

## AIFCA Chief Officer's Report

### New Defra ministerial appointments

Since the last AIFCA meeting there have been some significant developments in Government, and a number of new Ministerial appointments. The new Defra Ministers are:

- [The Rt Hon Thérèse Coffey MP](#), Secretary of State
- [Rebecca Pow MP](#), Parliamentary Under Secretary of State
- [The Rt Hon Mark Spencer MP](#), Minister of State (Minister for Food)
- [Trudy Harrison MP](#), Parliamentary Under Secretary of State (Minister for Environment)
- [The Rt Hon Lord Benyon](#), Parliamentary Under Secretary of State (Minister for International Environment)

The AIFCA has written to the Secretary of State and Ministers welcoming them to their new roles, introducing the IFCAs, and extending an invitation to meet with the IFCAs and the AIFCA.

### IFCA Funding

The AIFCA has made significant progress in securing additional funding for both revenue support and capital support.

The AIFCA has continued to make the case for continued and extended funding to enable the IFCAs to contribute their expertise and knowledge to the delivery of both local and national priorities. We have been successful in securing funding for the Spending Review programme. Albeit this funding is much delayed, in part as a consequence of the changes in wider government, but also because of the challenges of bridging the understanding in the IFCA policy teams of the role and importance of IFCAs.

### Fisheries Management Plans

Fisheries Management Plans (FMPs) are a new policy tool which Defra, and its Arm's Length Bodies will use to implement the objectives of the Fisheries Act 2020. IFCAs will play a key role as a partner supporting Defra to drive forward the development of the English FMP programme over the next 3 years.

As well as coordinating the IFCA engagement in the development of the plans, The AIFCA has led the engagement with Defra on how to make this work in practice. As a direct consequence of our engagement an additional £500,000 has been made available to IFCAs this year. Each IFCA has now received further funding in support of this programme. There is a commitment to continue this until the end of the SR21 period (24/25). However, given the current uncertainties over departmental budgets, future funding will be determined over the course of the year.

The work Defra are asking IFCAs to do to includes:

- Supporting the Defra led English FMP programme;
- Helping to coordinate communications and engagement with inshore fishing communities; and,
- Contributing fisheries management experience through technical advice and evidence to support policy development and implementation planning.

The IFCAs will also have an important role in supporting the future implementation of FMPs by contributing to the evaluation of policy and measures in pre-consultation draft and final FMPs.

The AIFCA has updated its website to provide further information on the FMPs including information on the 'Front Runner Plans' and how to get involved [HERE](#)

#### Marine Spatial Prioritisation and Marine Protected Area Management

The AIFCA has been engaged with the Defra sponsorship team and the relevant policy leads to expedite the funding set out in the IFCAs SR Bid, as they relate to marine planning, licensing and permitting (now consolidated under the heading Marine Spatial Prioritisation) and Marine Protected Areas. I have worked with Defra to establish a set of delivery outcomes and these have been shared with the Chief Officers Group.

As a consequence of this work, we anticipate that a further £1m of funding will be made available this financial year and this sum is indicated for the forthcoming financial year. Once the submissions to Ministers have been made and if they are agreed we expect further correspondence between the Defra and the IFCA Chairs, in a similar format to the letters received regarding IFCAs role in FMPs.

This funding is intended to support;

- 1) Marine Licensing Asks
- 2) Marine spatial prioritisation programme
- 3) Marine plans
- 4) Delivery of aquaculture and mariculture strategy
- 5) Delivery of angling strategy

#### Capital Bid

When the IFCAs were established in 2011 they were given duties to ensure fishing was sustainable and to protect marine habitats and species from fishing as laid out in sections 153 and 154 of the Marine and Access Coastal Act (2009). Defra has provided £3 million in New Burdens Funding annually to pay for these duties. The ten IFCAs receive approximately £6.7 million collectively from their constituent Local Authorities. IFCAs are unable to take out loans to support their delivery duties.

In assessing the needs of IFCAs at their creation, the capital replacement programme was excluded from the original New Burdens funding allocation as it was envisaged that capital for vessel modernisation would be provided from the control and enforcement funds in the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund. In the event insufficient consideration was made of the needs of the IFCAs from this fund with the majority of investment being diverted elsewhere into national programmes, and latterly for EU Exit works.

