



Devon and Severn Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority



FY 2024/2025

Version 1.0

March 2024

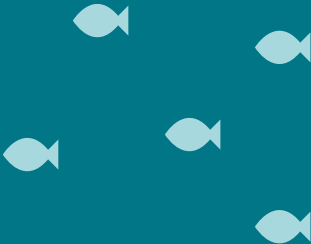
ANNUAL PLAN

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D&S IFCA

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IFCAs' National Vision

“To lead, champion and manage a sustainable marine environment and inshore fisheries, by successfully securing the right balance between social, environmental, and economic benefits to ensure healthy seas, sustainable fisheries, and a viable industry”.

D&S IFCA's VISION

“We believe in shared responsibility for the health and benefits of the marine environment and uphold our duties, now and in the future. We will be proactive in our management to restore and recover marine ecosystems, habitats, and species. We envisage that the waters, under our authority, will support sustainable fishing practices serving local, national, and international communities. We will innovate, and champion the use of technology, the delivery of low impact fisheries and the UK Government's 'Net Zero' by 2050 carbon target. We embrace co-management and will drive change in inshore recreational and commercial fisheries, recognising their social and economic benefits, and securing a future for sustainable fishing in the coastal belt”.

Introduction

This is the D&S IFCA's 14th Annual Plan, and it sets out the known priorities for the forthcoming year.

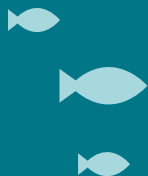
The publication of the front running Fisheries Management Plans (FMP) in December 2023 brought the intentions of the Joint Fisheries Statement into focus and signalled the beginning of the ambitious change to fisheries and environmental management. The FMPs are driven by the eight Objectives set out in the Fisheries Act 2020 and D&S IFCA's approach to management will be guided by both the FMPs and the Objectives. This Annual Plan sets out how D&S IFCA will support the introduction of management for the first five relevant FMPs and support the development of the next tranches of relevant FMPs. One of the clear outcomes from developing the FMPs so far is the need for better evidence and data to support management decisions.

In line with its Vision, D&S IFCA's plans to continue with its Remote Electronic Monitoring (REM) projects. These projects will help explore how technology can play a key role in filling the evidence gaps. D&S IFCA has identified that REM technology can deliver effective monitoring of fishing activities and intends to explore whether it is feasible to introduce REM as a mandatory requirement for the mobile gear vessels operating in the District. When D&S IFCA introduced the requirement for Inshore Vessel Monitoring System (IVMS) devices for all mobile gear vessels in 2018, the ambition was to develop technologies further and 2024/25 may see the delivery of that goal.

In addition, D&S IFCA intends to develop REM solutions for the static gear fleets in partnership with Southern IFCA. Developing REM for the static gear fleet had been a key goal in D&S IFCA's 2023/24 Annual Plan but limited resources meant that this was not possible. Working with Southern IFCA it is hoped that a project to explore ways to monitor potting effort will be delivered.

The focus for the enforcement team remains monitoring illegal incursions into Marine Protected Areas by demersal towed gear vessels and illegal netting in estuaries. The intended introduction of REM will enable D&S IFCA to monitor mobile gear vessel activity more effectively and efficiently and will increase compliance with management measures. The national introduction of IVMS on all licensed vessels under 12 metres in length will improve monitoring and intelligence gathering regarding any small netting vessels.

D&S IFCA intends to expand its utilisation of the immense potential of combining vessel monitoring data and catch data to better inform its management decisions. The data will be used to better inform existing Monitoring Control Plans and to begin to build much better understanding of patterns of fishing and catches.



It is expected that additional SR21 funding from Defra will be provided. This funding is intended to provide IFCA's with additional financial support so that they can assist with the delivery of three key national workstreams, Fisheries Management Plans (FMPs), Marine Spatial Prioritisation including marine licensing and sustainable development, and Marine Protected Areas (including the expectation that necessary management measures are implemented by the end of 2024).

D&S IFCA will progress these workstreams and the Annual Plan sets out the additional work required to deliver Defra's expectations. However, due to its financial situation, D&S IFCA will need to deliver this additional work with a reduced number of staff.

D&S IFCA will continue to review its activity-based permit byelaws. Further work will be required to ensure that the amended Mobile Fishing Permit Byelaw, developed over the past two years is introduced. This plan sets out that D&S IFCA intends to remake the other three activity-based byelaws to provide additional flexibility in the management that can be introduced similar to that achieved in the amended Mobile Fishing Permit Byelaw.

This plan highlights the main workstreams for 2024/25 but it also records the many other areas of work necessary to support the organisation's governance and business as usual functions.

Within this plan, focussed workstreams have been marked with an amber or green system to depict whether the workstream is a new workstream or whether the work has been carried over from the Annual Plan 2023/24. The status is as follows:



New Workstream for the
2024/2025 Annual Plan



On-going workstream carried over
from the 2023/2024 Annual Plan

Finance & Income

D&S IFCA's Revenue Budget for 2024/2025 has been set at £937,500. This is the lowest Revenue Budget of the nine mainland IFCAs. The base levy delivered by the funding Local Authorities had increased by 3% from £762,200 in 2023/24 to £785,066 in 2024/25. The levies on six of the funding Local Authorities are offset by the provision of £409,297 of New Burdens Funding (NBF) from Defra. However, due to Defra's administration of NBF, D&S IFCA does not receive all of the funding. In 2024/2025 this reduces the net NBF to D&S IFCA to £372,463. The 2024/2025 Revenue Budget is balanced by the expected additional Defra funding of £150,000 to continue its deliver of three further national workstreams. In February 2024, after the Revenue Budget had been agreed for 2024/2025, Defra advised that the additional funding for 2023/2024 had been reduced from £150,000 to £140,000. It is now very likely that at least another £20,000 will be required to be taken from Reserves to balance the Revenue Budgets for 2023/2024 and 2024/2025.

To balance the Revenue Budget for 2024/2025, Members agreed to continue to freeze recruitment and not fill the two vacant officer positions. D&S IFCA employs the least number of staff of any of the nine mainland IFCAs. Authority Members and Defra have been presented with a Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP). The plan forecasts that the levies on the Local Authorities will have to rise by 9.5% for the following three years and use significant amounts of D&S IFCA's reserves just to keep D&S IFCA operating at its current staffing levels and with existing assets.

The MTFP also sets out that the Somerset and Severn Local Authorities will no longer receive a surplus of NBF and will be expected to use their local taxpayers' money to fund D&S IFCA for the first time.

Defra has indicated that it is committed to reviewing D&S IFCA's current funding structure through further engagement with the funding Local Authorities.

