

**The Association of Inshore Fisheries and
Conservation Authorities**

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Chair: Tony Tomlinson MBE
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Date: 07th April 2022

By email only to; jfs@defra.gov.uk

RE: Draft Joint Fisheries Statement (JFS) Consultation.

I am writing on behalf of the Association of Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authorities (AIFCA). The AIFCA is the national body that represents the ten IFCAs in England. IFCAs are committees or joint committees of local government. The IFCAs have duties and powers conferred by the Marine and Coastal Access Act, 2009.

s.153(1) and (2) of the 2009 Act says

1)The authority for an IFC district must manage the exploitation of sea fisheries resources in that district.

(2) In performing its duty under subsection (1), the authority for an IFC district must—

(a) seek to ensure that the exploitation of sea fisheries resources is carried out in a sustainable way,

(b) seek to balance the social and economic benefits of exploiting the sea fisheries resources of the district with the need to protect the marine environment from, or promote its recovery from, the effects of such exploitation,

(c) take any other steps which in the authority's opinion are necessary or expedient for the purpose of making a contribution to the achievement of sustainable development, and

(d) seek to balance the different needs of persons engaged in the exploitation of sea fisheries resources in the district.

s. 154 (1) of the act says that;

(1) The authority for an IFC district must seek to ensure that the conservation objectives of any MCZ in the district are furthered.

Since the IFCAs were formed in 2011 they have transformed the way inshore fisheries are managed in accordance with these and other duties. The IFCAs have enabled local decision making and ensured local accountability. The IFCA structures are systems of co-management which attempt to reconcile often competing interests in our marine space.

Inshore fisheries are diverse; the majority of the commercial fishing fleet is under 10m in length and will fish within the nearshore waters, and the majority of recreational activity will be in the areas managed by IFCAs.

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For over 100 years inshore fisheries have been managed by local authorities. We have one of the largest inshore fleets in Europe. Working with Defra and our partner agencies, IFCAs have effectively implemented management in our Marine Protected Areas in inshore waters, which is in contrast to many areas elsewhere. The commitment to develop a world class system of fisheries management set out in both the draft Joint Fisheries Statement and the Fisheries Act itself is welcomed.

The re-focussing of domestic fisheries policy on fisheries not otherwise subject to effective management through the Common Fisheries Policy is welcomed. There have been systematic and structural failures in previous systems of management which have failed to address some of the key issues facing inshore fisheries. In particular there is a pressing need to ensure that some of our most valuable stocks have adequate information on which to base fisheries management decisions. The IFCAs alone have not been able to address some of these issues, in particular where stocks move across both domestic and international boundaries.

Our response to the consultation is primarily centred around the relationship with between the policies articulated in the Joint Fisheries Statement (JFS) and how to effectively ensure participation in policy formulation and the delivery of that policy.

We have identified the need to improve the ability of the IFCAs to engage in fisheries science partnerships and the value of the well-established national IFCA data collection programme to provide key, detailed input into Fisheries Management Plans (FMP). This can be supported by increasing the staff capacity of the IFCAs.

Fisheries Management Plans are a key requirement of the Fisheries Act and will form the basis of future UK fisheries management. There is strong support from Defra to engage IFCAs to feed into FMP development.

Effective governance of FMPs is emerging as a key challenge and opportunity. IFCAs provide a framework through which to reconcile competing demands associated with developing sustainable fisheries with the effects of marine resource extraction. This was recognised in the passage of the Fisheries Bill.

IFCAs manage the activities of the inshore fleet; a fleet that has historically been disadvantaged in the allocation of certain fishing opportunities. Furthermore, many of the most important fisheries for inshore fisheries are not well understood or accounted for through national fisheries management frameworks, in particular the molluscan and crustacean fisheries. Moreover, the allocation of fishing opportunities using social economic and environment criteria is potentially one of the main benefits of the new fisheries management plans. IFCAs can play a significant role in developing policy in this area.

