

Devon and Severn Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority

Quarterly Report for the Period Ending May 2019

Deputy Chief Officer Sarah Clark

General Situation

An IFCA Performance Evaluation exercise has been undertaken by consultants ABPmer on behalf of Defra. Part of the evaluation involved choosing certain IFCAs as case studies. This process involved desk-based research to gather information for all IFCAs on a range of metrics; to classify each IFCA according to their level of activity (with activity rated as high, medium or low) against each metric to differentiate between IFCAs; to group IFCAs which showed similar levels of activity for particular metrics; and selection of one IFCA from each group to use as a case study. D&S IFCA has been selected as a case study along with Eastern IFCA, North Western IFCA and Cornwall IFCA. The case studies were selected with the aim of enabling evaluation of performance and highlight the diverse nature of these IFCAs by considering factors such as geographical spread, range of fishers, cross border issues, IFCA to IFCA interactions and also to compare and contrast IFCAs with similar sea areas, such as D&S IFCA and Eastern IFCA.

Part of the D&S IFCA's review also included a focus group meeting senior IFCA Officers and Authority members, which took place in May and allowed ABPmer to get an understanding of their views on D&S IFCA's performance, functions, achievements and challenges faced. The final meeting of wider stakeholders has been arranged for 30th May 2019. ABPmer expect to deliver their report to Defra in July 2019. The report will be a summary of performance by IFCAs but will not make recommendations.

A working group, consisting of Chief (and Acting Chief) Officers of D&S IFCA, Eastern IFCA, Cornwall IFCA, the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Association of IFCAs (AIFCA), has been drafting recommendations on potential changes to the role and function of the AIFCA and a report, setting out these recommendations, will be submitted to the AIFCA in June 2019.

D&S IFCA has worked with Peninsula to develop a Health and Safety contract to evaluate and ensure D&S IFCA's policies and protocols are up to date and cover all aspects of the IFCA's work.

A meeting was held with DCC's Communication Support Team (Newscentre) following the termination of the Grassroots' contract. DCC's Communication team will conduct a more in-depth analysis of the current D&S IFCA's communications and its key aims going forward.

The IFCAs' Chief Officers' Group (COG) has nominated the Acting Chief Officer Mat Mander to review the policy relating to data sharing with other relevant organisations, in particular the MMO. Data sharing is imperative to the statutory work and functions of these organisations and this review aims to make this more efficient and swifter.

D&S IFCA is currently looking at the feasibility of working in partnership with the Environment Agency (EA) in North Devon to utilise the EA's RIB stationed at Alverdiscott as an alternative to keeping the FPV Enforcer.

Two new officers have been recruited to the IFCA and started work this quarter. Oliver Thomas has taken over as Environment Officer to cover Katherine Stephenson's maternity leave, and Callum Vale has been employed as an Enforcement Officer, completing the Enforcement team.

This quarter has been another busy one. There have been changes to the Environment team. Katherine Stephenson is now on maternity leave, having left at the end of April and her cover for the year is Oliver Thomas, who was successful at interview in March 2019. Ollie has many skills to bring to the work of the Environment Team as he previously worked as a Scientific Fisheries Observer with the Falkland Islands Fisheries Department and has studied seagrass beds in the South Arran MPA, as part of his MSc in Marine Resource Development and Protection at Herriot Watt University.

Survey work has continued with juvenile sole surveys being undertaken on the Severn Estuary in March and mussels stock assessment surveys on the Taw Torridge Estuary taking place in May. All the Hand Working (crab-tiling, bait digging and hand gathering) MPA assessments were completed this quarter and sent to Natural England for formal Advice. This advice has been received and has been used to inform the Byelaw and Permitting Sub-Committee (B&PSC) through its discussions on the development of a Hard Working Byelaw. D&S IFCA's Senior Environment Officer, Libby West, has been heavily involved in the drafting of responses to the Environment Agency (EA) and EDF consultations relating to removal of the requirement for Hinkley Point C to have Acoustic Fish Deterrents. Work is also gaining pace in the development of a research plan to fill the gaps in knowledge of the biology and ecology of the spiny lobster (or crawfish), to help inform future management of the species.

