

## AIFCA Chief Officer’s Report

### AIFCA Response to the FMP consultation

The AIFCA responded to the FMP consultation, a copy of the consultation response provided below.



Cover letter (1).pdf



Bass FMP.pdf



Southern North Sea Flatfish FMP.pdf



The English Channel Demersal N



Crab and Lobster FMP.pdf

*[Devon and Severn IFCA responses added for further information.]*



D&S IFCA

Consultation response



D&S IFCA

Consultation response



D&S IFCA

Consultation Responses



D&S IFCA

Consultation response



D&S IFCA

Consultation response

### Landing a Sustainable Future: A Comprehensive Review of the Whelk FMP and the Crab & Lobster FMP – Poole Workshop

The AIFCA and Kent and Essex IFCA delivered a project to help facilitate engagement, share best practice, and provide a platform for regionally focused IFCAs to collaborate and inform national Fishery Management Plans. The project focused on two FMPs, The Crab and Lobster FMP and the Whelk FMP, which between them make up a significant proportion of the inshore fishing economy and have had a history of regional management measures.

The project culminated in a workshop, held at the RNLi centre in Poole, Dorset. There were over 40 attendees; all the IFCAs were represented, by both members and officers of the Authorities. Joining the IFCAs were delegates from Seafish, MMO, Newcastle University and Defra.

The introduction of Fisheries Management Plans provides a new opportunity and framework for IFCAs to become more effective at delivering our IFCA duties by engaging in a national management programme for some of the most important inshore fisheries. Through this process we can support fisheries and create long-term sustainable management for some of our key inshore stocks. However, Fisheries Management Plans by their very nature will require IFCA management to be part of a national jigsaw and combine our efforts more effectively. The project helps the IFCAs work together to start to navigate the path between local, regional, and national objectives and help root FMPs in clear-eyed operational delivery.



AIFCA FMP Review  
Workshop Draft\_v1.

### Marine Net Gain (MNG) Policy Advisory Group

The AIFCA represents the IFCAs on the MNG Policy Advisory Group (PAG). Marine Net Gain (MNG) is an approach to marine development that leaves the environment in a better state than before. It aims to secure positive outcomes by halting and reversing the long-term trend of biodiversity decline by restoring and creating marine and coastal habitats and measures to support protected species. Government committed to developing MNG in its response to the 2018 terrestrial biodiversity net gain consultation which builds on commitments in the 25 Year

Environment Plan and was confirmed in the Environmental Improvement Plan. The MNG Policy Advisory Group (PAG) was established in April 2021 and will be in operation for the duration of MNG policy development and delivery.

The PAG is an advisory group that helps to steer the detailed approach and develop policy options for delivering marine net gain with expert and technical input from the marine development industry, other government departments, ALBs and eNGOs.

The objectives of the Marine Net Gain PAG are to:

1. Provide a platform to bring together diverse stakeholders with an interest in MNG to share their views, experiences and knowledge and build consensus on approach.
2. Review evidence and bring expertise to highlight evidence gaps and provide advice on key questions and priority issues to support effective delivery and implementation of MNG.
3. Identify barriers to implementation of an MNG approach and propose solutions to create a level playing field between sectors and test out best-practice approaches.
4. Provide recommendations on feasible, evidence based MNG measures and additional steps to support the development of pilots.
5. Assist in developing MNG communications such as guidance.
6. Support the evaluation of the effectiveness of a MNG approach.

The PAG is an advisory body to the MNG project. It will provide collaboration, expertise and guidance to achieve the group's objectives, including intelligence on emerging issues. For the avoidance of doubt, the PAG is not a decision-making body with respect to MNG policy. The PAG will focus on evidence gathering and providing advice that will inform policy recommendations.

Where appropriate, the PAG members should generate knowledge within their sectors of relevant activities undertaken by the PAG and the MNG Project. The MNG project sits within the governance arrangements for the Offshore Wind Enabling Actions Programme (OWEAP) and reports to the OWEAP Programme Board on a six-weekly basis. Outputs from the PAG will inform reporting to the OWEAP Programme Board via the MNG project lead.

The PAG may be asked to take forward actions from meetings and form task and finish groups outside of the PAG meetings, delivering the results of that work back to the PAG or OWEAP programme board. Members may be asked to take forward actions from meetings and/or gather opinion from their sector and deliver back to the PAG group.