Table (1) Levy Funding

	2023/24 Base Budget £	Base Budget Adjustments £	Inflation £	2024/25 Budget £
Employees	727,300	(13,200)	32,000	746,100
Premises	37,100	(1,000)	100	36,200
Transport	14,500	(500)	400	14,400
Supplies & Services	71,100	4,500	1,300	76,900
Boat Costs	32,300	1,800	1,500	35,600
Environmental Research	17,200	0	200	17,400
Support Services	55,100	0	900	56,000
Fees, charges, and interest	(40,000)	(5,100)	0	(45,100)
Gross Revenue Budget	914,600	(13,500)	36,400	937,500
Budgeted use of Reserves	(2,400)	(34)	0	(2,434)
Continuation of additional DEFRA Funding (at risk)	(150,000)	0	0	(150,000)
Net Revenue Budget / Total Funding from Levies	762,200	(13,534)	36,400	785,066

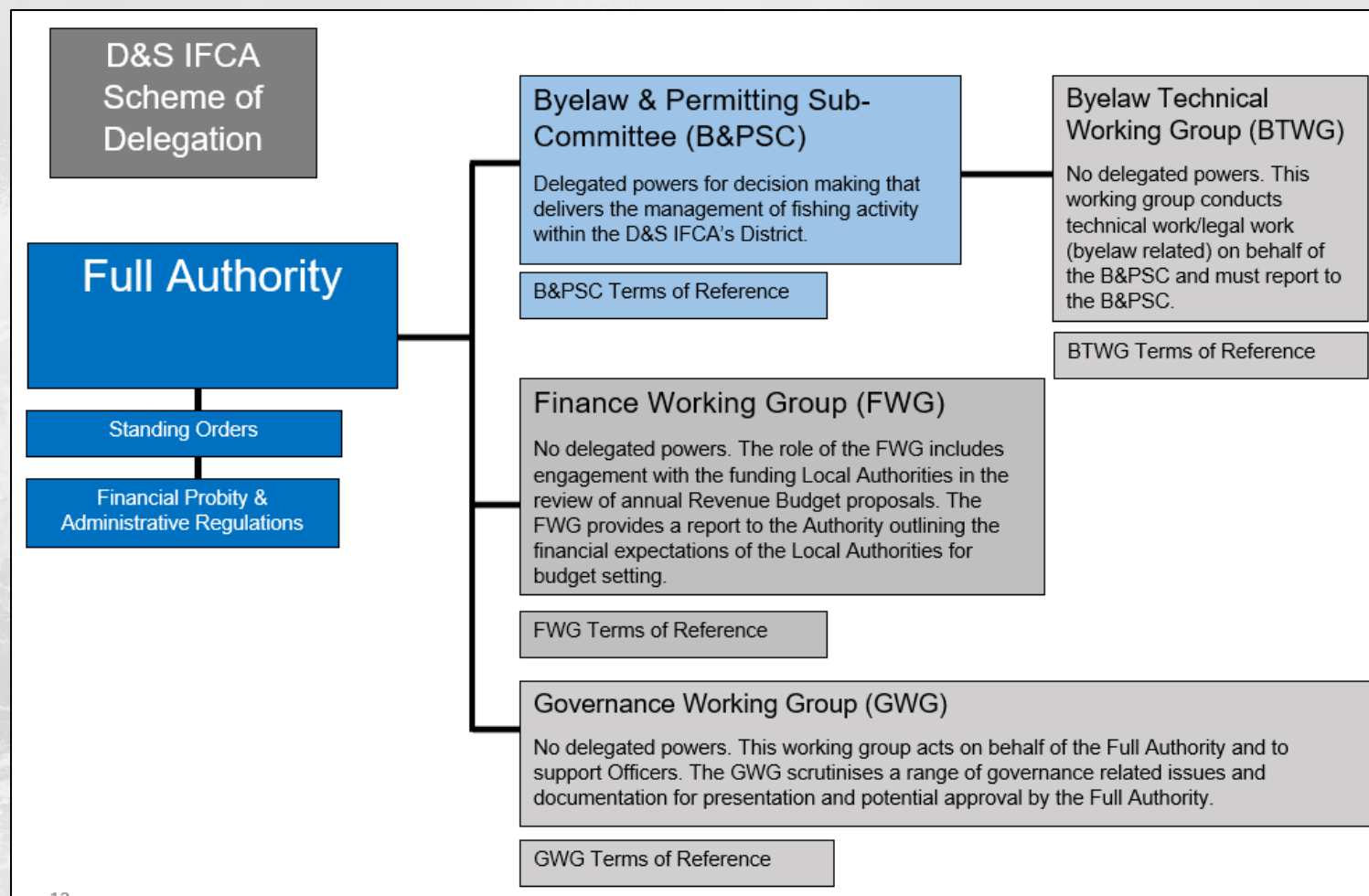
Table (2) New Burdens Funding

Local Authority	2023/24 Levy £	Increase in Levy £	2024/25 Proposed Levy £	New Burdens Funding £	Variance to New Burdens £
Bristol City Council	43,064	1,292	44,356	50,851	(6,495)
Gloucestershire County Council	110,290	3,309	113,599	122,428	(8,829)
North Somerset Council	35,290	1,058	36,348	42,574	(6,226)
Somerset County Council	121,114	3,633	124,747	133,952	(9,205)
South Gloucestershire Council	31,098	933	32,031	38,110	(6,079)
Sub Total Severn Authorities	340,856	10,225	351,081	387,915	(36,834)
Devon County Council	358,920	10,768	369,688	21,382	348,306
Plymouth City Council	35,823	1,075	36,898	-	36,898
Torbay Council	26,601	798	27,399	-	27,399
Sub Total Devon Authorities	421,344	12,641	433,985	21,382	412,603
Total Funding	762,200	22,866	785,066	409,297	375,769

Delivery of the Annual Plan

This Annual Plan endeavours to fulfil the Statutory duties of the relevant Funding Local Authorities relating to inshore fisheries and the marine environment and to recognise the additional funding provided by Defra for specific work. The combination of officers and Members working together will progress the Annual Plan.

The Authority also consists of 16 MMO Appointed Members and two representatives of each of the Statutory Agencies - Natural England and the Environment Agency. A list of Authority Members can be viewed on D&S IFCA's website by clicking [here](#)

