



Version 1.0

September 2023

Six Month Progress Report Relating to the Annual Plan - FY 2023 - 2024

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.

01

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

KG

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

Report:

This task was carried forward from FY 2022-2023 and is a Key Goal for 2023-2024. Since 1st April 2023, work has not progressed on the review of the Communications Strategy. To date there has been one meeting of the GWG in 2023 - 2024; however, this meeting focussed on a different topic. The GWG were recently tasked by the Authority to review the financial package of Officers and report back to the Authority at the September Authority meeting, therefore, the GWG has prioritised this requirement.

02

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.

Report:

The data base/s of contacts has been maintained. Depending on the messaging and information to be circulated, the contact list/s has been used for targeted direct communications (for example email circular) to different audiences. These groups include permit holders (per method), all permit holders, Members of the Authority and a contact group of all stakeholders. Since 1st April 2023 there have been **20** direct messages that have included information about FMP engagement events, opportunities to be part of the REM project, consultation (Byelaw review) and guidance for fishers to help them remain compliant with legislation.

03

Website (review) and Communications and Information Sharing

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.

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

Report:

The content of the website is reviewed and updated (when required) every week. Display pages are updated when required and news items are displayed and archived in the website Resource Library (Section G). A new website is being built with improved Content Management System (CMS); however, the work by the contracted company has fallen behind schedule. Officers have spent a significant amount of time testing the progress of the build (examining test pages) and reporting back.

Since 1st April 2023, 14 news items have been produced (mix of topics). Reports, Officers' papers, and meeting minutes are added to the Resource Library.

P1

The IFCA will contribute to co-ordinated activity at a national level.

04

Participation in national and regional fisheries and conservation activities

KG

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.

Report:

Officers have continued to review and respond to Marine Licence Applications (MLAs) and consultations. Twelve MLA consultations have been reviewed, which have included a response to a proposed seaweed farm in Charlton Bay, which has since been retracted, a further response to a proposal for a Seaweed farm just outside the harbour limits of Torbay which was refused by the MMO; a response to a proposed mussel farm in Bigbury Bay which has yet to have a decision made by the MMO. The use of IVMS has been valuable in being able to fully respond to the impact of marine developments on existing uses of the marine space. Officers have also provided feedback to MMO consultations on the South and South West Marine Plans, and participated in a workshop on the marine element of Local Nature Recovery Strategies. Responses were also provided for national proposals for King Scallop Closures in ICES areas 7d and 7e and managing the sole fishery in Lyme Bay. D&S IFCA participated in an ICES stock identification workshop for the 'Benchmark on selected sea bass stocks' (WKBSEABASS-ID; [report available in ICES library](#)) and has been invited to participate in the ICES Workshop on Bristol and Western Channel Herring (WKRRBWCH) in December 2023.

05

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.

Report:

Officers continue to engage with the HPC Marine Technical Forum and have considered a range of consultations (from Environment Agency and MMO) on HPC activities. Further work is expected when HPC seek to vary their Marine Licence and Development Consent Order (to remove the requirement to install an Acoustic Fish Deterrent).

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.

06

Crustacea Fisheries Engagement

KG

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.

Report:

Work on this action (engagement) has not begun. Officers are aware that engagement with fishers is needed but have had to prioritise FMP related work so far this year. The crab and lobster FMP has identified that nationally effort within the crab fisheries is of concern and will be addressed within the plan. Development of nationally focussed plans may not be on a time scale needed to reflect the immediate concerns raised by some fishers within D&S IFCA's District.

07

Netting Permit Conditions Review (communication aspect)

KG

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.

Report:

The pre consultation began on 19th May 2023 and ended on 30th June 2023. Communication included direct circulation of information (Mail Chimp) and a communication package (news/text) used on both the website (Latest News Page & Engagement Page) and Facebook. Stakeholders were encouraged to contact the lead Officer if they had any questions about the review. A report was produced for the B&PSC and discussed on 31st August 2023. To reflect the decision making of B&PSC Members, formal consultation will now be undertaken on a series of proposed changes to the Netting Permit Conditions. Information for communication (formal consultation) will be prepared in due course.