Working closely with Defra and the IFCAs the AIFCA has submitted a capital replacement programme to support the replacement of IFCA vessels. This bid has been accepted and we anticipate Defra being in a position to support the IFCAs capital bid replacement programme. Whilst there have been significant delays in the award of these funds, we anticipate further announcements shortly.

Linked to this programme is the AIFCA role in engaging with the National Ship Building Strategy. In the current strategy local authority vessels are outside of scope, however the strategy is being 'refreshed' and it is anticipated that the refresh will see local authority boat builds within scope. The full implications of which are yet to be decided, but it may mean that that future local authority vessel procurement is centralised, subject, one presumes, to the scale of investment sought.

### Joint Fisheries Statement

On the 23 November Defra published the Joint Fisheries Statement. This sets out the policies for achieving the 8 fisheries objectives in the Fisheries Act 2020. It is intended to ensure the UK Government delivers a thriving, sustainable fishing industry and healthy marine environment. It has been developed and adopted for the purposes of section 2 of the Fisheries Act 2020

The Joint Fisheries Statement is important as it sets out the agreed definitions of the objectives in the Fisheries Act. Members will note the inclusion of Cockles in the FMP programme. The AIFCA is in initial discussions with Defra on how to take this forward. More details on the Joint Fisheries Statement may be found [here](#)

### Isle of Scilly IFCA meeting

At the invitation of the IoS IFCA Chairman, I attended (virtually) the quarterly meeting of the Authority to provide an update on the role and activities of the AIFCA. The meeting provided for an excellent opportunity to discuss, amongst other things, funding issues, progress towards the implementation of the Spending Review process, the members appointment process and answer questions on the role of FMPs relevant to the work of the IFCAs. The feedback from the meeting was very positive and it was an excellent opportunity to see the committee working to engage in and deliver some exciting and innovative fisheries management programmes, including hearing about their research work and their progress in implementing shellfish management.

### TAG meeting

The AIFCA attended the IFCAs Technical Advisory Group (TAG) meeting in Jersey on 11-12/10/2022. The States of Jersey have long supported close collaboration with the IFCAs, not least due to the commonality and shared approach to the holistic management of their inshore fisheries. The meeting saw the IFCAs showcase their work and engage with a wide range of partners, including the Crown Dependencies, wider government agencies and with Defra.

The sheer diversity of work presented, and the innovation therein was a real credit to each of the IFCAs and the event, being the first of its kind since the beginning of the Covid lock down restrictions, provided a much-needed forum for engagement between the IFCAs and their partners.

The workshop afforded the opportunity for the IFCAs technical leads, to discuss with their partners, the role of IFCAs in the emerging Fisheries Management Plan (FMP) landscape. Tim Smith, the newly appointed Senior Policy Officer, with the AIFCA, ably led the discussions and engagement around this theme (as well as chairing the whole of the meeting). These discussions are an important precursor to ongoing engagement in the FMP process. The workshop, coming as it did, in the first week of Tim's new role, was certainly a baptism by fire, and one which he expertly took in his stride.

My overall impression of the meeting was entirely positive, and it was clear the talent in the IFCAs is exceptional. Having set the TAG forum up, with Dr Will Wright, over 10 years ago, it was a privilege to see how the IFCA community has grown. As we navigate the future within the Fisheries Act it is clear that we must adapt to this change and enable the skills knowledge and expertise of the TAG officers to effectively engage within the FMP framework. With thanks to Jersey State colleagues (old and new) for their hospitality, and the creative capability of the IFCA TAG members; I left the meeting with renewed confidence that that this is achievable.

### Fisheries Evidence Strategy project board

On behalf of the IFCAs I attended an inaugural meeting of this group in York. The Group is looking at how future evidence gathering can be better organised and coordinated at a systems level. The next meeting of the group is scheduled in Jan 2023. It is hoped that this group will better establish a process to ensure that both local, regional and national datasets can a) meet agreed standards b) be accessible and visible c) be commissioned in a coordinated way d) better enable co-creation and collaboration around fisheries data needs.

### IFCAS MMO Officers representatives' liaison meeting

The AIFCA has been invited to attend this liaison meeting which sees the MMO officer representatives on the ten IFCAs meet to discuss their roles and responsibilities as well as emerging issues. The meeting is seeking to set up terms of appointment and roles and responsibilities for the MMO representatives, so as to develop best practice and standardise and developed a shared understanding of the role of an MMO officer as a member of an IFCA. The meetings have emerged because of the refreshed look at MMO governance and will, in time, ensure that there is a shared and enduring understanding of the role of an MMO officer on an IFCA and act as a forum to sharing best practice and lessons learnt.