The absence of adequate stock assessments for many of the key commercial stocks, particularly non-pressure stocks, can be traced to the lack of focus on these stocks in national and previously EU, policy. The IFCAs can support the development of evidence to support FMPs and play a key role in their development. How the JFS engages with the

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IFCA structure can helpfully be further examined and we welcome the opportunity to discuss this with Defra colleagues.

Importantly, IFCAs are able to engage locally and have a proven track record in developing collaboration to support co-management. A lack of investment and reducing budgets, coupled with increased demands on the IFCAs to deliver national policy, have limited the capacity of the IFCAs to embrace the full opportunities that arise as a result of further collaboration and co-creation of management. According to the 'Evaluation of the Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authorities' (RPA and ABP Mer Unpub.) conducting partnerships is one of the key strengths of the IFCAs but there is increasing demand for partnerships with the fishing industry and recreational anglers to help improve trust. It is an area that urgently needs to be addressed for a successful fishing industry after Brexit (Ford and Stewart, 2019). Investment in this area will deliver significant benefits and support the sustainable development of inshore fisheries in all their forms.

In our submission to the Spending Review 21 process, we set out the opportunity to increase the capacity of the IFCAs to engage in fisheries science partnerships and FMPs, and the national IFCA data collection programme by way of increasing the staff capacity in the IFCAs. Our investment plan identified the need to appoint of new fisheries science and outreach officers.

The Fisheries Science and Outreach Officers (or equivalent) will lead the

- a) coordinated engagement in the development of Fisheries Management Plans.
- b) development a programme of works to enhance and develop the fisheries science partnerships
- c) development of a national inshore shellfish data collection standard and programme for the collection of key biological stock data
- d) develop data standards
- e) develop opportunities for 'self-sampling' by sentinel vessels to support industry collaboration
- f) co-ordinate stock data for key shellfish stocks and other inshore fisheries as defined by the FMP process.

Recreational Fishing

The Joint Fisheries Statement could helpfully set out how the commitment to the “promotion and development of recreational sea angling” will be delivered. Moreover, the JFS could establish how the recreational sea angling sector can be engaged in, amongst other things, the established Regional Fisheries Groups and more generally support co-design and management of inshore fisheries. To this end we welcome the development of the Recreational Angling Strategy, but for the strategy to be effective it must be adequately integrated into the Fisheries Management Plan systems for delivery.

Co-management

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Co-management is a knowledge partnership where different levels of organisation, from local to national, come together to provide a forum to share knowledge, coordinate tasks and enable co-operation to solve management problems. Co-management groups may support users in accessing resources, bringing together different actors, building trust, resolving conflict, and networking – furthering social learning, which is essential for co-operation and meeting shared goals. Over time, co-management schemes become adaptive co-management, which is effectively learning by doing. Fishers are empowered when their capacity is developed to shape management decisions. This requires building capacity and ensuring fair representation for a diverse and geographically disparate fleet. There are various degrees of co-management, ranging from:

- Instructive (minimal exchange of information between government and users);
- Consultative (mechanisms for consultation but decisions taken by government);
- Cooperative (government and users cooperate as equal partners);
- Advisory (users advise government and government endorses decisions);
- Informative (Government delegates authority to user groups who make decisions and inform government) along a scale of devolved power from Government to Community management.¹

Fisheries co-management as a solution to resource use problems and conflicts over access, forms part of the solution to achieving socially, economically and ecologically sustainable fisheries. Co-management requires stakeholder participation (participation of fishers in the management process), empowerment and knowledge sharing as well as the delegation and sharing of power. Co-management is multi-functional, addressing different knowledge and resource management problems and requires adaptive governance and learning through experimentation. The guiding principles include both the participation and empowerment of fishers and other stakeholders, collaboration and a sharing of responsibility between fishery participants and managers as well as a clear and transparent process to results-based management at the closest level possible to the resource base.