08

Fisheries Management Plan Engagement

KG

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 IFCAs have received additional funding from Defra to undertake work to support the development and implementation of national Tranche 1 and Tranche 2 FMPs.

Report:

D&S IFCA continued to be involved in the Crab and Lobster FMP Working Group, Science Sub-Group and the Shellfish Industry Advisory Group. D&S IFCA has provide input into the development of the FMP and its evidence statement and research priorities. D&S IFCA has disseminated information to all relevant permit holders, D&S IFCA Members and the wider public regarding in person and on-line engagement events. D&S IFCA continues to be the lead IFCA in the Channel NQS FMP and is a member of the NQS FMP's working group. Since 1st April 2023 there has been 7 separate mail shots (email circular or Mailchimp) to highlight FMP development and engagement opportunities. Two news items have been produced (May and August) to highlight relevant FMP information – to advertise Defra Flyers and Defra consultations on six front runner FMPs.

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.

09

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).

Report:

Work has not begun on the review of the Compliance and Enforcement Strategy. There has been one meeting of the GWG so far in 2023 - 2024; however, this meeting focussed on a different topic. The Governance Working Group were recently tasked by the Authority to review the financial package of Officers and report back to the Authority at the September Authority meeting, therefore, the GWG has prioritised this requirement.

10

Spatial Monitoring of Towed Gear Vessels

KG

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.

Report:

Officers have spent considerable time monitoring spatial data from the towed gear vessels operating in its District. Four formal investigations have been started in the reporting period involving one case of non-reporting devices and three cases of suspected illegal incursions by towed gear boats into Marine Protected Areas. In addition, a further four cases have been progressed, resulting in No Further Action in respect to one case, the acceptance of a £1,000 FAP for an illegal incursion, and the court proceedings continuing in the remaining two cases.

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.

11

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.

Report:

Officers have held Internal TCGs at least once each month and there has been a total of 8 TCGs since 1st April 2023. Rather than duplicate with external TCG's Officers attend the MMO's south and south west TCGs along with Southern IFCA's TCGs. These are in addition to the above number, and each will sit on average once a month.

To date, Since 1st April 2023 officers have produced 95 Intelligence reports. These have been produced through a combination of Officers own observations along with the information being provided from other stakeholders and members of the public.

12

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.

Report:

Since 1st April 2023, **28** case files have been created. Of those **11** are currently active with the rest having been disposed of. Having introduced a process map for minor infringements (no permit) these type of offences are less resource heavy and are able to reach disposal in a timelier manner. Officers have also introduced an investigation process map setting out the stages all investigations should follow, which encourages standardisation along with reducing the burden on Officers undertaking what could be unnecessary work.

13

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.

Report:

The investigation tables can be viewed on D&S IFCA's website:

<https://www.devonandsevernifca.gov.uk/Enforcement-Legislation/Investigation-Tables>

14

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.

Report:

The national code of Conduct is posted on D&S IFCA's website – Section E of the Resource Library (Enforcement Related Guidance Documents - folder).

15

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.

Report:

Internal training has continued and is very important given the relative inexperience of the four Enforcement Officers. Inspections are followed by debriefs including footage from the Officers' body worn cameras to improve Officers' performance and safety. Officers have been involved in the discussions regarding national enforcement training provisions. All D&S IFCA Enforcement Officers have attended the necessary courses and acquired sufficient knowledge, and skills to hold a D&S IFCA warrant.

16

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.

Report:

Officers hold regular meetings with the Natural England Area Team and the MMO Marine Licencing Team, in order to ensure efficient approaches to a range of management-relevant issues. Officers have also held meetings with Cornwall IFCA and the MMO to discuss assessment and management of activities in the Bristol Channel Approaches SAC (a cross-border marine protected area designated for harbour porpoise).

Due to other commitments, attendance at NIMEG meetings has not been fully met but the SEO will be attending the two-day face to face NIIMEG meeting - 20th - 21st September.

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.

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.

17

KG

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.