### **OEP publishes report on Environmental Assessments Regimes.**

On the 19<sup>th</sup> October The Office of Environmental Protection published a report looking in detail at the implementation of environmental assessment regimes within the planning system. The report covers Environmental Impact Assessment, Strategic Environmental Assessment and Habitats Regulations Assessment and considers what is working well and where there are barriers to their effectiveness. Government is seeking to amend these regimes and our aim is for this report to help inform any future changes by providing evidence of how the current systems are working. The report identifies three fundamental root causes impacting on the regimes' effectiveness: access to information, the extent of post-decision monitoring, evaluation and reporting and access to expertise. These root causes arise less from the law itself, and more from shortcomings in the wider planning system that affect the way assessment laws are implemented. The full report can now be found [here](#).

## The Implementation of the Environmental Principles Policy Statement

From 1st November 2023 Ministers and government departments have a new legal obligation to consider the impact their policies will have on the environment. The Environmental Principles Policy Statement (EPPS), which was laid before Parliament by Defra in January 2023, sets out how policymakers should apply five environmental principles to support environmental protection and enhancement.

The duty to “have due regard” to the Environmental Principles Policy Statement (EPPS) means government ministers and officials now have a legal duty to be guided by the statement when making policy.

The EPPS is one of the four main cornerstones of environmental governance in the Environment Act 2021, alongside the Act’s provisions on environmental targets, the Environment Improvement Plan and the OEP. It will apply to new policy decisions, including for policies which were already under development but not yet finalised.

The EPPS covers five environmental principles set out in law that are: the integration principle (that environmental protection be integrated into the making of policies); the prevention principle; the precautionary principle; the rectification of environmental damage at source principle; and the polluter pays principle.

The EPPS can be found [here](#).

### FinVision

**FinVision** is a collaborative partnership led by the [University of Plymouth](#) with the Angling Trust, [Southern IFCA](#), the [Institute of Fisheries Management](#), [Bass Anglers’ Sportfishing Society](#), [National Mullet Club](#) and the [Association of IFCAs](#), funded by Defra’s [Fisheries Industry Science Partnership](#) which will deploy underwater cameras in key coastal and estuarine habitats in the south west, such as Plymouth Sound Marine National Park. FinVision aims to learn more about the preferred habitat of recreationally important species during their juvenile life stages.

Understanding which types of habitat are essential for juvenile fish is vital to promoting sustainable fisheries and safeguarding the future of our sport. Recreationally important species like bass, grey mullet and flounder rely on inshore and estuarine areas for the first years of their life. FinVision aims to identify which habitats in these areas are important for which species. With these findings we can better advocate for policy decisions and decisive action that protects these vulnerable early life stages, such as through Essential Fish Habitat Mapping and [Fisheries Management Plans](#).

Through **FinVision** the partnership will deploy a ‘smart’ underwater camera system (known as a JHaM-Cam unit), capable of seeing the smallest juvenile life-stages of fish, in a range of inshore habitats. Later in the year, anglers, and other members of the public, will be able to join in analysing the videos by counting the numbers and size of fish living in different types of habitat via a specially-developed interactive website.

Training workshops on fish identification will be lead by the Institute of Fisheries Management. Sign up will be available soon.

## **Turning the Tide for Coastal Communities – Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC)**

The AIFCA has supported the development of a bid to the ESRC. The bid has been successful in passing the first phase and at the time of writing is being revised to accommodate feedback from peer review ahead of a final decision on whether the programme will be funded.

“Turning the tide for coastal communities: resilient futures that leave no-one behind” champions individuals, groups, and coastal communities 'left-behind' within UK sustainable development. The project will focus on three sets of marginalised 'groups' - (1) fishers along with their families and associated businesses; (2) young people (15-24 yrs old); and (3) individuals comprising what we term the hidden margins. It will explore their unique and shared experiences of climate and composite crises, and work to strengthen their capabilities to live well and meaningfully shape the resilience and sustainability of their communities and coasts.

Through smart use of existing data and participatory and creative arts-based methods, research activities will enhance understanding of the perspectives of marginalised groups in the context of multisector practitioner and policy knowledge and interdisciplinary science to identify and address structural challenges and issues for their resilience and sustainable development across scales. This new understanding will inform the co-creation of resilience strategies and partnerships that attend to participants' priorities and amplify their existing voice and action across different contexts of UK governance. The research focuses on SW England (Cornwall) and NE England (Northumberland) to draw out key lessons about the strategies these groups already employ to respond to intersecting crises, and how to better enable these for a more resilient future. The following objectives cut across scoping and data collection, co-creation and sharing of experiences and priorities, and network and capacity strengthening, working from grounded experience to the project legacy at community and national level.