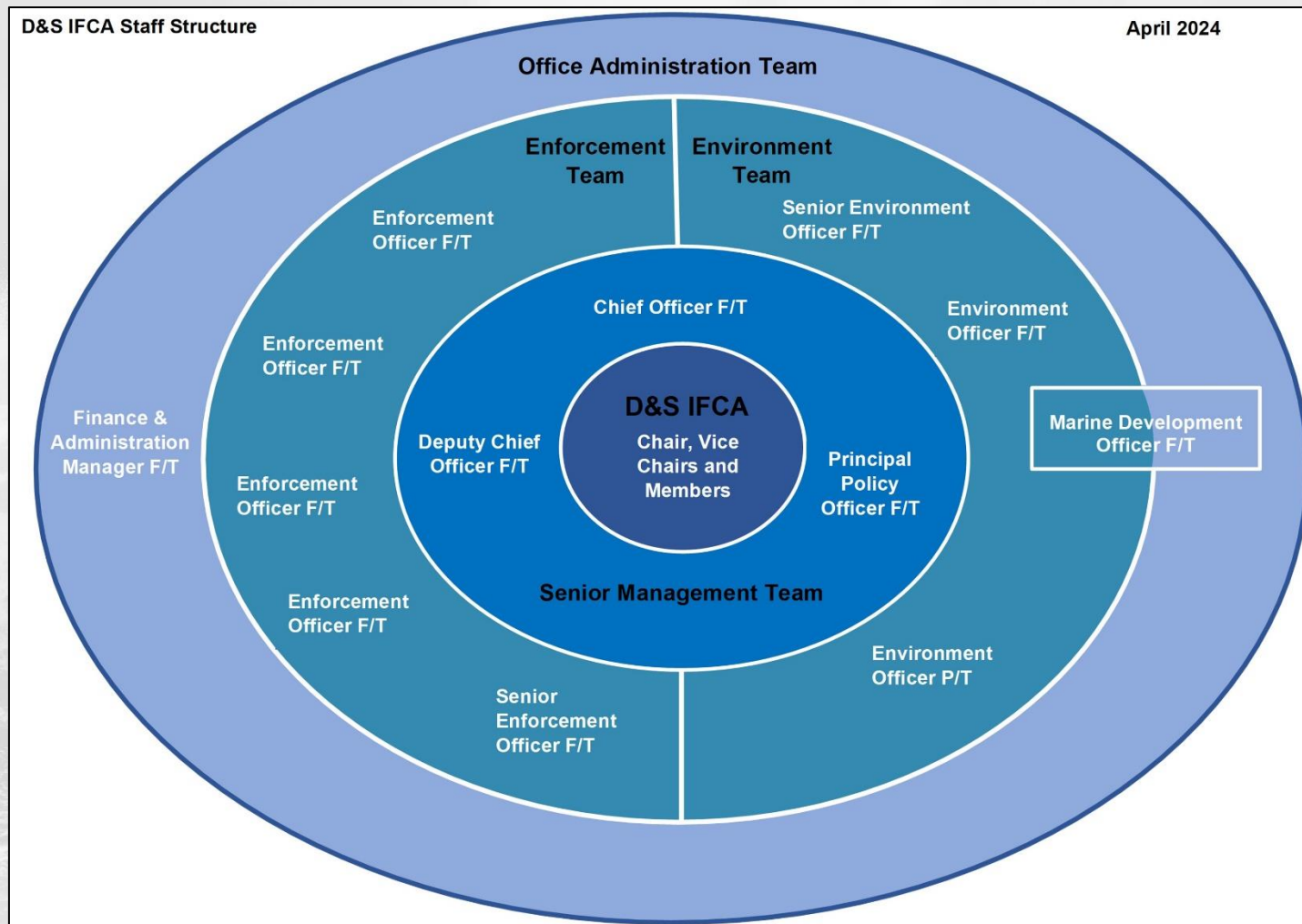


Funding Authorities' Representation	
Gloucestershire County Council	1 Member
South Gloucestershire Council	1 Member
Bristol City Council	1 Member
North Somerset Council	1 Member
Somerset County Council	1 Member
Torbay Council	1 Member
Devon County Council	5 Members
Plymouth City Council	1 Member
General & Statutory Members	

The Authority also consists of 16 General Members (appointed by the MMO) whose areas of expertise include environment, marine law, commercial and recreational fisheries, angling and charter angling, education, and communications.

The Authority also consists of Statutory Members representing the Environment Agency and Natural England.

Delivery of the Annual Plan – Officers & Staff Structure



D&S IFCA Officers – April 2024

Chief Officer: Mat Mander

Deputy Chief Officer: Sarah Clark

Principal Policy Officer: Neil Townsend

Finance & Administration Manager: Olga Pepper

Senior Enforcement Officer: Gavin Mayhew

Enforcement Officer: Chris Mills

Enforcement Officer: Ben Mitson

Enforcement Officer: Jon Norman

Enforcement Officer: Callum Bedford

Senior Environment Officer: James Stewart

Environment Officer: Lauren Parkhouse

Environment Officer: Sarah Curtin

Marine Development Officer: Nadine Hanlon*













Marine Development Officer: Freya Diamond**

*Twelve-month dual role in 2024/2025 as Marine Development Officer and Environment Officer.

****Twelve-month contract as maternity cover.**

Key Workstreams for 2024/2025

The work of D&S IFCA consists of key workstreams as well as the 'business as usual' workstreams that are undertaken to fulfil Defra High Level Objectives. The key goals for 2024/2025 are summarised below:

-  To progress towards the introduction of REM (cameras and gear sensors) on all Mobile Fishing Vessels operating in the District.
-  To extend the REM trial onto potting vessels in the District to assess the suitability of this technology on these vessels.
-  To gather data on crustacean catches, fishing effort and gear used and to determine the seasonality of egg bearing of lobsters.
-  Spatial monitoring will continue as a key workstream for the Enforcement Team to monitor compliance with access restrictions to the towed gear fleet in MPAs.
-  To engage with potting fishers in the District to discuss to their concerns about their fisheries and crab and lobster stocks and consider whether further management measures would be appropriate.
-  As part of the national Crab and Lobster FMP, D&S IFCA will be undertaking FISP funded research in the crustacea fisheries in its District, working with University of Bangor, Seafish and South Devon and Channel Shellfishermen. A key part of this research will be to test a methodology to determine the hardness of the shell of brown crab.
-  To remake the Potting Permit Byelaw, Netting Permit Byelaw and Diving Permit Byelaw.
-  To support to IFCA Members by providing familiarisation material and regular training webinars.
-  To investigate commercial fishing activity and effort through the analysis of IVMS, Catch App and log book data.
-  To engage with Marine Spatial Prioritisation programme by providing evidence on the impacts including co-location of developments and licensable activities in relation to fishing activity and MPAs.
-  Further national FMP work will be undertaken through involvement in the FMP working groups, provision of evidence, and dissemination of information to stakeholders in the District to aid engagement.
-  To complete the outstanding MPA assessments for commercial fishing activities operating within the Bristol Channel and Approaches SAC in the D&S IFCA's District by the end of 2024.

Focus on Governance Workstreams

There will be a rolling twelve-month schedule of quarterly Authority meetings. Officers will organise and prepare relevant information for these and other meetings, including the Byelaw & Permitting Sub-Committee and the working groups that have been established by the Authority, to assist with different workstreams. The Standing Orders of the Authority and the Terms of Reference for the Byelaw and Permitting Sub-Committee and working groups will be reviewed annually.

Officers will continue to provide the secretariat to the Authority and working groups. Planning, organising, and managing different elements of work undertaken by officers and the Authority will be a time consuming, but necessary requirement if goals are to be achieved. D&S IFCA's Policies and Procedures will be reviewed where appropriate to ensure that they meet legal requirements and ensuring officers remain compliant with these policies. D&S IFCA's Publication Scheme will be updated with more information during 2024/2025. There will be additions to the website Resource Library to allow greater access to information by stakeholders and the general public. D&S IFCA will continue to support Defra and its Funding Authorities in finding a resolution to its funding crisis.

Training and Familiarisation for Members

This is a new task for the 2024/2025 Annual Plan. Over the next twelve months the officers will host multiple virtual training and familiarisation sessions for Members. The sessions will be of particular benefit for Members of the Byelaw & Permitting Sub-Committee. The sessions will set out the role of Members in the decision making and overall governance of the Authority. This will also include the provision of an overview of current management byelaws and how permitting byelaws function as a legal framework for the introduction of management measures (permit conditions). In addition, the sessions will explore how pre-consultation and formal consultation can be used to inform decision making relating to changes to management measures.

The Governance Working Group

This working group has been established by the Authority and has immediate and longer-term goals that translate into tasks for FY 2024/2025 that reflect the list of work set out within the GWG catalogue.

Review of D&S IFCA's Communication Strategy

This review has been carried forward from the 2022/2023 and 2023/2024 Annual Plans. The GWG will review the existing Communications Strategy and an updated document will be presented to the Authority for approval.

Review of D&S IFCA's Compliance & Enforcement Strategy

This review has carried forward from the 2023/2024 Annual Plan. The GWG will review the current Compliance and Enforcement Strategy and an updated document will be presented to the Authority for approval.

Success Criterion:

Governance related work is relevant to different Success Criteria. The Authority is supported by an organised, efficient, and effective secretariat. New members will receive an induction pack and briefing from the Authority. There will be a rolling twelve-month schedule of quarterly Authority meetings. Notices of meetings and documentation will be made available in line with Standing Orders.