Report:

The pre consultation began on 19th May 2023 and ended on 30th June 2023. A report documenting the findings of the consultation, relevant background information, and Officer comments was produced for the B&PSC. The report and an accompanying Officer paper (recommendations) was discussed on 31st August 2023. The B&PSC also discussed the content of a Bass Survivability Report – (Understanding Mortality of European Sea Bass (*Dicentrarchus labrax*) in Small-Scale Inshore Netting) which has relevance to the review. To reflect the decision making of B&PSC Members, formal consultation will now be undertaken on a series of proposed changes to the Netting Permit Conditions. Information for communication (formal consultation) will be prepared in due course. Following the consultation, the responses will be collated, and the findings presented to and discussed by the B&PSC.

18

KG

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.

Report:

A package of information (proposed Byelaw, Impact Assessment, proof of advertising, minutes of meetings) were sent to the MMO (byelaw review/legal team) in late May 2023. The MMO confirmed receipt of the proposed Size of Fishing Vessels Byelaw 2022. The MMO were unable to provide feedback and advice within the expected 45-day period for Quality Assurance. On 3rd August the MMO provided feedback on the proposed Size of Fishing Vessels Byelaw 2022 and the accompanying Impact Assessment. Changes to both the Byelaw and the Impact assessment have been recommended by the MMO before the Byelaw is submitted to the Secretary of State. Officers will analyse the comments and discuss the feedback with the Byelaw Technical Working Group. The B&PSC will be informed in due course about the findings.

19

Introducing the Mobile Fishing Permit Byelaw 2022

KG

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.

Report:

A package of information (proposed Byelaw, Impact Assessment, proof of advertising, minutes of meetings and proposed Permit Conditions) were sent to the MMO (byelaw review/legal team) in late May 2023. The MMO confirmed receipt of the proposed Mobile Fishing Permit Byelaw 2022. The MMO were unable to provide feedback and advice within the expected 45-day period for Quality Assurance. On 4th September 2023 the MMO highlighted that the Mobile Fishing Permit Byelaw 2022 remains under review. The MMO requested further information from D&S IFCA Officers to justify why the IFCA requires the provisions proposed specifically in view of the IVMS. Officers provided a response to the MMO to explain why the Authority cannot rely on the national roll out of IVMS (Statutory Instrument) to meet its requirements to manage mobile fishing gear vessels in its District.

20

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.

Report:

Officers published the final report 'Understanding Mortality of European Sea Bass (*Dicentrarchus labrax*) in Small-Scale Inshore Netting' on 22nd August 2023. This report was followed by a supplementary data file on 25th August 2023 in response to a request for additional information from an Authority Member. The report was also presented as Agenda Item 6 at the B&PSC meeting on 31st August 2023. The report was discussed at length, and the evidence informed later discussions on the review of Netting Permit Conditions. It was agreed at the B&PSC meeting that there should be some minor amendments made to the report and it would be re-published in due course (as version 1.1).

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.

21**EMS/MCZ Assessments****KG**

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.

Report:

The final few outstanding assessments for all Tranches of MCZ have been completed bar one for Torbay MCZ, which is in draft and will be sent to NE for formal advice in the next few weeks. Monitoring and Control Plans are also in place and have been actively reviewed for several gear-feature interactions. The only site where HRA assessments need to be developed is for the Bristol Channel and Approaches SAC, where Harbour Porpoise is the designated feature. D&S IFCA has been in discussions with the MMO and CIFCA who share responsibility for management of fishing activities within the site. The MMO will share their Harbour Porpoise Impacts Evidence Statement once completed with D&S IFCA which will help inform Officers assessments. Additional HRAs (three) and MCZ assessments (two) have been undertaken as part of the process of determining requests for exemption from D&S IFCA's Byelaws, and an HRA and MCZ assessment conducted for aquaculture activities in the Dart.

Officers have also provided details of all the MPA assessments completed since 2012 with the AIFCA and Defra, explaining the formal advice received from Natural England, what management is in place and whether those outstanding will be completed with management in place by 2024 to fulfil UK commitment under the Environmental Improvement Plan.

22**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.

