

Devon and Severn IFCA News

University academic and maritime law expert elected to key role in protection of marine environment

Professor Mike Williams elected as Chair of D&S IFCA



On 13th June 2019, Professor Mike Williams was elected as Chair of D&S IFCA and replaces outgoing Chair Elaine Hayes who stepped down.

Appointed as a General Member in November 2010 when IFCA's were formed by the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009, Professor Williams has served as Vice-Chair since June 2016 and since last year has been Chair of the [Byelaw and Permitting Sub-Committee](#). He has also sat on the Authority's Finance and General-Purpose Sub-Committee.

Professor Williams' expertise is in seabed and foreshore law, and he has been influential in pioneering a number of new ways of working, including the development of activity-based permit byelaws that are used to manage different fishing activities in the D&S IFCA District.

The Authority has also led the way in the use of an inshore vessel monitoring system (I-VMS), making it a requirement for all fishing vessels using trawls or scallop dredges. The system reports the position, speed and course of the vessel up to every three minutes for the entire time the vessels are at sea. This means the Authority can see when a vessel is operating in any of the 22 Marine Protected Areas (MPA) – in their district and is a significant step in supporting the protection 1914km² of nationally and internally important habitat.

Mat Mander, D&S IFCA's Acting Chief Officer, paid tribute to Professor Williams and said members had been keen to see him take the top job. He said:

"Mike has been a key member of the IFCA for eight years, and because of his legal background he brings a unique set of skills to the organisation. Both the byelaw system and

the I-VMS are key innovations that are having a real influence on the development of inshore fisheries management practices going forward, and Mike has been really integral to both. He is always keen to test and explore opportunities for innovative working, something that will stand us in good stead to meet future challenges.

“Given his expertise, Mike was the obvious choice to take over as Chair. His predecessor Elaine Hayes developed us into, as we would say, one of the leading IFCAs, and members felt Mike would be the perfect person to continue this work.”

Professor Williams himself said:

“I think the job is what you make it. The marine space has given me a professional career, but also my wife and I have boated and dived off the coast of the South West for decades. I suppose you could say I wanted to give something back for all those decades of pleasure. IFCAs are there to balance the socioeconomic benefits of exploiting the fishery with the need to protect it, so our work is crucial for the future economies of places like Plymouth and Brixham, and for the marine environment. The IFCA works very closely with the University, reflecting that synergy between the research, regulation and industry. It’s so important that what we do is evidence based, and that’s where the University comes in.”

You can read the original news article created by Toby Leigh, Media and Communications Officer along with other news items produced by the University of Plymouth by clicking [here](#).

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