Enforcement & Compliance
Strategy

Reviewed 11/10/19

Focus on Management of Fishing Activities

Byelaw development and reviews of permit conditions are the remit of the B&PSC. In 2024/2025 it is expected that there will be four meetings of the B&PSC. As well as identified tasks, the B&PSC will monitor and consider external developments that may influence management considerations for 2024/2025. The Byelaw Technical Working Group (BTWG), which includes officers, will support the B&PSC to undertake legislative drafting work.

Mobile Fishing – Byelaw and Permit Conditions

Officers expect the new Mobile Fishing Permit Byelaw 2022 to be signed by the Secretary of State during 2024/2025. When implemented, modified permit conditions and annexes will be introduced that correspond to wording used (interpretations) in the new Byelaw. These must be drafted by officers with the assistance of the BTWG.

Whilst awaiting the introduction of the new Byelaw, which is beyond the control of D&S IFCA, existing permit conditions will be adapted and introduced under the current Byelaw, where necessary. This will include drafting new permit conditions and the introduction of a new additional annex that defines the coastal mariculture sites.

When the new Mobile Fishing Permit Byelaw 2022 is in place, formal consultation can take place with a view to the introduction of Remote Electronic Monitoring (REM) technology as permit conditions.

Re-make of Byelaws.

The Mobile Fishing Permit Byelaw 2022, that is expected to be introduced in 2024/2025 provides an improved legal framework for the scope of permit conditions. The Byelaw caters for an increase in permit fees for administration, a review process for amendments to administration fees, a modified review process for amendments to the permit conditions, an expanded exemption clause, and the scope for the Authority to introduce specified equipment for monitoring of sea fisheries resources. It is logical that the same approach is taken with the existing Potting, Netting and Diving (for specified shellfish species) Permit Byelaws. Therefore, the tasks set out below are new for the 2024/2025 Annual Plan.

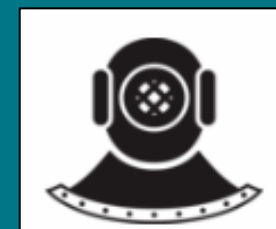
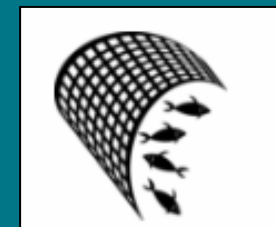
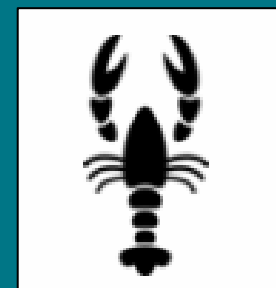
To Re-make the Potting Permit Byelaw, Netting Permit Byelaw, and the Diving Permit Byelaw

The task for 2024/2025 is for the B&PSC to “make” each Byelaw. Once made by the B&PSC, formal consultation will be undertaken on each Byelaw. The task, as a whole, will involve drafting, creation of new annexes, communication work, development of impact assessments, and decision making of the B&PSC.

The re-making of the three Byelaws will require future development of new permit conditions for each of the Byelaws; however, there is an expectation that the management measures will remain the same in 2024/2025.

Success Criterion:

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



Pressures & Risks to Static Gear Fisheries

In 2022, members of D&S IFCA's potting sector raised concerns regarding the level of effort on crab and lobster stocks and the potential displacement of more efficient 'offshore' vessels from EU waters into UK waters (including those within D&S IFCA's District) due to the NQS tonnage set in the Trade and Co-Operation Agreement between the EU and UK. Concerns have also been raised regarding, in particular, crab stocks in the South West both inside and outside of D&S IFCA's District, and nationally through the Crab and Lobster FMP Working Group. The Crab and Lobster FMP was published in December 2023 to meet the requirements of the Fisheries Act 2020, the UK Joint Fisheries Statement and a commitment in the Environmental Improvement Plan 2023 for England. The long-term sustainability of crab and lobster stocks is a key component of the FMP and initial management interventions have been proposed in the FMP. One such intervention is to pilot finer scale management for brown crab and lobster in selected fishery units. The Western English Channel Crab Fishery Unit (CFU) has been identified as a potential priority area where management options will be discussed throughout 2024 with the potential for appropriate regional management measures to be implemented.

D&S IFCA officers will continue to hold meetings with static gear fishers throughout the District to understand their concerns regarding crustacea fisheries. The engagement meeting to be held in Torbay will also gather information on potting and netting that can inform the Monitoring and Control Plans developed for the Torbay MCZ.

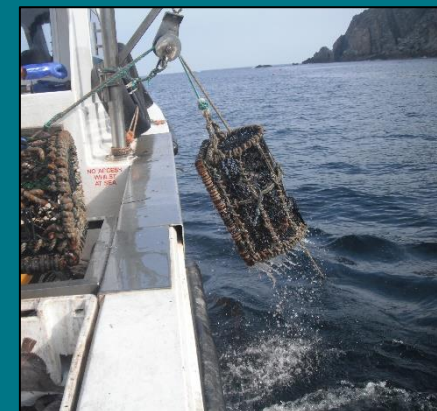
Officers will be undertaking surveys at sea on board fishing vessels as part of the lobster egg bearing seasonality study and trialling the methodology for testing the hardness of the shell of brown crab as part of the FISP funded project. During these surveys, officers will gather additional data on location of activity, catches, effort, morphometric measurements of shellfish caught, and these real-life data will be analysed to compare with catch app and log book effort data and IVMS data. Comparison with IVMS data will identify how IVMS can give an improved description of fishing activity and effort.

Marine Protected Area (MPA) Monitoring and Control Plans

Monitoring and Control Plans (M&CPs), developed for activities within four MPAs in the district, have been in place for several years and are reviewed annually. The Monitoring and Control Plans for towed demersal gear in Torbay MCZ and Lundy SAC will be reviewed using data collected from IVMS to show the level of activity in the sites, and reports will be produced by the end of March 2025. For Torbay MCZ, two new M&CP were produced in 2023 and these will monitor the level of potting and netting in the MCZ to feed into a review of the MCZ assessments for these activities. Reports on the monitoring of these activities will be produced by the end of March 2025. For the other three M&CPs in place i.e., for netting vs shad in Severn Estuary SAC, and netting vs shad and potting vs seagrass in the Plymouth Sound and Estuaries SAC, an annual audit will be undertaken to determine if trigger points, in relation to the number of permits issued, have been met and whether the Habitat Regulation Assessments (HRA) need to be reviewed. New M&CPs may be required for the Bristol Channel and Approaches SAC depending on the conclusions of the HRAs to be undertaken.