Report:

Officers have drafted a Monitoring and Control Plan (M&CP) report for netting and seagrass in Torbay MCZ, which will be published in due course. The remaining M&CPs are reviewed annually (in February/March) but are no longer formally reported on unless specified trigger points are exceeded. An audit trail is maintained for these trigger point assessments. The remaining M&CPs are netting vs shad (Severn Estuary SAC), netting vs shad (Plymouth Sound and Estuaries SAC), and potting vs seagrass (Plymouth Sound and Estuaries SAC).

23**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.

Report:

All data on the vessels operating in the commercial dive fishery during July, August and September will be collated at the end of the season, including IVMS data, Catch app data, sales notes, and landings data. Analysis and reporting will then take place by February 2024. Detailed research on the timing of scallop spawning in the District is currently being undertaken, to provide further evidence to the report on scallop spawning published in May 2023. Since sampling began in late March 2023, 14 samples (each of 30 scallops from Torbay) have been processed.

24**Fisheries Management Plans (FMPs)****KG**

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 IFCAs have received additional funding from Defra to undertake work to support the development and implementation of national Tranche 1 and Tranche 2 FMPs.

Report:

D&S IFCA has reviewed all the consultation documentation associated with the five front-runner FMPS that are relevant to the D&S IFCA District. This involved thorough review of the FMP itself together with the Evidence statement and fisheries data, research requirements and Strategic Environmental Assessments. Officers have written responses on the Bass FMP, Whelk FMP, King Scallop FMP, Crab and Lobster FMP and Channel Non-quota Species FMP frontrunner FMPs and has shared these with Members of the B&PSC for comment. Responses will be submitted to Defra by 1st October 2023.

25**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.

Report:

Officers have surveyed the cockle beds and three out of the usual five mussel beds on the Taw-Torridge. Officers have also identified and surveyed a new area of mussel that had not previously been surveyed. Logistical constraints in accessing mid-channel beds (Pulleys and Sprat Ridge) mean that Officers will be working with a drone operator to undertake an aerial survey of the remaining beds, scheduled for the end of September 2023.

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.

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.

26**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.

Report:

D&S IFCA is organising a meeting together with the MMO for Monday 30th October 2023 as joint chair of the Inshore Potting Agreement Committee meeting. Updates at the meeting will include any fishery infringements in the IPA, rollout of the REM trials in the D&S IFCA's District and management of the Skerries Bank and Surrounds MCZ and Start Point to Plymouth Sound and Eddystone SAC which co-locate with the IPA areas. Minutes from last year's meeting will be shared and minutes of this meeting will be taken. Any changes agreed by the IPA Committee to the chart of the IPA areas will be mapped using GIS and disseminated to permits holders and used to inform the MMO licence variations.

27**Exemption Authorisations**

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

Report:

Officers assess and process exemption requests as required and within 60 days of receipt. Where the proposed activity involves a gear-feature interaction within a protected area, the necessary protected site assessments are carried out and sent to NE for formal advice before the exemption is authorised. D&S IFCA's website is updated to reflect all current and ongoing exemptions. Ten authorisations have been issued since the beginning of April 2023. A table of Exemptions/Authorisations can be viewed on D&S IFCA's website - <https://www.devonandsevernifca.gov.uk/Enforcement-Legislation/Exemptions-to-Byelaws>

28**Trialling New Technologies****KG**

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.

Report:

This project was expected to start in April but for various reasons has not progressed as quickly as first envisaged. Five vessel owners have volunteered to be part of the second phase of the trials and their vessels will join the vessel that was involved in the trials since September 2021. It is hoped that the cameras and gear in gear out sensors will be fitted in the coming weeks ahead of a trial that is expected to last up to six months. The vessels involved in the second phase of the trial include, otter trawlers, beam trawlers and scallop dredging vessels. The varying size of the vessels and the different fishing methods will help to demonstrate the applicability of the technology across all demersal towed gears. Work has not begun extending the trial to potting vessels.

29

Crustacea Research (1)

KG

To gather data on crustacean catches, fishing effort and gear used and to determine the seasonality of egg bearing of lobsters.