Finfish Research and Management

Bass

A supervisory meeting of the seabass PhD was attended where timeframes and priorities were agreed for the remainder of the project. All fieldwork for the PhD is now complete, with the exception of periodic downloads of data from the acoustic receiver arrays in the three estuaries.

The Cefas-led Bass Conservation UK project held a meeting to discuss the findings of the workshop held in 2018 and the online questionnaire survey. The outputs from these were used to identify local research priorities for the next stage of the project. It is hoped that 50 data storage tags will be released on bass in south Devon in the next quarter and 50 from bass in north Devon later in 2019.

Herring

Initial findings from the Bristol Channel Herring project are due out in late May 2019. At the time of writing Swansea University has confirmed that herring do appear to be spawning locally at Minehead and Clovelly and genetic work should be able to determine whether or not these fish are a separate population to those caught at other locations in the Bristol Channel, English Channel and Celtic Sea. The Blue Marine Foundation and Plymouth University, with input from D&S IFCA officers, are planning the next part of the project which aims to identify the precise locations of spawning habitats using a combination of sidescan sonar, drop-down camera, sonar camera and sediment grabs. This project is part of the North Devon Marine Pioneer programme and originated from local fishermen's knowledge of local spawning behaviour which was not documented anywhere.

Essential Fish Habitat

D&S IFCA's officers took part in a workshop on Essential Fish Habitat (EFH) for third year students studying fish and fisheries at Plymouth University. Officers presented on the work of the IFCA focussing on how research informs local fisheries management and then helped to facilitate a session on how best to define and measure EFH.

Another of the intertidal flat fish surveys was carried out at Weston-Super-Mare and Burnham, on the Severn Estuary in March. This is carried out using a 1.5m Riley push net to sample species found in the intertidal, particularly looking at juvenile sole. This work is being carried out in partnership with Plymouth University.

Inshore Fish Monitoring Workshop

A lack of data on the distribution of fish in inshore areas is apparent in many areas of marine management. Generally, UK and international surveys which form part of stock assessments do not take place in waters shallower than 20m. Natural England has bid for funds to undertake a pilot project in the South West to build on and extend the current level of inshore and estuarine monitoring, with a focus on different habitat types. A workshop to review the proposed sampling regime was attended, with good discussion on how best to achieve the necessary spatial and temporal coverage.

Wrasse

Further analysis of the Live Wrasse Fishery data collected during 2018 is now complete and the results have been presented to the B&PSC. A meeting was held with the Wrasse fishermen and the Agent for the Salmon Farms to discuss the results of the data collection from 2018 and discuss the forthcoming fishery for 2019. Initial survey planning for the Live Wrasse Fishery has been completed ready for when the fishery opens in July.

Shellfish Research and Management

Mussels

The annual mussel survey on the Taw-Torridge Estuary SSSI commenced over the spring tide in mid-May. This survey is quite extensive and labour intensive and takes five/six days of Environment Team's time and also involves volunteers and Natural England taking part to assist. The beds surveyed in the Taw Torridge Estuary are Coolstone; Life Boat Slip; Sprat Ridge; Pulleys and Yelland. Results of this survey will inform the stock assessment of mussels on the Estuary and will record mussel extent, coverage and biomass. The stock assessment will be compared to previous years to determine if there has been a decline or incline in mussel stock. This will inform the level of commercial removal of mussels from the beds.

Spiny Lobster or Crawfish

D&S IFCA helped organise and chair a crawfish workshop at Plymouth University, together with Isles of Scilly IFCA and Plymouth University. There have been reports by divers and fishers that crawfish numbers are increasing in the South West, and in particular, South Devon, where very few crawfish have been seen since the 1980s until a few years ago. The workshop was used to determine the current gaps in knowledge of crawfish and discuss the potential research programmes and management options. The workshop was well attended by fishers from Devon and Cornwall, Universities of Plymouth and Exeter, NE, MMO, Defra, Cefas, SW IFCA's, Seasearch divers and the Marine Conservation Society. This was an extremely useful and successful workshop and a plan is being developed to work in

collaboration with the SW IFCA's and universities to carry out the research that was highlighted as necessary to help inform management. Working with members of the fishing industry in Devon is key to the success of the planned evidence gathering

A presentation on the data collected to date and the outputs of the workshop was given to the B&PSC at the May meeting. The DCO visited the Isle of Scilly IFCA along with Cornwall IFCA to discuss the protocols for the research work planned and to demonstrate and share the methodology for the tagging of crawfish, genetic sampling and morphometric measurements. The DCO also gave a presentation on crawfish to the South West Marine Ecosystem Conference held in Plymouth in April 2019.