Success Criterion:

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



MPA Assessments



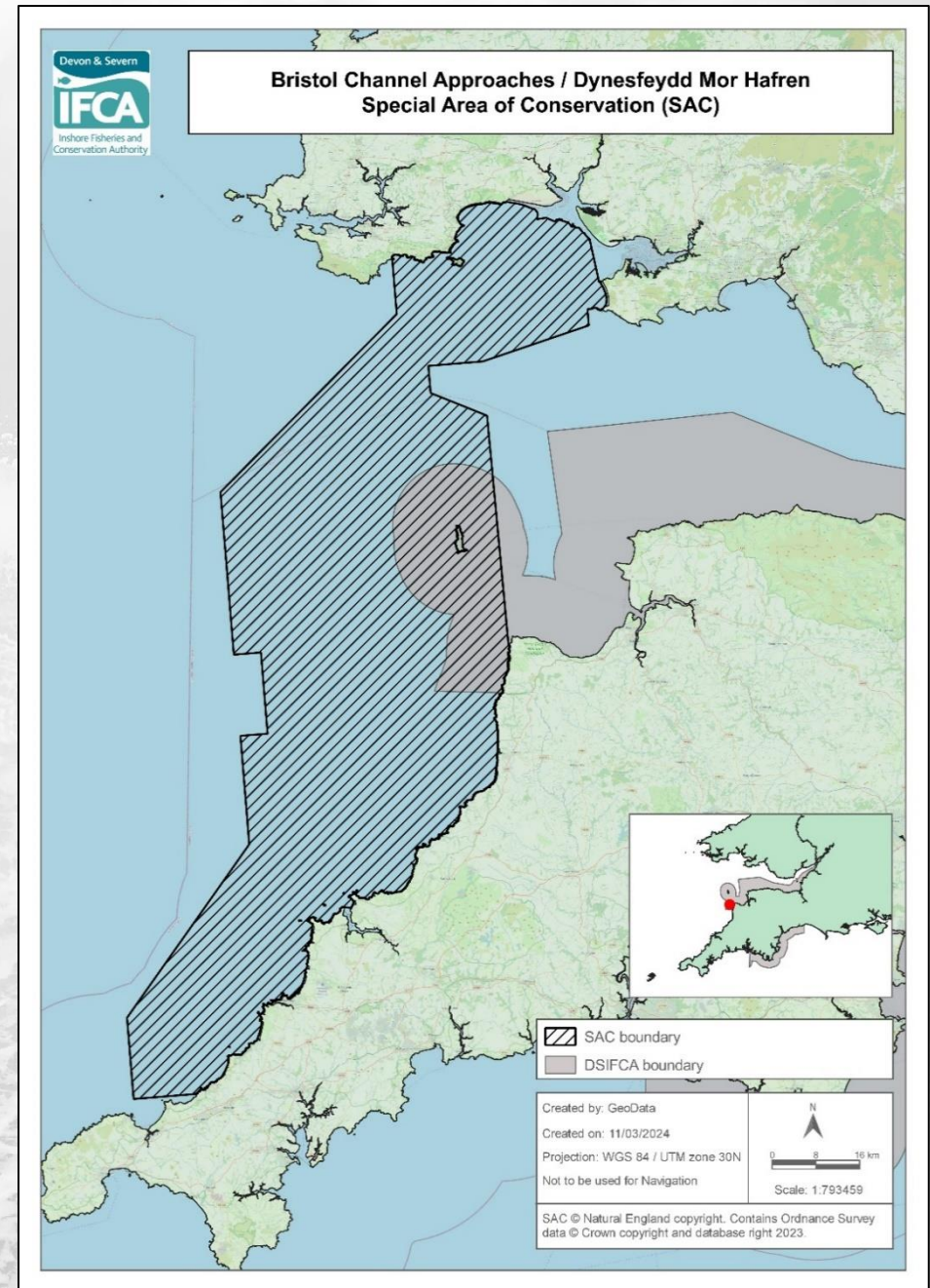
D&S IFCA has completed MPA assessments for almost all the fishing activities taking place in MPAs in the District. These assessed whether the activities would impact site integrity and prevent conservation objectives being met.

The Bristol Channel and Approaches SAC is the only remaining site where HRAs need to be completed. Literature reviews have been undertaken and these will inform these assessments together with discussions with the MMO and Cornwall IFCA, as the site straddles these regulatory areas.

At least 12 HRAs will be completed for fishing activities that could potentially impact harbour porpoise prey species, disturbance and bycatch of harbour porpoise, and impacts on supporting habitats.

The assessments need to be completed and appropriate management measure introduced by the end of 2024 as part of the UK Marine Strategy.

Over 60 management measures have been introduced specifically for MPAs and further consideration of the formal advice from Natural England on the MPA assessments will determine whether any further management measures need to be considered.



Extended Trials of New Technology

Remote Electronic Monitoring

D&S IFCA started its trial of Remote Electronic Monitoring (REM) in September 2022. The second phase, funded by the Fisheries and Seafood Scheme saw five mobile gear vessels join the project during 2023 and 2024. The trials have successfully demonstrated that the use of cameras and gear sensors, with Inshore Vessel Monitoring System devices, can provide much more effective spatial monitoring than can be achieved through conventional approaches to monitoring, and at a fraction of the cost.

The REM system is fully automated and is has been designed to monitor the activity of demersal towed gear vessels whilst operating in MPAs. However, the project has shown that other management measures can potentially be adapted to the benefit of fishers, such as removing the bar length requirement for scallop vessels or allowing trawlers to stream their gear inside MPAs.

The data from the REM system are designed to be fully accessible to the owner and master of the vessel. In 2024, officers plan to continue the engagement with the towed gear sector. This will demonstrate how the technology can be used to benefit them, as well as protecting the environment, and to demonstrate how privacy concerns have been addressed in the design of the system. Officers will explore external funding opportunities to procure and install the equipment on all mobile gear vessels but also to support the ongoing costs associated with the automated monitoring of the system, the warranty and maintenance of the hardware and the airtime.

In partnership with Southern IFCA, officers intend to test similar REM technology to monitor potting effort in the static gear fleet. D&S IFCA had planned to start the REM trials in 2023 but prioritising other workstreams delayed the project. The project will evaluate if REM technology, in combination with a simple application of Artificial Intelligence, can used to automate the counting of pots being hauled and deployed. The project intends to support and inform the management consideration in the Crab and Lobster FMP and Whelk FMP.

Durometers

D&S IFCA will be trialling the use of durometers to define and measure the hardness of the shell of edible brown crab (*Cancer pagurus*). Durometers are used in North American crab fisheries to measure compliance with fishing regulations. This trial forms part of a FISP project (partners include the University of Bangor, South Devon and Channel Shellfishermen and Seafish) to gather evidence to inform the Crab and Lobster FMP objectives. The use of durometers and readings associated with different shell hardness will also help investigate the crab meat yield compared to hard shelled crab. The work to trial the methodology will be conducted on board potting vessels in the D&S IFCA's District. Officers, together with a FISP funded Research Assistant and an MSC student from the University of Plymouth, will be conducting the surveys.



Focus on Enforcement

D&S IFCA operates an intelligence - led and risk-based approach to enforcement. The approach meets recommendations set out in the Hampton Review and makes best use of D&S IFCA's limited resources. The approach is delivered through identifying the fisheries that occur in the District that D&S IFCA currently regulates. This is in line with the National Intelligence Model followed by other enforcement agencies and improves the sharing of intelligence throughout the organisations giving a better overview of potential illegal activities. This intelligence feeds into regular Tasking and Control Group meetings from which officers are expected to develop enforcement plans that reflect the predicted risk and also reports of suspicious activity.

The damaging interaction of demersal towed gears with the designated features within D&S IFCA's Marine Protected Area network represents the greatest environmental risk that D&S IFCA has a responsibility to manage. Illegal incursions reduce the natural capital value derived from these important habitats and can significantly impact static gear fishers through the loss of pots and nets towed away by illegal fishing.

In order to provide as much protection as its resources will allow, D&S IFCA plans to continue to monitor, as closely as possible, the activity of the mobile fishing fleet in its District and, when required, will take the necessary enforcement action against vessels fishing illegally. D&S IFCA will continue to use spatial data from the various sources (IVMS, VMS, AIS) as a component of the evidence used in its investigations.