### **AIFCA presents to the “Protecting wrecks: The next 50 years” conference**

The AIFCA presented to a conference Protecting Wrecks: The Next 50 Years, which was held on 22 November 2023 at the Society of Antiquaries of London. The conference provided an opportunity to reflect on what has been achieved under the Protection of Wrecks Act and discussed the scope and potential for updating the Act to further enhance protection for our significant underwater heritage sites. Speakers introduced topics on a range of issues relating to the Act's successes, issues and challenges, and future opportunities. Expert delegates had opportunity to discuss with panel members and with each other.

The seminar explored

- what we have learned from 50 years of protecting wrecks under the Act,
- what the changing threats and opportunities facing maritime heritage are, and
- what practical options we have to improve the Act and/or its operation for the future.

### **The AIFCA presents to the “Fishing into the Future residential events to support fishermen, scientists and policymakers to work together effectively”**

Fishing into the Future is an industry-led charity with a mission to chart a course to sustainable and prosperous U.K. fisheries – relaunched its Education Programme (F-REP).

F-REP is a series of three-day residential events taking place in multiple locations around the country. The events aim to provide an opportunity for people from fishing, science and policymaking to learn from each other's expertise and work together effectively ahead of the

implementation of Fisheries Management Plans (FMPs) – which are set to radically overhaul the way commercial fishing is managed in the UK.

### **The AIFCA joins the Scottish Government Fisheries Management Plan Working Group**

As an independent coastal state under the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), the UK is required to sustainably manage the living resources and fishing activities within its EEZ in a way that best meets the requirements of the stocks, marine environment and the stakeholders who depend on these fisheries.

The Fisheries Act 2020 requires the UK fisheries policy authorities to prepare and publish Fisheries Management Plans (FMPs) that set out policies and measures to manage fishing activity to restore and/or maintain fish stocks to sustainable levels, whilst supporting a thriving fishing industry and a healthy marine environment. The UK Fisheries Policy Authorities have identified a list of FMPs in Annex A of the [Joint Fisheries Statement \(JFS\)](#). The Scottish Government's Marine Directorate<sup>1</sup>, is the coordinating authority for 21 FMPs and along with DEFRA the coordinating authority for the Horse Mackerel FMP. The Marine Directorate will coordinate the preparation and publication of the plans on behalf of the other fisheries policy authorities acting jointly.

This group will give stakeholders the opportunity to provide feedback and input on the drafting of the UK Fishery Management Plans (FMPs) being prepared by the Scottish Government. The information gathered will help finalise the proposed FMPs, which will be subject to a public consultation in 2024.

### **Shared Outcomes Fund Round 3. Coastal health, livelihoods and environment (CHLE): a data and analytical framework for long-term resilience, sustainability, and growth**

This pilot will provide better awareness of the baseline data required to understand and monitor health status of marine ecosystems and the communities they comprise around the UK. It will also start to establish a cross-government framework for responding to emergency events in a collaborative way. This framework will facilitate timely, accurate, robust, balanced data and analysis interpretation to support action to limit and mitigate impacts to animals, humans, and the environment.

- Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
- Centre for Environment, Fisheries and Aquaculture Science
- Cabinet Office
- UK Health Security Agency
- UK Hydrographic Office
- Association of Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authorities
- Natural History Museum

Funding: £3.2 million, of which c. £357,333 is allocated to the IFCA's participation.

For further information: [Shared Outcomes Fund Round 3 Pilot Project Summaries.pdf \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#)

### **Lessons from delivering HPMA's - are they the right approach to achieving effective marine conservation?**

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<sup>1</sup> Referred to as Marine Scotland in the JFS

On the 21<sup>st</sup> of November the AIFCA joined a panel to discuss “Lessons Learnt from delivering HPMA’s. The seminar was held at the Human Ecology Research Group (HERG) at the University College London. Dr Sarah Coulthard, Newcastle University led the discussions and other panellists included Mark Atkinson (head of marine social science, DEFRA), Phil James, Director Sustainable Development Reform Hub, former head of domestic marine economics, DEFRA), Prof. Peter Jones, UCL, Dr Bryce Stewart, University of York and Jean-Luc Solandt, Marine Conservation Society (MCS).