### HPMAs

The AIFCA has led engagement in the HPMAs steering group. We have supported the engagement of the IFCAs in that process, including attending several key meetings with the relevant local IFCAs. As a direct consequence of AIFCA involvement and the hard work of the individual IFCAs involved, the voices of the local communities have been heard in the HPMAs consultation process.

### Fisheries Management Plan evaluation

The AIFCA represented the IFCAs at the Fisheries Management Plan evaluation workshops. By way of background, ICF (as Defra contractors) and partners have been contracted to undertake an external evaluation of the Fisheries Management Plan (FMP) Programme on behalf of Defra over the next 2½ years.

The objective of the evaluation is to support the ongoing implementation of the FMP Programme. In particular it aims to develop an understanding of how the Programme is building a foundation for collaborative working and to generate lessons on what works in which contexts. It will also capture evidence on the extent to which FMPs are delivering successful outcomes and who is benefiting from these, how FMPs are contributing to the Fisheries Act Objectives, and on the main challenges and opportunities of FMP delivery. The evaluation will commence in January 2023, initially seeking to capture learning from the six FMP front runners.

A framework that specifies the evaluation design (i.e. priority research questions, indicators and research methods) was developed over November and December. It drew on a theoretical understanding of how the FMP programme is intended to work, articulated through a 'Theory of Change'. Evidence collected over the course of the evaluation will test and refine this understanding.

### Communication and engagement capacity building project

The AIFCA are in the process of delivering the following contract; communication and engagement capacity building project. Quotes for the services have been sought by 2 December 2022. The invitation for tender is [HERE](#). The project will be delivered by the end of next FY.

### IFCAs and the mNCEA

Simon Pengelly has joined the AIFCA as Senior Technical Officer with the primary role of co-ordinating IFCA engagement in Defra's marine Natural Capital and Ecosystem Assessment (mNCEA) programme.

In the 2021 Spending Review (SR21), the Government committed £140 million over the next three years (2022/23, 2023/24, 2024/25) towards the Natural Capital and Ecosystem Assessment (NCEA) programme. We are midway through Year 1 of the programme.

The programme builds on recommendations in the 25 Year Environment Plan, 2021 Dasgupta Review and Natural Capital Committee reports. It will underpin the value of managing our natural capital, transform the way we make policy decisions and ensure we invest in environmental reforms which achieve maximum benefit. The programme will focus on providing up-to-date datasets and ecosystem assessment tools to address key evidence gaps which are barriers to fully understanding and improving the state of our natural capital assets. There is a strong element of data gathering activities and analysis as part of the programme. To date IFCAs have been engaged in the programme mainly through the Inshore Fish and, to a lesser extent, the Benthic Habitats Year 1 projects. Planning is underway for Year 2 of the programme and there will be further opportunities for funded IFCA engagement and participation. It is also our opportunity to shape how evidence is gathered and managed to inform our inshore fisheries management needs.

Simon is developing a more in-depth introduction to the potential role for IFCAs in the programme at the upcoming TAG meeting. His new contact details are Email [simon.pengelly@association-ifca.org.uk](mailto:simon.pengelly@association-ifca.org.uk)

### Fisheries and Seafood Scheme Panel

On behalf of the IFCAs I have accepted the appointment to the Fisheries and Seafood Scheme Panel. The Fisheries and Seafood Scheme delivers investments to safeguard the long-term sustainability, resilience and prosperity of the seafood sector across England. The Fisheries and Seafood Scheme provides financial assistance for projects that support the development of the catching, processing and aquaculture sectors, and for projects that enhance the marine environment. The scheme is available to applicants whose organisation and/or vessels are registered in England. Further details of the scheme may be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/fisheries-and-seafood-scheme>

### NIMEG

As a member of NIMEG I have worked closely with the groups chairs to support their governance arrangement discussion and also to facilitate liaison between that group and the Chief Officers Group (as required). In particular an issue of a new national intelligence sharing platform has been proposed by MMO, and the IFCAs have been engaging with MMO on the opportunities to ensure that a) the current system is enhanced and b) IFCAs and the MMO continue to share a platform to share information and intelligence in a secure manner.