Illegal coastal and estuarine netting continues to pose a high risk to the environment and species of fish that are known to use these areas of D&S IFCA's District. It poses particular challenges to the Enforcement Team, as the netting is normally undertaken by small, less than six metre vessels that operate at night, with no lights, and manoeuvre at high speeds. It is hoped that the expected completion of the national roll out of IVMS to all licensed commercial fishing vessels will provide improved intelligence on this activity and improve detection rates.

Emsstrom Monitoring

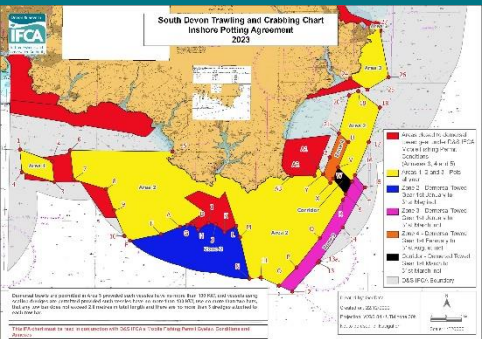


The review of the Netting Permit Conditions resulted in changes to management measures for netting activity. This included the introduction of a prohibition of all commercial and recreational netting activity in the area of the Emsstrom wreck.

The enforcement team will conduct increased levels of patrols in this area to monitor compliance, in recognition that it is a new permit condition for both the commercial and recreational netting sectors.

Success Criterion:

IFCAs implement a fair, effective and proportionate enforcement regime.



Focus on Environment – Research

Crustacea Research

1. Seasonality of Egg Bearing of the European Lobster, *Homarus gammarus*

Officers will continue this research which commenced in 2023/2024. Survey work, on-board fishing vessels operating in the D&S IFCA's District, will be conducted in order to ascertain the months of the year lobsters carry eggs, the stages of development of these eggs, the shedding period and the months where there is no egg bearing by lobsters. Having two years' worth of data will provide a better evidence base to help inform the use of the enforcement tools that may be used to identify if a berried lobster has been scrubbed of its eggs.

2. Measuring the Hardness of the Shell of Edible Brown Crab, *Cancer pagurus*

As part of the Crab and Lobster FMP evidence gathering needs, D&S IFCA, together with Seafish, South Devon and Channel Fishermen and the University of Bangor applied for Fisheries Industry Science Partnership funding to develop a methodology to measure the hardness of the shell of the edible brown crab. This will be trialled using a tool called a durometer that is used in North America fisheries for this purpose and to monitor compliance with regulations. D&S IFCA officers, together with a research assistant (funded through the project) and an MSc student from the University of Plymouth, will be trialling the durometers on board fishing vessels in the D&S IFCA's District.

3. Catch, Landings and Effort Data

As part of the proposed on-board surveys, D&S IFCA officers will gather catch, gear and activity data to feed into other Crab and Lobster FMP FISP projects and to provide data on catch and landings per unit effort and potentially provide evidence to support considerations in the management of pot fisheries in the District. D&S IFCA officers will work with permit holders in its District and Members of the Authority, who have expertise in this area of work. These surveys will also support the engagement with potting fishers that D&S IFCA officers will be undertaking this year in the South of the District. This work will provide information on the potting activity and encourage fishers to share their views and concerns regarding the crustacea fisheries in the District. Officers will also be collating data from the Catch App, log books and IVMS to compare with the data gathered from fishers and on-board survey. Comparison with IVMS data will identify how IVMS can give an improved description of fishing activity and effort.

Success Criterion:

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



Molluscan Research

Taw Torridge Estuary Mussels and Cockles Surveys



The Taw Torridge Estuary is an SSSI, and its intertidal shellfish beds are important for the overwintering birds that frequent the estuary. Mussels and cockles are important food sources for these birds and the stock assessments of these shellfish feed into a food availability model. In 2023/2024 a drone was used to undertake an aerial survey of the intertidal mussel beds to ascertain whether aerial footage could be used to identify live and dead mussels using this methodology. This would be particularly relevant to the mussels located on beds that are logistically difficult to access due to tidal restraints (Sprat Ridge and Pulleys). The footage will be analysed in 2024/2025. The annual survey (by foot and potentially by drone), of the intertidal mussel beds and areas where cockles have been identified, will be undertaken to assess, not only the bivalve molluscan stocks that are available for the birds, but also the amount of mussels that can be taken commercially by shellfish operators. This information will help inform the monitoring and potential management of the shellfish resource.

Exe and Teign Estuaries Mussels and Cockles Surveys



The Exe and Teign Estuaries currently have temporary closures in place, prohibiting the removal of mussels from public beds in both estuaries. Surveys of the intertidal mussels and cockles on the Teign and Exe Estuaries are undertaken biennially. The last surveys were undertaken in 2022 and therefore assessment of the stocks of mussels and cockles in these estuaries will take place on the spring tides in 2024. In the Exe Estuary, which is a Special Protection Area for overwintering birds, the focus of research will be on Bull Hill where an increase in mussel stock was identified in 2022. A cockle survey will take place on the Cockle Sands. Surveys have been carried out in this area since 2010 and the survey in 2024 will assess the stock and identify if the cockle density has remained stable, as identified in 2022. No commercial harvesting of cockles takes place on the Exe Estuary, but recreational hand gathering does take place and therefore assessing of cockle stock is important to ensure sufficient food availability for the overwintering birds.

Mussel and cockle surveys are undertaken in the Teign Estuary in the area outside of the Teign Regulating Order. The density of cockles, calculated from surveys between 2018 and 2020, has increased and the average size of cockles is stable, suggesting that up to 2022 the recreational gathering on the Teign Estuary has not had a negative impact on the stock. The survey in 2024 will provide further evidence to verify if this is still the case. The mussel stock on the Teign crashed between 2012 and 2019 and further biennial surveys are required to assess whether stocks are starting to recover and estimate the scale of any observed recover.

Success Criterion:

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



Pacific Oyster Removal Trials in Exe Estuary and in the Waddeton Order on Dart Estuary

Officers have been in discussion with shellfishermen on the Exe Estuary, who are keen to develop and trial a low impact methodology to remove pacific oysters from the intertidal area. Pacific Oysters, *Magallana gigas*, are an invasive non-native species. They were introduced into England by the then Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Fisheries to provide increased opportunities to bivalve shellfishermen to diversify following large scale mortalities and reduction in stocks of the native oyster, *Ostrea edulis*. Pacific oysters were believed not to be able to spawn in the colder waters of the UK. However, spawning has taken place with warmer water temperatures, and this has led to an increase in pacific oysters in estuaries around the south coast of England. In the Exe Estuary there has been a large settlement of wild pacific oysters and there is concern from Natural England regarding the impacts to the intertidal beds and changes in biodiversity due to the settlement, and that these may lead to impacts to the feeding opportunities of the birds using the estuary. The removal of pacific oyster trial, if successful, could also be rolled out on the Dart Estuary. D&S IFCA holds the Waddeton Regulating Order, an area leased from the Duchy of Cornwall, which lies within the Dart Estuary MCZ, and which expires in 2026. D&S IFCA is responsible for ensuring that any bivalve shellfishery infrastructure is removed, and that wild pacific oysters, which have settled as a result of the shellfish production, are also removed from the intertidal areas covered by the Waddeton Order, where possible and practicable, before the expiration of the lease from the Duchy.

King Scallop Scallops - Monitoring of the Commercial Scallop Dive Fishery

Through D&S IFCA's Commercial Diving Permit Conditions, scallop divers are able to remove scallops from specified areas (MPAs) in the District in the months of July, August, and September, subject to additional restrictions. D&S IFCA officers will monitor the activity in 2024, by analysing:

- IVMS data to identify areas fished and time spent in those areas; and
- landings/sales notes and Catch app data to determine the landings of each vessel, the number of scallops landed and the value of these landings.