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.

Report:

Officers have undertaken lobster surveys regularly throughout the summer, on board several fishing boats operating in the North and South of the District. A total of **16** surveys have been undertaken at time of writing (8th September 2023). Morphometric data have been collected on carapace length, sex, abdomen width and claw size and, for those lobsters that are egg bearing, the condition and developmental stage of the eggs has been recorded. All data collected have been inputted in spreadsheets for analysis later in the year.

30

Crustacea Research (2)

KG

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.

Report:

D&S IFCA has been involved in the project this year and undertook interviews to recruit a potential Research Assistant (RA) that will be funded by the Fisher Industry Science Partnership (FISP) project. Unfortunately, the selected candidate was unable to take up the post. Recruitment for the RA will recommence in December 2023 to ensure that a RA is in place to commence the research throughout the 2024 season. Durometers have been purchased. These are the tools that will be used to test the hardness of the shell of brown crab. Officers together with the Executive Officer of the South Devon and Channel Shellfishermen visited the Blue Sea Company to trial the durometers on crabs that were about to be processed. They appeared to work well and Bangor University (who are lead on the Project) are developing some weights that can be fitted to the durometer to ensure consistency in the pressure applied to the shell. This is an on-going workstream for 2023 and 2024 and results will feed into the development of early interventions for the Crab and Lobster FMP.

31

Crustacea Research (3)

KG

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.

Report:

Officers have been gathering data on lobster catches whilst on-board fishing vessels as part of Crustacea Research (1). Unfortunately, due to the failure to recruit the FISP funded Research Assistant early in 2023, the gathering of data for crab catches, landings and activity has been pushed back until 2024. The gathering of the crab catch data on board fishing vessel will be combined with testing the use of durometers to measure the hardness of the shell of brown crab so that Officers use their time on board fishing vessel to gather as much information as possible.

32

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.

Report:

In 2022–2023, Officers published a call for information on the Skerries Bank Angling Zone. All responses were reviewed, and a consultation report published in April 2023. The surveys to date have identified a greater need to be able to accurately determine the use of the site and the seasonality of activity within the site. It is envisaged that the wider (national) rollout of iVMS devices to netting vessels will provide this opportunity. A long-term plan will then be developed.

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.

33

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.

Report:

The Annual Plan FY 2024 - 2025 will be published on the website by 31st March 2024. It is anticipated that it will be the same structure and presentational design as the Annual Plan for FY 2023 - 2024.

34

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.

Report:

The official Annual Report FY 2022 - 2023 was published at the beginning of this financial year and sent to the Secretary of State. This six-month report for FY 2023 - 2024 will help officers prepare the Annual Report for FY 2023 - 2024 that will be presented to Authority Members in March 2024.

35

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.

Report:

All Officers continue to report hours worked against identified workstreams and those detailed in the Annual Plan 2023/2024.

36

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.

Report:

The Chair wrote to the Secretary of State on 6th September setting out the financial crisis that D&S IFCA is in. Defra has not confirmed whether it has engaged with the Local Authorities as set out in the letter to the Chair, dated 19th May 2023.

37

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.

Report:

All Officers have undertaken personal development plan review and appraisals this year. The plans have highlighted where training is required. Environment Officers have undertaken additional R statistics training to increase their capability in analysing data. A new Assessment method for appraisals has been introduced and used for the Senior Management Team. This is based on the newly updated Job profiles. It is envisaged that this new approach for the appraisals will be rolled out for all Officers.

38

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.

Report:

A report summarising the outcomes of the job evaluation was presented to Members at the AGM on 15th June 2023. Following Members' agreement at the meeting, a further e officers' paper has been developed with the Authority's Governance Working Group and will be presented to the Members at the September meeting.

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.

39

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.

Report:

Authority meetings have taken place this financial year on 15th June 2023 as well as the most recent meeting 21st September 2023. All information other than Part 2 information is published on the website – Meetings tab, Resource Library & Members Area. Draft minutes that have been initially reviewed by Members are also published, along with minutes that have been approved at the following meeting.