### Training

As papers in this pack will perhaps demonstrate I have worked extensively on supporting the ability of the IFCAs to continue to collaborate on national training arrangements. I have worked with the NLTO and since the last meeting there has been a Competent Officers Course and Advance Officers course delivered by the NLTO. I would like to express my thanks to the COG for their direction, to the NLTO for their work in delivering the programme and to Kent and Essex for their continued engagement in support of hosting the NLTO role.



### Conduct and Operations Report

The AIFCA along with the COG chair have engaged with Defra on the IFCA quadrennial Conduct and Operations Report. The Defra Secretary of State has a statutory obligation under the Marine and Coastal Access Act (MACCA) 2009 to prepare a report into the conduct and operation of IFCAs every four years, which is laid before Parliament. Defra are now collecting evidence to inform the report for the period 2018-22. The report will take a different form the last one, whereby in addition to the IFCAs reporting alongside a general call for evidence, Defra have commissioned social researchers to gather information directly through port visits, from the commercial fishing fleet. It is anticipated that the wider engagement with communities and interested parties will commence around Christmas time.

### Legal Guidance Support

I am delighted to report that, with the support of the Chairman of Devon and Severn IFCA, I have approached Jason Lowther of the University of Plymouth to assist in a collaboration to support the development of legal guidance (on an ad-hoc basis) and support with some training to the IFCAs generally on legal aspects of their tasks. Jason has kindly accepted this offer. We will work together over the coming months to identify some areas where further guidance notes may be developed, with the potential to develop some online presentations and resources to be offered to members of the IFCA committees. I am grateful to both Mike and Jason for this suggestion and look forward to an exciting collaboration. The new AIFCA IT systems (see note below) will allow this work (and the existing notes and guidance) to be shared with IFCA members and staff.

### IT systems upgrade

With two new members of staff, we have worked on the AIFCA IT infrastructure, which sounds rather grand, but in reality, means with the new employee's computers, we are now able to make full use of the MSOffice 365 suite. The AIFCA system and files can be shared across the AIFCA employees (reducing the risk of data loss and ensuring knowledge transfer). Importantly we have the ability to establish AIFCA share points. This means that we can host and share information with the IFCA members on the secure IFCA site.

### Publications

I have authored a book chapter and co-authored peer review papers (mostly outside of work time), and conference papers including;

Barrett, C, et al., 2022 "Cuttlefish conservation: a global review of methods to ameliorate unwanted fishing mortality and other anthropogenic threats to sustainability" ICES Journal of Marine Science <https://doi.org/10.1093/icesjms/fsac200>

Clark, RWE 2022 Fisheries of Poole Harbour. In Humphreys and Hall. Harbour Ecology. Pelagic Publishing <https://doi.org/10.53061/KZRS7935>

Solandt J-L and Clark RWE (In Prep) Fisheries Governance body development in England that can lead to strictly protected Marine Protected Areas. For IMPAC5, Vancouver.

Clark, RWE and Humphreys J 2022 Concepts of co-management: the case of non-native shellfisheries in England. ECSA 59: Using the best scientific knowledge for the sustainable management of estuaries and coastal seas. Estuarine and Shelf Sciences Association. 5-8/09/22 San Sebastian, Spain.

Please let me know if you would like copies of these papers and I hope (where © allows) overtime we will be able to share many more of the relevant IFCA scientific reports and assessments via the AIFCA share point (see above note).

### Letters of support

On behalf of the AIFCA I have provided the following letters of support



Game and Wildlife  
Trust letter of supp



Emma Plotnek FITL  
dletter of support.pd



AIFCA Marine  
Conservation Societ



Camber dock  
investment.docx.pdf



3C's.pdf

### Research cruise consents

On behalf of the IFCA's I have liaised with the Foreign and Commonwealth Office on research cruise consents. During the period there have been five cruise consent applications for review. As these cruises are not intending to operate within IFCA Districts no permissions or consents were required. In the event that the cruise requiring consent then the AIFCA liaises with the relevant IFCA to ensure that the proper authorisations are in place.

More recently there have been significant improvements in the way that the consenting processes operates, including better geographic positioning and awareness of the necessary assessment processes, particularly as this relates to operations within marine protected areas