

Consider the Authority's responsibilities for the national Inshore Vessel Monitoring System.

Background

Under European legislation Vessel Monitoring Systems (VMS) are required to be fitted and operated on all licensed fishing vessels 12 metres and greater in overall length. These units send a real time positional information report every two hours via satellite communication networks which reflects the fact that such vessels primarily work offshore. Most of the VMS units also automatically store the positional information every ten minutes and these data can be remotely downloaded.

The Authority has been running an Inshore Vessel Monitoring System (IVMS) Pilot that should culminate in July 2018 with the fitting of IVMS units to 84 vessels that are under 12 metres in overall length that are engaged in the towed gear fisheries within the District.

Under the Mobile Fishing Permit Byelaw all vessels engaged in the towed gear fisheries within the district will be required to report in real time every ten minutes whilst operating in the District and every three minutes when operating within spatial restricted areas such as Marine Protected areas. The positional reports will be transmitted via the mobile phone GPRS networks.

In part, the Authority's pilot has been helping to inform the national IVMS project. It is Defra's intention, with Ministerial support, to consult shortly on the proposal to introduce a Statutory Instrument (SI) that would require IVMS units to be fitted on all English registered fishing vessels, under 12 metres in overall length wherever they operate. The SI would also apply to Devolved Administration registered under 12 vessels that operate in English waters (defined as BFLs excluding the Scottish, NI and Welsh zones).

The default real time reporting rate for these vessels would be every 10 minutes. Other IFCA's would be required to introduce a new Byelaw to ensure that all vessels over 12 metres in overall length would also transmit in real time every ten minutes within IFCA Districts. This Authority would introduce further permit conditions under the existing Permitting Byelaws to achieve the same result.

Next steps

It is envisaged that IFCA's will support the national IVMS project by applying to the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF) for funding to purchase and install the necessary IVMS units to cover all of the relevant vessels, approximately 2,700 in total. Two national Project coordinators will also be recruited and will be responsible for the installation program. This is similar to the process that the Authority has adopted for the pilot project.

It is estimated that there are 422 <12m fishing vessels with their home port located within the Authority's District. In addition, it is proposed that the Authority will apply for 65 vessels based in the Channel Islands but whose administration ports are either Brixham or Plymouth. Whilst a detailed roll-out plan is still under development it is currently anticipated that there will be three tranches over the next three years:

Tranche 1 (2018-19) - 9m to 11.99m vessel length – 115 vessels*

Tranche 2 (2019-20) - 6m to 8.99m vessel length – 177 vessels*

Tranche 3 (2020-21) - <6m vessel length – 195 vessels

*56 vessels are already included in the Authority's pilot project.

A key element that will fall to IFCAs is the requirement to fund the full cost of procurement and installation in advance and to re-claim retrospectively. With an indicative cost of £1,300 per IVMS unit (including installation) expenditure of circa £633k would take place over three years. This would be broken down to £96k in 2018/19, £110k in 2019/20 and £72k in 2020/21.

It should be noted that the intention is to have a monthly EMFF claim process with a maximum 8-week turnaround which should avoid IFCAs requiring a large sum for IVMS.

Risks

The introduction of IVMS on all under 12 metre UK registered licensed fishing vessels operating in English waters is a complex project and as such there are inevitably associated risks. These are mitigated through the structure and processes of the project, including risk and issues registers, in line with PRINCE 2 project management methodology. The project sits under a wider Control Capability Programme within the MMO, which provides a further layer of checks and balances that help to mitigate project risks

A key risk for consideration by IFCAs is that as the applicants for EMFF funds they are technically the owners of the equipment and the Terms and Conditions of Grant would apply to them. To address this the EMFF funding team have agreed that an agreement is drawn up that will transfer responsibility for compliance with the Terms and Conditions of Grant to vessel owners following installation of the equipment. This has already been drafted for the Authority's pilot project.

Financial Implications

Whilst the funding model for the project requires the Authority to pay for units in advance, there will ultimately be full cost recovery from EMFF funds and the finance from Defra for the 10% not covered by EMFF.

There is a financial risk to the project because the costs of provision and installation of IVMS units was originally an estimate and actual costs in the Devon & Severn pathfinder indicate that it is likely to be circa £1,200 to £1,300 per unit. Additionally, paying for project resources was not originally factored in. This means that circa £351k will be required to cover the 10% to be paid by public authorities, which is £51k more than the £300k provided by Defra. However, Defra are in the process of making an additional £51k.

As with any project there is a risk that more could be spent during the lifetime of the project than is currently budgeted for due to changing circumstances. Whilst this is judged to be a low likelihood it should be noted that there is the potential for some of the cost to fall to IFCAs. The contingency plan would be to seek additional EMFF funding for the permitted 90% and to request that Defra cover the remaining 10%. If Defra were unable to do so then for an overspend of £100k, £90k would be sought from EMFF funds, the amount to be paid from public funds would be £10k and an option may be for this to be shared between the ten IFCAs.

Because EMFF is an EU funding stream, EU exit introduces a financial risk because it will occur during the lifetime of the project. This risk is mitigated because HM Treasury have agreed to underwrite the project including potential over spend during the lifetime of the project. However, to secure this guarantee, EMFF applications must be submitted by the end of June 2018. Plans are in place to ensure that this takes place albeit it relies upon every IFCA fully engaging with the project.

The level of necessary expenditure by the Authority during the lifetime of the project will need to be drawn from the general reserves. The total projected expenditure is greater than the total general reserve fund

The Authority has already demonstrated its drive to be innovative and supportive of VMS and IVMS technology with a longstanding aim to introduce a fully documented trawl fishery in the District which should be fulfilled by July 2018.

It is Recommended that the Authority continue to promote the use of technology in fisheries and conservation management and support the national IVMS project by agreeing to submit the necessary EMFF bids outlined in the report.