

AIFCA Chief Officer's Report

Fisheries Management Plan Programme Board

The Chief Officer represented the AIFCA on the Fisheries Management Plan Programme Board. In the lead up to the publication on the consultation of the draft front runner FMPs the board managed the programme.

Highly Protected Marine Areas Programme Board and working groups

The Chief Officer represented the AIFCA on the Highly Protected Marine Areas programme board and associated working groups. The Programme Board is developing proposals to present to Ministers on future options and the working groups developing management proposals (which are currently in consultation) for the existing HPMAs.

Premiam

On the 14th June 2023 the Chief Officer represented the AIFCA at the Annual PREMIAM Steering Group. PREMIAM is concerned with Pollution Response in Emergencies: Marine Impact Assessment and Monitoring.

Accidental spills of oil and chemicals into the marine environment have the potential to cause substantial harm to the marine and coastal resources that many in society use and enjoy. Great improvements to ship safety and training have been made but the increased volumes of hazardous and noxious substances (HNS) transported by sea mean that future spills from shipping accidents and other sources are inevitable. In the UK there are well established procedures for search and rescue, salvage, chemical and oil spill cleanup, and environmental impacts advice covered in documents such as the National Contingency Plan. BUT - historically there were no established expert guidelines in the UK for post-incident monitoring and impact assessment nor, indeed, were there a fully co-ordinated mechanism for overseeing the practical aspects of the programme (e.g., survey design, sampling, analysis, interpretation etc.) as an integral part of the emergency response.

The PREMIAM programme has brought together 22 government departments and agencies from across the UK with an interest in marine spill response and the protection of the marine environment. Expert guidance and integrated decision making, and co-ordination processes have already been developed and the Premiam partners are committed to continue to work together to apply best practice in terms of science and co-ordination to post spill monitoring and impact assessment.

Marine Net Gain – Policy Advisory Group

Defra published the [summary of responses](#) to the consultation on the high level principles of Marine Net Gain on 21 March this year. Defra are now preparing the government response which they expect to issue in the summer. This will “herald the beginning of detailed policy development for implementation which Defra want to take forward with stakeholders”. To support this Defra have relaunched the Policy Advisory Group (PAG) and invited the AIFCA to participate in the group.

The group's remit will be to support policy development, receive updates and to understand progress with related projects on marine net gain.

POSTNote summarising the network of Marine Protected Areas and its components, and the designation of Highly Protected Marine Areas in English inshore and offshore waters.

The AIFCA contributed to a UK parliament POSTNote. POSTNotes are based on literature reviews and interviews with a range of stakeholders and are externally peer-reviewed. The POSTNote draws on publications from the chief officer and the AIFCA website, amongst a number of other leading experts. The POSTNote can be found [HERE](#) and provides a useful primer on marine protected areas in England and is a useful source of reference information.

FISP projects Award

The University of Plymouth Enterprise Ltd has been awarded £530,790 funding for a technology-enabled, industry co-developed approach to understand early juvenile fish habitat requirements. The partnership includes The Angling Trust, Association of Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authorities, Bass Anglers Sportfishing Society, Institute of Fisheries Management, National Mullet Club, Southern Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority

The project will last 22 months and aims to apply camera technology supporting public participation in collection of data on how fish use coastal and estuarine habitats at their earliest juvenile stage. To achieve this the project will deploy a 'smart' underwater camera system, capable of seeing the smallest juvenile life-stages of fish, in a range of inshore habitats. We will develop an interactive web-portal to support public participation in video analysis, and work with recreational anglers to measure species abundance and size of fish living in different habitat types. The expected outcome is that the data and approach developed will fill important knowledge gaps about the essential habitats required by populations of fished species. This information will bring benefits to fisheries by supporting policy decisions and management actions that make fisheries more sustainable through broader consideration of the ecosystems on which exploited populations depend. The project will also be a vehicle for the fishing industry, scientists and managers to work together to devise effective management, helping give the industry a voice and stake in management processes.

Coastal health, livelihoods, and environment: a data and analytical framework for long-term resilience, sustainability, and growth

The Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs led "Coastal health, livelihoods, and environment: a data and analytical framework for long-term resilience, sustainability, and growth" bid, submitted to the Shared Outcomes Fund, has been successful with securing funding.

The aim of the programme is to determine a minimum but sufficiently comprehensive ongoing coastal monitoring framework that can operate routinely and country-wide after the pilot programme period, resulting in the ability to: 1. Ensure government responds quickly, effectively, and robustly to adverse marine events (for example mass mortalities of marine animals and impacts of pollution and microbiological contamination effects on human health) to minimise ecological and economic damage, communicating in a consistent 'one government' manner to stakeholders. 2. Improve our understanding of the health of the coastal ecosystem to: a. Better predict adverse events and understand multi-factorial or gradual processes to proactively protect coastal communities. b. Put in place effective management and remediation measures to improve environmental quality to reduce the likelihood of adverse events to minimise the impact to coastal communities.

The expected increase and diversification of pressures on England's coasts necessitate a new framework for predicting, managing, and mitigating their adverse effects to promote resilience and growth in all coastal regions. While there are effective and efficient mechanisms for responding to clearly defined and discrete events - such as chemical spillages and detection of recognised pathogens – there is currently: 1. A lack of coordination across government Departments to enable necessary collection, curation, and analysis of the necessary data to

understand and respond to more complex and/or long-term events (e.g., the north east coast crustacean mortalities), and 2. Unclear responsibilities across Departments: a clear internal framework is required for proactive monitoring and reactive response. Therefore, new transformative approaches are required.

The Cockle FMP

In accordance with the direction provided by the members the AIFCA entered into contract with Defra for delivery of the cockle FMP. The work associated with the contracting required substantive changes to the delivery plan, following revised timelines which compress the period of time for the delivery of the project.

The AIFCA FMP Review Project

The Chief Officer worked with the team in Kent and Essex IFCA to implement the AIFCA FMP review project. The project brings together the views of the members of the IFCA's as well as providing a space through which the IFCA's can collaborate on the implementation of the FMPs.

Newcastle University Project

The Chief Officer worked with Dr Coulthard on the AIFCA led theory of change programme. Dr Coulthard has over the summer met over 50% of the IFCA's and is developing a unique insight, through the lens of social science, on the role of IFCA's. The work will be a very important step in ensuring that the IFCA stories are told and that the IFCA's are recognised and heard.