Other Research

Seals

Members of the fishing industry have approached the IFCA and consultants ABPmer regarding their concerns about the interaction of seals in their fishing gear – in nets, traps and pots. Seal numbers in Torbay are on the increase and up to 29 have been seen hauled up on the pontoons in Brixham. The fishers are worried, not only about the loss of landable fish from their fishing gear, but also the possibility of entanglement in fishing gear by the seals. D&S IFCA has liaised with the consultants and fishermen, which resulted in a meeting being held at Brixham with all concerned. The output from this meeting was to trial acoustic seals deterrents on nets in Torbay, which will commence shortly.

Pioneer Programme

D&S IFCA has assisted with bid writing and communication work for the fisheries projects this quarter. Lessons learned are also being drawn up for submission to Defra. Officers have also provided information to Chris Williams of the New Economic Foundation who is undertaking work on behalf of the Marine Pioneer to produce a report outlining the current baseline of the fishery in the Marine Pioneer area, how fishing opportunities are allocated, how fisheries management is funded and to outline different community/ co-management models.

Marine Protected Area

Officers worked together to collate a review of the evidence of the direct and indirect impacts of bait digging for use in Habitat Regulations Assessments for all European Marine Sites in the District. Following Defra's Revised Approach to the management of commercial fisheries in European Marine Sites, further analysis of bait digging and hand working data has now been completed. Activity reports have been produced and the Torbay MCZ assessment has been completed and sent to Natural England. Bait digging HRAs were completed this quarter for all designated features of the European Marine Sites in the District. They were sent to Natural England for formal advice, which has been received, and will help to inform B&PSC in the current discussions around management of hand working activity.

Numerous MCZ assessments have been completed this quarter. The last of these assessments are currently being finalised, along with the Monitoring and Control Plans which accompany some of the assessments. The report for the cuttlefish potting study, which investigated the impacts, which cuttlefish pots may have on seagrass during shooting, hauling, and while on the seabed and also trialled different media attached to the pots as cuttlefish egg-laying media, has been completed. This work feeds into the MCZ assessment for potting in Torbay.

The 'March 2019 Natural England's Marine Data Release' has been loaded into QGIS and filtered so that only layers relating to D&S IFCA's District are shown. Each EUNIS code has been saved as a separate layer. This has been completed for all MPAs in the D&S IFCA's District.

The Salcombe Scallop Fishery operated between 15th December 2018 and 15th March 2019. Five vessels actively participated in the fishery this season and scallop landings' data have been entered and basic analysis has been carried out.

The northern part of Zone 2 of the Inshore Potting Agreement Chart, which lies within the Start Point to Plymouth Sound and Eddystone SAC, was closed in 2014 to demersal fishing vessels, under the precautionary principle, due to the inability to monitor vessel activity and concern about potential impacts to some reef features that lie within that area of the SAC. D&S IFCA has maintained that it would reassess the extent of the area closed to demersal gear and undertake a Habitats Regulation Assessment (HRA) if IVMS was introduced to the mobile gear fleet. With the introduction of IVMS in 2018, all mobile fishing vessels can now be monitored. The areas have been extensively surveyed and the data collected are in the process of being mapped and the HRA work has commenced.

Dispensations

This quarter dispensations have been granted to Cefas and the MBA to undertake their annual beam trawl surveys. A dispensation was also granted for the removal of mussels from the scrubbing piles in the Teign Estuary, which have built up in this area due to the cleaning of mooring pontoons.

Severn Estuary & Bristol Channel Research, Advocacy & Governance

Hinkley Point C

This has been a major work stream this quarter, with the Environment Agency (EA) and EDF consultations relating to removal of the requirement for Hinkley Point C to have Acoustic Fish Deterrents starting. A draft response was submitted to the EA in late April 2019 with further addendums being prepared for later submission. The draft response to EDF energy was also started. Following submission of the draft, a telecon was held with the EA permitting officer and technical specialists about the draft response and D&S IFCA has agreed to submit additional clarification and evidence on two points raised. At the time of writing the EA consultation has been extended indefinitely pending the submission of additional documentation from EDF energy.