Angling Research

Skerries Bank Angling Zone

Officers will investigate the use of the Skerries Bank Angling Zone by the commercial fishing sector and gather data on the fishing activity taking place and the level of catches/landings by the different sectors. This will involve the use of the MMO Catch App and landings data and IVMS through the national roll out.

Success Criterion:

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



Focus on Communications

Communications underpin a range of D&S IFCA's work including: publications; attendance at local, regional, and national meetings; personal engagement with stakeholders; consulting and responding to consultations; and information dissemination through D&S IFCA's website. The GWG is reviewing the Communications Strategy in 2024-2025.

Fisheries Management Plans

The first Tranche of FMPs were published in December 2023. D&S IFCA responded to consultations on the final draft for the Bass FMP, Crab and Lobster FMP, Whelk FMO, Scallop FMPA and Channel NQS FMP. Officers continue to engage of the development of management measures and early interventions for these species and sits on relevant working and science groups. D&S IFCA will continue to disseminate information to its stakeholders including permit holders on any developments. Officers will also engage on the development of the Tranche Two FMPs relevant to the D&S IFCA's District and South West. These include the Skates and Rays FMP, the Celtic Sea and Western Channel Pelagic Species FMP and North Sea and Channel Sprat FMP.

Crustacea Fisheries

Engagement through meetings with commercial fishers operating in the District, will continue in 2024/2025. These engagement events will involve discussions on their concerns regarding crustacea stocks and what potential measures that they think would be appropriate to manage the crab and lobster fisheries in the District. The outputs from these meetings will be considered in line with potential early interventions discussed in the Crab and Lobster FMP, in particular, the introduction of a pilot area for the Western Crab Fishing Unit and trialling potential management measures across the unit, which includes the D&S IFCA's District.

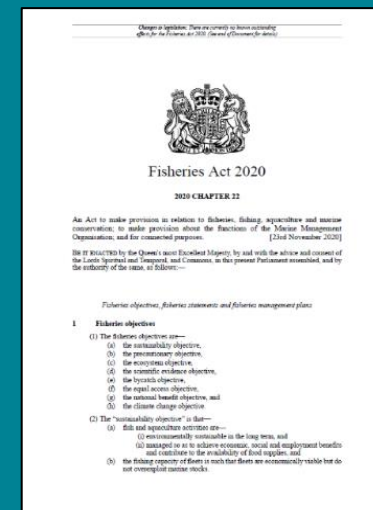
Byelaw Review Related Engagement

The re-making of three Byelaws will include the need to formally advertise in a selection of newspapers. This is a mandatory requirement; however, it is both expensive and less effective than other forms of communication. D&S IFCA will also advertise the making of three new Byelaws by using a mixture of its own communication initiatives, including direct communication to contacts on its mailing list (Mail Chimp) and news posted on the D&S IFCA website and Facebook.

Consultation work relating to changes to permit conditions, which may include the potential introduction of REM, will also take place. This will also include direct communications using D&S IFCA's mailing list, information on the website, but may extend to engagement sessions with the different sectors.

Success Criterion:

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



Success Criterion 1:

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

Success Criterion 2:

IFCAs implement a fair, effective and proportionate enforcement regime.

Success Criterion 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 Criterion 4:

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

Success Criterion 5:

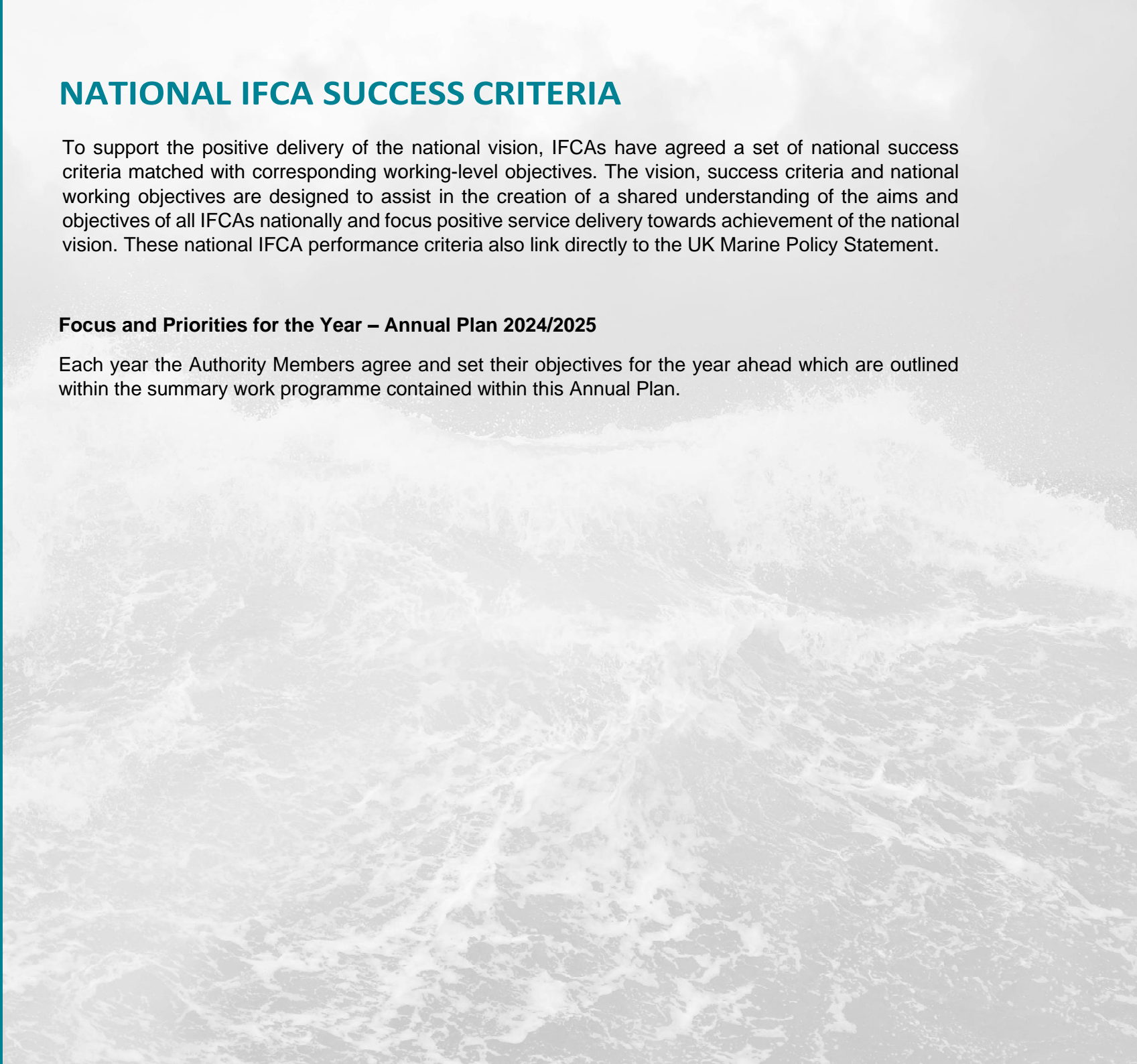
IFCAs make the best use of evidence to deliver their objectives.

