.
- Research being conducted by the University of West of England into the **Public Right to Fish** has been discussed and the IFCA is in the early stages of facilitating this work.
- **D&S IFCA have led the establishment of a new platform for researchers studying the ecology of the Severn Estuary** to meet and discuss current work. The Severn Ecological Research Forum (SERF) currently has members from Natural England, Natural Resources Wales, Swansea University, Ocean Ecology and Plymouth University. The purpose of SERF is to provide a space to enable partnership working towards shared goals, which will promote sustainable development and nature conservation and improve our understanding of the ecosystem of the Severn Estuary. It is a group of stakeholders that meet on a non-commercial basis to discuss current or proposed research and monitoring to provide evidence on the marine ecology of the Severn Estuary area. Discussions with various researchers who are interested in undertaking work in the Severn have taken place this quarter.
- Involvement in the **Hinkley Point C Marine Technical Forum** (HPC MTF) has continued with considerable time spent attending meetings, giving feedback on reports and inputting into joint Defra responses.
- A pre-quarterly meeting was held with officers from the **Severn Council's** attending, to discuss various aspects of work in the Severn Estuary.

- The **Coastal Futures Conference** was attended in London where EU Exit was the main discussion point.
- D&S IFCA is involved in the **Fishing into the Future's Introduction to Sustainable Fishing** training course to be held in March. The CO and DCO will be presenting at the training event. The wrasse fishery, whelk research and management, and the IPA will be presentation topics along with regulatory role of the IFCA. Several meetings have been attended to discuss the content of the event and D&S IFCA's input into it.
- The DCO gave a lecture to Masters students at Plymouth university on **Mariculture** in Devon and the UK. This is an annual lecture delivered as part of the Aquaculture Masters course.
- A presentation on the **Shellfisheries on the Exe Estuary** was given to the Exe Estuary Forum meeting in February.
- As part of the **Project UK's Crab and Lobster Fisheries Improvement Plan**, D&S IFCA has attended meetings and has engaged a student from Plymouth University to undertake a Master's Project looking at the by-catch from potting vessels involved in the Western Channel and Celtic seas fisheries. The student will be analysing past data from the Inshore Potting Agreement crustacean fisheries and a crab fishery around the Isle of Man. Further data from North Devon potting vessels will also be collected.

Training and Development

Personal Development Plan annual reviews were undertaken with all team members early this quarter.

Statutory training courses in first aid, sea survival and firefighting at sea were attended by members of the team. A Data Protection meeting was held for all officers in Brixham.