A meeting of the D&S IFCA Nuclear Working Group was held in Taunton with discussion on the primary areas of concern from the officers and Authority members and best approach for an IFCA and individual member responses agreed.

With increasing interest from local stakeholders, D&S IFCA has also spoken to a number of individuals and organisations about the IFCA's involvement, role and planned response.

ASERA

This quarter D&S IFCA has completed their review of their Action Plan under the Severn Estuary Management Scheme and presented an overview of recent IFCA work at the Joint Estuaries day in Chepstow.

Aquaculture

Seaweed Farm

The proposer of the trial Seaweed Farm in Start Bay has submitted a Licence application for farm to the MMO. The proposed location of the Seaweed Farm is within an area open to demersal fishing gear and many vessels may be displaced by this proposed location. The DCO reviewed and responded to the proposed seaweed farm in this area and made suggestions of other locations that may cause less conflict and displacement. Further changes to the proposal were submitted to the MMO and passed onto D&S IFCA for comment. There will be a teleconference with all interested parties to discuss this proposal and other options at the end of May.

Policy Development & Input

Input into Defra's sustainable fisheries and ecosystem approach working group has been a major work area this quarter. As well as attending several face-to-face meetings and telecons D&S IFCA's officers prepared a paper looking at integration of fisheries and other marine activities and presented the findings at a two-day conference in London. It is currently thought this group will continue to input into policy development.

D&S IFCA responded to the Iteration 3 consultation for the South West Marine Plan. In particular D&S IFCA is concerned about the lack of a specific displacement policy for fishing and is currently preparing additional information to send to the MMO to evidence the need for an additional policy. D&S IFCA has also requested the separation of policies for fishing and aquaculture within the plan as the two activities have very different spatial and temporal dynamics, impacts and regulatory regimes.

Meetings

A meeting was attended at the National Marine Aquarium in Plymouth, to discuss the feasibility of a scallop hatchery in Plymouth. The aquarium has been conducting work to create a successful scallop hatchery, the next step for them was to ensure the hatchery would be feasible and have wide ranging uses. Various industries with an interest in scallop fisheries were brought together at the meeting, giving the opportunity for the aquarium to present their findings so far and get ideas of use of the scallop hatchery output.

The most recent Project UK Fisheries Improvements (PUKFI) meeting for the Channel dredge scallop Fisheries Improvement Plan (FIP) was intended. This meeting summarised the progress of the group and highlighted what stage the group was in the FIP process, moving into year three. The work that has been completed and the future targets were discussed.

A meeting was attended at Brighton University to discuss projects undertaken by the university and Sussex IFCA looking to support sustainable cuttlefish stocks. The projects included assessing the survival rate and egg quality under laboratory conditions, and the use of artificial media on the pots to make the removal of cuttle eggs easier and to enhance the chance of survivability. Academics, fishers, Defra, Cefas, NE, IFCA's and NGOs were present at the meeting and there were many useful discussions regarding the current state of the inshore and offshore fisheries and possible management solutions.

The South West Marine Ecosystem conference, held at Plymouth university, was attended by two of the Environment Team, together with the DCO, who was presenting. This conference is not only interesting and informative, it is a good opportunity for networking.

The Lundy Marine Protected Area Advisory Group and Lundy Management Forum were attended this quarter. All current and future projects for the MPA and Lundy Island were discussed at these meetings with several different stakeholders.

The annual TAG conference which was held in Lancaster was attended and a presentation was given on the work being carried out on the Live Wrasse Fishery. A meeting hosted by CEFAS in Weymouth was attended. The meeting was held to bring together SIFCA, D&S IFCA, CIFCA, CEFAS, a representative fisher and a representative from one of the salmon farms who all work on wrasse. Presentations were given by each individual on the current work being carried out and discussions were had on any issues or concerns about the Live Wrasse Fishery. A meeting with the Live Wrasse fishers working in the D&S IFCA's District took place in Plymouth. The meeting was held in order to discuss issues with the completion of statutory paperwork and give the fishers an opportunity to raise any concerns prior to them starting fishing in the D&S IFCA's District. Fishers have indicated that they may start to rod and line for wrasse in the Plymouth Sound.