There has been one B&PSC meeting this financial year – 31st August 2023. All papers and reports for B&PSC are published in the same way as the Authority papers. It is the same process for minutes of the B&PSC meetings as it is for the Authority meeting minutes with both draft minutes and approved minutes being accessible to the public.

40

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.

Report:

A mixture of in person and virtual meetings is now in place. On occasions the monthly staff meeting for Officers has been in person. Virtual meetings continue to provide flexibility and have been used for team meetings and also working group meetings that have included Members of the Authority. There has been a virtual meeting of the Governance Working Group and pre-meetings (preparation for formal meetings) involving the Chair, Vice Chair and the Chair of the B&PSC.

Virtual meetings have been of use to help prepare the Officer papers for the formal meetings.

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.

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.

41

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.

Report:

A range of research planning has been undertaken, including for intertidal mollusc surveys (item 25), on-board crustacea surveys (items 29 & 30) and scallop spawning research (item 23). Additional survey planning was carried out for a drop-down video (DDV) and still camera survey in the Start Point to Plymouth Sound and Eddystone (SPPSE) Special Area of Conservation (SAC). This survey is to investigate the location and quality of the coarse sediment in the area. It will also be used to ground truth some of the most recent habitat maps provided by NE for the rock feature. Cornwall IFCA completed 12 of the survey sites with the DDV and still camera on 24th August 2023, with further survey dates planned for the end of September 2023. Officers have also contributed to planning of a PhD research programme to fulfil evidence needs on essential fish habitat; this work (led by the University of Plymouth) will commence in October 2023 and will focus largely on the Severn Estuary. Reactive research planning has also been undertaken for emerging research needs such as linking iVMS and landings data to demonstrate the economic importance of specific areas to the inshore fleet.

42

Research Reporting

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

Report:

Additions to the Sections H (Research) of the website Resource Library since 1st April include:

- Understanding Mortality of European Sea Bass (*Dicentrarchus labrax*) in Small-Scale Inshore Netting
- Supplementary data for above report (Aug 2023).
- Devon Avon & Otter MCZ Assessments (mixed assessments) & Fishing Activity Reports.
- Timing of King Scallop Spawning in D&S IFCA's District (April 2023)
- Skerries Bank Angling Zone – Call for Information (2022) - Consultation Response (published April 2023)

43

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.

Report:

A virtual TAG meeting was attended in May 2023. The MMO gave an overview of their proposed MPA management progress project. AIFCA gave an update on the mNCEA programme (Marine Natural Capital and Ecosystem Assessment). Cefas gave an update on their One Health Project and some IFCA's gave updates on various projects including permitting systems.

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.

A strategic research plan that contributes to greater understanding of the marine environment and delivery of cost-effective management of sea fisheries resources.

44

Standard Operating Procedures

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

Report:

Officers continue to review and develop SOPs as and when required. D&S IFCA fed into a national inventory of all IFCA's Health and Safety policies, procedures, and SOPs. Risk assessments continue to be reviewed when necessary and a new accident reporting procedure has been developed. All Health and Safety policies, procedures and risk assessments are shared with Officers and are available on the Members part of the website so are accessible to all officers in the field. The IAuditor system is used to undertake vessel checks, vehicle checks and accident, incident and near misses reporting.

45

MEDIN

To collect research/ survey meta data and upload it to the Marine Environmental Data and Information Network (MEDIN) using nationally agreed formats.

Report:

Metadata are uploaded to MEDIN during the reporting phase of research and will be carried out as appropriate for relevant surveys.

46

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.

Report:

Officers have engaged with researchers and students from academic institutions, Cefas, Environment Agency and other institutions including third sector organisations, on a range of issues in order to further marine research and evidence gathering. For example, as outlined in item 42, Officers have contributed to planning of a PhD research programme to fulfil evidence needs on essential fish habitat. Officers are also planning a workshop day for students from the University of Plymouth, to be held in November 2023, which outlines the work of D&S IFCA.

47

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.

Report:

Officers use a wide range of evidence in their work; all reports list the research papers and other evidence sources used.