Equity and justice in terms of access to fishing opportunities is fundamental to co-management. There are some clear success factors for co-management at the community level, these are:

1. Appropriate scale and defined boundaries
2. Membership is clearly defined
3. Group homogeneity
4. Participation by those affected
5. Leadership
6. Empowerment, capacity building, and social preparation
7. Community organisations
8. Long-term support of the local government

¹ NEF (2019) North Devon Marine Pioneer project reports
<https://www.researchgate.net/project/North-Devon-Marine-Pioneer>

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9. Property rights over the resource
10. Adequate financial resources/budget
11. Partnerships and partner sense of ownership of the co-management process
12. Accountability
13. Conflict management mechanism
14. Clear objectives from a well-defined set of issues
15. Management rules enforced

Issues of power- and knowledge-sharing need to be addressed through the co-management process, in order to overcome problems of overfishing; lack of resilience; dependence; differing and changing perspectives; negotiation and combining local ecological knowledge and scientific knowledge as well as building sustainable institutions and governance.

Considering the Governments stated policy on the Management of EMS's (Defra's revised approach); this has put considerable strain on the IFCAs, who on the one hand have successfully implemented MPA management inshore, but on the other hand have not been able to fully apply all the aspects required of their co-management capability. This has taken place despite their structure being well aligned to co-management, because the outcomes and the locations of the MPAs are predetermined and outside of the influence of their authority / districts. Their task, to implement central policy in a local context, particularly in the absence of additional resources, has resulted in inevitable tensions with some of the fishing communities they serve – notably the mobile gear sector. This can be ascribed to the root of some of the tensions revealed in the recent independent report. Currently no co-management arrangements are in place outside of the IFCA regions (up to 6 miles from the coast). Expanding co-management arrangements needs to consider capacity and equity and is not a substitute for industry-led voluntary approaches. **We welcome further dialogue on how to effectively integrate co-management structures into the emerging FMP framework.**

What are your views on the proposals for developing FMPs?

Non-Quota stock management.

The AIFCA commissioned an independent report entitled 'Towards Regional Inshore Fisheries Management'² which examined seven wild capture shellfisheries in the context of the concept of Fisheries Management Plans (FMPs). The report identifies problems with five of them as well as with the wider management landscape, and makes specific recommendations as to how future management should be designed and resourced. These are Channel Crab, East Coast Lobster, Channel Whelk, Channel Scallop and Channel Cuttlefish. I will not reproduce this report in our response, but the summary of findings forms the basis for part our response

² Davies, W., Kibberd, E., Williams C., 2022 'Towards Regional Inshore Fisheries Management'. New Economics Foundation. Available Online http://www.association-ifca.org.uk/Upload/NEFC%20Report%20-%20AIFCA%20FMP_FINAL_Jan2022%20for%20public.pdf

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to this consultation. Furthermore, the report shows how all of these fisheries are currently suffering from:

- a. A lack of coherence in terms of inshore and offshore management which is leading to risks of overfishing;
- b. A deficit in terms of management and governance for the offshore component of the fishery outside 6 miles, where a substantial portion of the mortality is taking place but there are fewer (often no) restrictions in place and the management bodies are not applying the precautionary principle, effective effort limits, or any component of ecosystem-based management;
- c. Data deficits include stock assessments, fishing capacity assessments and wider social and ecological impacts of the fishery; and
- d. There are concerns that a two-tier approach to inshore and offshore management is cancelling out any potential and realised benefits of good management practise.

We welcome the proposed groupings for the FMPs, which appear to have identified effectively these fisheries. As stated, we welcome further dialogue on how to effectively integrate co-management structures into the emerging FMP framework and our submission to the Spending Review 21 process, we set out the opportunity to increase the capacity of the IFCAs to engage in fisheries science partnerships and FMPs, and the national IFCA data collection programme by way of increasing the staff capacity in the IFCAs

In conclusion

The AIFCA welcomes the development of the Joint Fisheries Statement and the Fisheries Management Plans. We welcome the opportunity to work with Defra and partners to deliver the ambition and support coastal communities.

Yours sincerely

Robert Clark

Association of Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authorities.