

Approving D&S IFCA's Annual Plan for 2023/2024

Officers' Recommendation

That the Annual Plan 2023/2024, subject to any changes in workstreams identified by Members at the Authority meeting, is finalised, published, and sent to the Secretary of State.

Background

As specified in S.177 of the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009, before the beginning of each financial year D&S IFCA must make and publish a plan setting out the Authority's main objectives and priorities for the year and send the Annual Plan to the Secretary of State.

Although the Annual Plan, as presented at the Authority meeting (Agenda Item 9 – Annex A), is at an advanced state, there is the opportunity for Members to provide feedback and suggest changes to planned work for 2023/2024, before it is finalised.

Considerations

Officers' have recognised that the Annual Plan is a form of communication and is an opportunity for the Authority to demonstrate the range of work that is being undertaken to meet its Statutory Duties. Therefore, Officers have worked to improve the presentation of the Annual Plan as compared to previous editions.

The Annual Plan sets out new workstreams for 2023/2024, on-going work from the previous financial year and the range of tasks required to meet functional deliverables, set out as Success Criteria. It is the view of Officers that the content of the Annual Plan 2023/2024 reflects the tasks that are of most importance to deliver or progress over the next twelve months.

New Expectations

In addition to new burdens funding, Defra has provided D&S IFCA with additional short-term funding of £150,000 (per year) as part of the Government's 2021 Spending Review. Over 60% of D&S IFCA's funding is now from Central Government. The additional funding is intended to provide D&S IFCA with financial support so the organisation can support the delivery of three key national workstreams:

- Fisheries Management Plans (FMPs) development and delivery;
- Marine Spatial Prioritisation programme;
- Completion of all Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) assessments and the implementation of necessary management measures for all MPAs.

D&S IFCA's Officers are already supporting these workstreams and the Annual Plan 2023/2024 sets out the additional work required to deliver Defra's expectations. However; D&S IFCA will need to deliver this additional work with its existing staff resources (thirteen full time and two part-time Officers).

Omissions from the Annual Plan

D&S IFCA is not sufficiently resourced to meet all its Statutory Duties. The necessity to prioritise the delivery of national workstreams further restricts D&S IFCA's ability to address issues that are of concern to our Authority Members, local fishers, conservation groups and the wider public.

The 2023-24 Annual Plan does not include several workstreams that will remain as longer-term objectives. Workstreams excluded from the 2023/2024 Annual Plan include the following:

- In 2019, the Byelaw & Permitting Sub-Committee concluded that a new district wide **Handworking Permit Byelaw** should be developed. Further work, that included consultation, identified challenges relating to the structure and content of the Byelaw (and Permits) to meet objectives and balance the needs of different users. Due to the prioritisation of other byelaw related work, the workstream has not progressed since 2021.
- Although the Netting Permit Conditions (the management measures) will be reviewed in 2023/2024, the overarching **Netting Permit Byelaw** will not be reviewed. The existing framework that the Netting Permit Byelaw provides must therefore accommodate any potential changes in management. Elements set in the Byelaw such as fees for a Permit or the advantages associated with extending the scope of Exemptions therefore cannot be addressed this year.
- Both the **Potting Permit Byelaw** and the **Diving Permit Byelaw**, both introduced in 2015, will not be reviewed in 2023/2024 with a view to their re-making. In addition, there will be no development of a potential Hook and Line Permit Byelaw that would manage angling activity.
- The Annual Plan 2023/2024 does not include a review of the **Potting Permit Conditions**. However, there may be a need to review these if there are outcomes from the implementation of the Crab and Lobster FMP, and further concerns relating to crustacea stock status and effort on the stocks escalate. If it becomes necessary to review the Potting Permit Conditions, another workstream under the Annual Plan 2023/2024 will need to be deferred.
- The **mussel stock assessments** on the Teign and Exe Estuaries have, in recent years, been undertaken annually. Officers have made a decision to defer this year's work to 2024/2025, to provide enough time for Officers to focus on crustacea related research that has taken primacy. Therefore, they will not be undertaken in 2023/2024.

National Success Criteria

The 2023/2024 Annual Plan provides readers with detail about specific tasks, but also sets out the more functional, often repeating types of work, that must be continually delivered to meet nationally agreed IFCA success criteria and specific outcomes relating to that success criteria. Throughout the document Officers have highlighted the connection between different work being undertaken and the success criteria.

Success Criteria 1:

IFCAs are recognised and heard, whilst working in partnership and engaging with stakeholders.

Success Criteria 2:

IFCAs implement a fair, effective and proportionate enforcement regime.

Success Criteria 3:

IFCAs use evidence based and appropriate measures to manage the sustainable exploitation of sea fisheries resources and deliver marine environmental protection within their districts.

Success Criteria 4:

IFCAs have appropriate governance in place and staff are trained and professional.

Success Criteria 5:

IFCAs make the best use of evidence to deliver their objectives.

Next Stages

Subject to approval of Members, Officers can make changes to the Annual Plan 2023/2024 to recognise the views and feedback from Members. Following this, the Annual Plan will be finalised, marked electronically as the Annual Plan 2023/2024, published, and sent to Defra.

Background Papers

- Authority meeting minutes (D&S IFCA's Website Resource Library)
- D&S IFCA Annual Report 2022-23
- National Success Criteria

End.