The 50th Annual SAGB Conference was held at Fishmongers Hall and was attended by the DCO. There were interesting talks, including one from the Fisheries Minister, and it provided a fantastic opportunity to network and find out what workstreams other agencies and sector members are currently involved in.

Training / Personal Development

Two days of training in Quantum Geographical Information Systems (QGIS) were undertaken as part of the IFCA's move to open access (free) software for data analysis. Andrew Harfoot from Southampton University came to the IFCA offices to give two days of training in QGIS. Mapping techniques which are currently used in MapInfo were taught in QGIS as this is the software package IFCA will be moving towards in the future.

Training on how to implement the South Marine Plan has been completed in order to gain further insight into what the plan involves and how it will affect the work currently being carried out by D&S IFCA. Implementation training was given by the MMO to demonstrate how D&S IFCA will need to consider the South and South West Marine Plans in the future.

Officers completed training courses to fulfil their STCW 95.

The Annual Reviews of Environment Team Personal Development Plans commenced this quarter. The Senior Environment Officer help input into the process and the final interviews will be completed by the end of May.

Enforcement

Support was given to the Enforcement Team to carry out three patrols this quarter. This included a patrol in Plymouth Sound for the wrasse fishery and to map pots on or near seagrass beds in the Sound. The pots on seagrass aspect of the patrol was one of the six patrols carried out yearly as part of a Monitoring and Control Plan. There were no pots on the seagrass during this patrol.

Another patrol was carried out to the east of the district, targeting whelk boats. One vessel was boarded, and whelks were measured to ensure the vessels was complying with the MCRS of 55mm. A dawn patrol was carried out on Bank Holiday Monday, again to the east of the district. After checking the area up to Lyme Regis for vessels, the patrol targeted the Exe and the Teign for any possible bass nursery area offences. A day was spent on bank holiday Monday assisting enforcement officers on a patrol around Budleigh beach targeting a vessel landing undersized crab.

Recruitment

Ffion Blundell started a three-month placement with the IFCA in April. She has been working really hard QA'ing fishing activity data and its historic input into our filing system; analysing cockle data from 2018 surveys and preparing information for input onto the D&S IFCA's website MPA and research pages. Shortlisting and interviews for the maternity cover for Katherine Stephenson who has now left on maternity leave, took place in March. Oliver Thomas has been employed as maternity cover for 1 year and started in May 2019.

Enforcement Overview (Feb – May 2019) Senior Enforcement Officer Gavin Mayhew

General

The first half of this quarter was dominated by the topic of EU Exit, D&S IFCA has been working closely with officers from the Marine Management Organisation (MMO). A number of meetings were attended, and joint patrols undertaken to explore a series of scenarios using the Authority's new patrol asset FPV DAVID ROWE. These patrols have been outside the D&S IFCA's District, in areas between the 6nm and 12 nm limit, where officers conducted boardings on some foreign vessels. The purpose of these was to carry out platform testing of our assets along with an increased presence of fisheries enforcement officers in those sea areas, flying the flag. D&S IFCA's patrol vessels feature on the national asset register and are able to respond to takings from the Joint National Maritime Control Centre (JNMOC). This quarter has seen some periods of settled weather which have allowed a good number of patrols that have extended well beyond our normal areas.

Training

All of the Enforcement team have benefited from 2 days of QGIS training. The first time for some, an opportunity to refresh and improve for others. QGIS is a very important part of the work of the Enforcement team as the software is used for plotting positional data from on board I-VMS devices installed on the Mobile Fishing fleet. These charts are an important aspect of many investigations, not only spatial incursions. Officers from the Environment team have accompanied the Enforcement team on several at sea patrols, made possible by the larger patrol vessel. This has allowed some important familiarisation and training between the teams with the objective of increasing the flexibility of officers. Having more officers able to come to sea, will allow for more patrols.

Enforcement work

During this quarter a total of nine suspected offences have been detected, those investigations will progress during this next quarter. This is despite the loss of one of our Enforcement Officers Adam Walters, who left due to family relocation. Adam's work streams and ongoing investigations have been distributed among the officers, which has added to what was already a high case load.

D&S IFCA Officers held a successful recruitment day for a new Enforcement Officer. On the 20th May Callum Vale joined the Enforcement team. Callum is 23 years old and has a passion to work in this area. He has relocated to within a commutable distance to Brixham as his family home is in Cornwall, however this has not phased him and although it is early days his is progressing very well, and no doubt will be another great addition to the Enforcement team.

A total of 35 patrols have been conducted this quarter with 22 of those being at sea. Predominantly these are intelligence-led targeted patrols, addressing the risks identified through the Tasking and Control Group (TCG) meetings. This process is working well and is continuing to improve and modernise. A small number of these patrols have also had some tasks supporting environmental objectives those being: collecting water and mussel samples from Offshore Shellfish; Environmental DNA (eDNA) water samples to assist a Natural England funded study undertaken by Applied Genomics™; surveying effort levels on areas of seagrass within Plymouth Sound and compliance with the Wrasse Fishery's Voluntary Code of Conduct.

All officers are working on a number of case files with some progressing to prosecution through court. The table below details a number of recent investigations and their status.

Investigations (selected)

Offence date	Offence	Location	Outcome if complete
02/11/18	Trawling within restricted area	Start Bay	Summoned to court
07/11/2018	U/S Lobster, U/S Bass, No Netting permit	Torbay	Court Fine £4882.95
22/11/2018	Dredging with no permit	Salcombe	FAP £250 x 5
13/11/2018	Trawling In closed area	Lyme Bay	FAP £2000 issued
09/10/2018	Dredging in restricted area	Start Bay	Prosecution pending. Information provided to court.
10/12/2018	Non-reporting I-VMS, Spatial incursion.	Plymouth	With Solicitor
14/12/2018	Scallop curfew	Brixham	NFA – Not in public interest
17/01/2019	Cat 1 Diving no permit	Torbay	OWW issued
29/01/2019	Cat 1 Diving permit misuse	Brixham	FAP £250 Paid

25/01/2019	Dredging in restricted area	Salcombe	Being finalised
20/01/2019	Mobile fishing expired permit	Brixham	With Solicitor
14/02/2019	Spider crab less than MCRS	Dartmouth	FAP £500 Issued
20/03/2019	No Mobile Fishing Permit	Lyme Bay	With Solicitor
18/03/2019	Non-Functioning IVMS	Lyme Bay	Ongoing
02/03/2019	Non-Functioning IVMS, No Potting Permit	Lyme Regis	Ongoing
03/04/2019	No Potting permit	Salcombe	Ongoing
03/04/2019	No Potting Permit	Plymouth	Ongoing
24/04/2019	Spatial Incursions	Torbay	Ongoing
30/04/2019	U/S Whelks	Lyme Bay	Ongoing
30/04/2019	U/S Whelks	Lyme Bay	Ongoing

Projects

Officers have been working closely in supporting roles with the MMO, in preparation for EU Exit. The first half of this quarter saw this in some intensity, being involved in weekly conference calls that have brought all the IFCAs and MMO together to better co-ordinate the national assets. These have reduced recently due to uncertainty with the timeline of the process, however the foundations have been laid and as a whole, fishery enforcement is better prepared for whatever may arise.

There have, at last, been some developments and progress with a project which stalled some time ago. D&SIFCA has been working towards providing digitised versions of our spatial management areas to the Mobile Fishing Fleet. Initial discussions between D&S IFCA and Kingfisher/Sea Fish have been built on and progressed to the next level. Kingfisher is currently working to produce a similar product but to include all MPA's nationally. It is hoped that this will align with D&S IFCA's project quite well. Further workshops and meetings are being arranged to progress this project, hopefully to fruition.

Considerations are being given as to the future for FPV ENFORCER. Currently the RIB, although in working order, needs some modernisation to improve reliability. ENFORCER does have a number of intermittent faults with most parts of its electrical system. Options are being explored, due to the age of ENFORCER, the amount of investment required may be

considered too great to be financially viable at this stage. Other options include the potential use of an Environment Agency RIB ENDEAVOR, which is stored in an Environment Agency secure compound in Alverdiscott, North Devon. Having an asset in this part of the district would be very valuable, given the added challenges that are involved with the transportation of an asset from Brixham to that part of the District to conduct a patrol.

The lease period for the Authority's towing vehicle, currently a Ford Ranger, is due to expire at the end of this summer. Officers are now assessing and costing differing options to replace it, these include both leasing and purchase options. Given the nature of our work, a replacement 4-wheel drive will be required, however options are limited due to the requirement to have the maximum towing capacity of 3500kg.

Policy Overview

Principal Policy Officer N. Townsend

The key work streams for the period 25th February to 22nd May 2019 have included the following:

- Creation of officer papers for Authority & B&PSC meetings
- Attending meetings to inform stakeholders & to promote D&S IFCA
- Creation and delivery of multiple consultations related to byelaw working
- Documenting the findings of consultations
- Delivery of internally generated communications & news items
- Publication & Website Management
- Revision and refinement of internal policy documents related to data protection

Byelaw working

There has been two B&PSC meetings since 26th February 2019. As well as the compilation of detailed minutes, a significant amount of other work has been completed following the February meeting and new work is now required as a result of the meeting on 16th May 2019. Minutes are taken of all B&PSC meetings and posted on the website for any member to examine.

Consultation and Documentation

A significant amount of consultation and the documenting of work has been undertaken during this period. Three separate 'Call for Information' exercises have been completed. Specific information was prepared relating to each topic and a Mail Chimp email circular was primarily used to give a wide audience direct notification. The bait digging communication exercise included the creation of a questionnaire.

All consultation working now includes the use of surgery sessions which provide stakeholders with the opportunity to talk to an officer in person about the different consultations. Other initiatives have included the use of on-line survey forms (Google Forms) to help stakeholders engage.

Diving Permit Conditions

The final phase of consultation associated with the mandatory Three-Year Review of the Diving Permit Conditions has now been completed. Several specific items were subjected to consultation including the introduction of additional protective measures for spiny lobster and consideration of a change in the daily bag limit of scallops that can be taken by recreational divers. The findings of the consultation were documented in a supplement report that was presented to and discussed by the B&PSC on 16th May 2019. Several changes to the existing Diving Permit Conditions were agreed and work will now be undertaken to amend the Diving Permit Conditions in due course and re-issue the conditions of use along with new Annexes (Charts).

Potting Permit Conditions

As agreed by the B&PSC, a single condition of the Potting Permit Conditions was subjected to consultation with a view to its removal. The specific condition related to the use of finfish of a specified size (Minimum Conservation reference Size) for use as bait within pots. The existing condition was not considered to harmonize with the 2019 Landing Obligation. The findings of the consultation were documented in a supplement report that was presented to and discussed by the B&PSC on 16th May 2019. Following the decision taken by the B&PSC, the Potting Permit Conditions will now be amended and re-circulated in the near future.

Review of Hand Working Fishing Methods (Bait Digging)

Work related to the review of all defined Hand Working Fishing methods has continued this quarter. Information, including an overview of the method, current management (Voluntary Codes) and a summary of D&S IFCA's research work was assembled within a Mail Chimp circular with the intention of engaging with stakeholders to gather further information and evidence. The four-week engagement process provided a mixed response which was summarised and assembled into a supplement report. The same supplement report also contained a full account (with the use of hyperlinks) of the numerous and relevant Marine Protected Area Assessments undertaken by the Environment team, coupled with the formal advice provided by Natural England.

The supplement report was presented to and discussed by the B&PSC on 16th May. The focus on bait digging is the second of three separate phases of the initial review. Key findings and concerns related to aspects of bait digging were noted and will be re-visited during more formal "Options for Management" discussions later in 2019. The management of some hand working fishing methods has potential to develop into a Byelaw.

Exemptions Byelaw

D&S IFCA must replace an Emergency Byelaw which has been granted an extension by the Secretary of State. The main objective of this Byelaw is to enable D&S IFCA to grant permissions (Exemptions) to a person, persons or organisations to undertake an activity that would otherwise be prohibited by another Byelaw. This would include scientific work that could add to an existing evidence base or contribute to a longer-term data set, potential to explore new fisheries through pilot projects such as aquaculture and allow for other activities such as gear recovery from a Marine Protected Area to be evaluated and monitored. The Authority has recognised that without an Exemptions Byelaw in place there could be an adverse impact

on the Authority's' ability to manage inshore fisheries as the opportunity to gain a better insight or understanding of the marine environment would be more restricted.

A final draft of the Exemptions Byelaw is well underway, with advice being taken from the Byelaw Technical Working Group (on behalf of the B&PSC) regarding the content and formatting used. The required Impact Assessment (consultation version) is also being finalised to accompany the Byelaw during a formal phase of consultation.

Temporary Closure of Shellfish Beds

As agreed by the B&PSC, a temporary closure to the public mussel beds within the Exe and Teign was introduced on 1st May 2019. Communication work has been conducted to inform stakeholders and D&S IFCA has received assistance from contacts regarding the placement of internally produced posters in various locations and access points to the defined sites.

Meetings

On the 1st May the Principal Policy Officer accompanied by Senior Environmental Officer Libby West and Members of the Authority attended a meeting with ABPmer. This group is conducting meetings with various IFCA's as part of an IFCA performance evaluation for Defra. Officers and Members were able to answer specific questions that related to many aspects of IFCA's work, including the achievements of D&S IFCA and the challenges it faces meeting its statutory duties. Other notable meetings included participation at the Exe Estuary Management Partnership. This meeting informed the attendees of a planned (and now introduced) temporary closure of public mussel beds in the Exe and Teign Estuaries and to provide an update of the D&S IFCA's review of defined hand working fishing activities.

Publications

The internal policy documents relating to publications and Freedom of Information are the key drivers for the continuing increase in the Authority's documentary output. Documenting the work of the Authority is essential for accountability and transparency with information. This is particularly evident for assembled evidence bases, research work and the rationale for potential change associated with a decision-making process. Work has continued this quarter populating the D&S IFCA's Website Resource Library with relevant material that has included multiple Environmental Assessments (MCZ & HRAs). Minutes are taken for all Authority and B&PSC meetings which are made available to all stakeholders along with the majority of officer papers that are prepared for those meetings.

Focus on the Website & Communication Work

The greater use of the website is a fundamental part of D&S IFCA's Communication Strategy for both external stakeholders and our own members. The new website acts as the central hub for D&S IFCA's promotional work or news items. The site is updated on a very regular basis with some key areas of particular benefit to Members. The Meetings page is used to display the majority of papers for the most recent meetings, whilst the members secure area also includes minutes that are still in draft form and not yet approved. The resource library is beneficial as the eight sections demonstrate a range of information including Annual Plans, older meeting papers, D&S IFCA's Byelaws, Impact Assessments and a range of and environmental information and research reports

Officers have been encouraged to continue with a new system of creating their own news stories that can appear in both blog and “active” PDF format. Not only do internally generated news stories contain accurate information, but they also provide an insight into officers’ work. Internally generated stories can be released at appropriate and relevant stages or formulated to either be pro-active or reactive. The stable file structure within the website allows for links to be used to access other information, therefore providing depth to the news items whilst also maintaining controlled over their publication shelf life. Selected news items can also be used to create a quarterly newsletter. Following news items is an effective way for Members to follow work being undertaken in real time, rather than quarterly intervals.

News items can and are being shared on Facebook and can be highlighted using twitter. A lot of work has been done improving the presentation of items on the site via the use of thumbnail images. Several display pages are still being developed which will enhance the presentation of the site still further.

Officers have been in contact with the Devon County Council communication support team (Newscentre) that plan to conduct a more in-depth analysis of the current communications and the Authority’s key aims regarding its communications.

Information Management System

The new system is now in place and has relevance to many aspects of working. With a new file structure now in place, the most essential elements to comply with GDPR are now possible. This quarter has seen subtle changes to the Data Protection Register and arranging file access for new members of staff. The monitoring of internal structures and procedures is being planned for this upcoming quarter to help staff and the organisation remain compliant with a range of data protection related policy documents.

Blackjack

The vessel has been placed in dry storage in Dart Haven (Galmpton) where it is expected to remain until early July. Following an inspection by an MCA surveyor, several issues have been identified that need to be addressed by tradespersons, whilst the vessel is being stored. Quotations have been received for essential works, which will now be completed. Work will include new anodes, new ventilation seals for the engine room compartment, some minor repairs to the GRP and a load test of the movable gantry that is used to lift survey equipment. The later can only be achieved when the vessel is once again back in the water.