NATIONAL IFCA SUCCESS CRITERIA

To support the positive delivery of the national vision, IFCAs have agreed a set of national success criteria matched with corresponding working-level objectives. The vision, success criteria and national working objectives are designed to assist in the creation of a shared understanding of the aims and objectives of all IFCAs nationally and focus positive service delivery towards achievement of the national vision. These national IFCA performance criteria also link directly to the UK Marine Policy Statement.

Focus and Priorities for the Year – Annual Plan 2024/2025

Each year the Authority Members agree and set their objectives for the year ahead which are outlined within the summary work programme contained within this Annual Plan.



Success Criterion 1: IFCA's are recognised and heard, whilst working in partnership and engaging with stakeholders.

Outcomes

The IFCA will maintain and implement an effective Communication Strategy.

The IFCA will maintain its website, ensuring public access to current fisheries and conservation information for the District, including management requirements and byelaws. Non-reserved IFCA Committee papers will be published.

The IFCA will contribute to co-ordinated activity at a national level.

Workstream & Actions

01

The GWG to review D&S IFCA's Communication Strategy & Delivery Plan

This work will involve familiarisation with current documentation, establishing a drafting team, developing robust drafts, and attending GWG meetings to review drafts. The final objective is the adoption of the Communication Strategy by the Authority.

02

Stakeholder Database

To maintain a database of stakeholder contacts which will be reviewed and updated by 31st March each year. This will facilitate engagement with stakeholders. Also, to maintain the database of D&S IFCA Permit Holders.

03

Website Review & Communications and Information Sharing

To review the website by the last day of each working month, and by 31st March each year to ensure it meets the objectives of D&S IFCA's Communication Strategy. Producing and uploading news items on the work of D&S IFCA and other relevant information to the website.

04

Participation in national and regional fisheries and conservation activities

By 31st March each year, the IFCA will have participated appropriately, proportionately and at the right level of delegation, in regional and national fisheries and conservation activity including attendance at meetings e.g., NIMEG, RFG, TAG.

05

Hinkley Point C Nuclear Power Station – HPC Marine Technical Forum - MLA Applications

This workstream is expected to continue into 2024/2025, focussing mainly on proposed material changes to the Development Consent Order for HPC, and measures proposed to compensate for fish kill associated with the Project. This workstream will meet the objectives of Marine Spatial Prioritisation programme, as an example of D&S IFCA's commitments to national engagement to support sustainable development, directly funded by Defra.

06

Participation in National and Regional Fisheries and Conservation Activities

Review and respond to Marine Licence Applications (MLAs) and Consultations. This is an on-going task which involves several officers. Depending on the applications and consultations this can be time consuming and will be documented in the officers' time recording. This will meet the Marine Spatial Prioritisation Programme, as an example of D&S IFCA's commitments to national engagement to support sustainable development, directly funded by Defra.

The IFCA will contribute to co-ordinated activity at a national level.

The IFCA will maintain its website, ensuring public access to current fisheries and conservation information for the District, including management requirements and byelaws. Non-reserved IFCA Committee papers will be published.

The IFCA will contribute to co-ordinated activity at a national level.

07 Crustacea Fisheries Engagement

To engage with potting fishers in the District to understand their fishing activity, record their concerns regarding crustacea fisheries and crab and lobster stocks, and their considerations on what further management measures would be appropriate.

08 Fisheries Management Plan Engagement

As part of the national FMP work D&S IFCA will engage with the FMP groups and provide information and expertise to help inform the FMPs. D&S IFCA will also disseminate information to stakeholders in its District so that they can engage with the FMP process through in person and on-line events. All IFCAs have received additional funding from Defra to undertake work to support the development and implementation of national Tranche 1 and Tranche 2 FMPs.

09 Re-make Potting Permit Byelaw (engagement)

The Byelaw will need to be advertised in a selection of newspapers. In addition, D&S IFCA will use a range of communications to inform stakeholders and provide the opportunity to respond with objections or supportive responses. Communications will include direct circulation of information (Mail Chimp), hard copy of information if requested and the posting of news items on the website and Facebook. The process will be documented with relevant information reported to the B&PSC.

10 Re-make Netting Permit Byelaw (engagement)

The Byelaw will need to be advertised in a selection of newspapers. In addition, D&S IFCA will use a range of communications to inform stakeholders and provide the opportunity to respond with objections or supportive responses. Communications will include direct circulation of information (Mail Chimp), hard copy of information if requested and the posting of news items on the website and Facebook. The process will be documented with relevant information reported to the B&PSC.

11 Re-make Diving Permit Byelaw (engagement)

The Byelaw will need to be advertised in a selection of newspapers. In addition, D&S IFCA will use a range of communications to inform stakeholders and provide the opportunity to respond with objections or supportive responses. Communications will include direct circulation of information (Mail Chimp), hard copy of information if requested and the posting of news items on the website and Facebook. The process will be documented with relevant information reported to the B&PSC.

12 Mobile Fishing Permit Conditions (engagement)

When implemented, the Byelaw will include scope for specified equipment to be introduced for the monitoring of sea fisheries resources. This may lead to consultation on any permit condition changes.

D&S IFCA will use a range of communications to inform stakeholders and provide the opportunity to respond. Communications will include direct circulation of information (mail Chimp), hard copy of information if requested and the posting of news items on the website and Facebook. The process will be documented with relevant information reported to the B&PSC.

Success Criterion 2: IFCA's implement a fair, effective and proportionate enforcement regime.

Outcomes

The IFCA will publish its enforcement risk register and strategy, clearly setting out its approach to achieving regulatory compliance and potential sanctions that may be applied for infringements

D&S IFCA will manage operational activity (e.g., through a Tasking & Co-ordination Group) and capture, record, evaluate and disseminate intelligence that is compatible with partner organisations. It is engaged in joint working with partner organisations.

Workstream & Actions

13

Review the Compliance and Enforcement Strategy

To review the current strategy and consider introducing new ways of operating. This task is a workstream for the Governance Working Group (GWG).

14

Spatial Monitoring of Towed Gear Vessels

To monitor IVMS, VMS and AIS data for mobile fishing gear vessels and to undertake patrols to target mobile gear vessels that may be operating without fully functioning IVMS and VMS devices. This remains a priority workstreams for D&S IFCA. This workstream is imperative to ensure monitoring of compliance of spatial restrictions under the Mobile Fishing Permit Conditions and to seek to ensure the protection of designated features of Marine Protected Areas. Continued monitoring will identify gear conflict between the mobile fishing fleet and other fishing sectors.

15

Emsstrom Monitoring

To conduct increased levels of patrols in this area, record the number of patrols undertaken and monitor the level of compliance and use of the site by the recreational sector, in recognition that it is a new permit condition for both the commercial and recreational netting sectors.

16

Tasking & Co-ordination Group

To hold regular internal Tasking and Co-ordination Group (TCG) meetings in line with the National Intelligence Model (NIM). Officers will continue to prepare intel reports. Outcomes of TCG and intel reports will be disseminated among other regulators (NIMEG) in line with the NIM. Officers will also attend the MMO's South and Southwest TCG meetings and SIFCA's TCG meetings.

17

Creation of Case Files

Officers will prepare a case file for each reported illegal fishing activity. Each casefile will be shared with the D&S IFCA Legal advisor as part of the determination on whether the evidential and public interest tests, as set out in the Code of Crown Prosecutors, have been met. The preparation of case files is an essential part of the Enforcement Officer role.

18

Investigation Tables

To compile records of enforcement activity in a standard format; provide them to the National Inshore Marine Enforcement Group (NIMEG) and publish them on D&S IFCA's website.

Warranted Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Officers (IFCOs) will be trained and accredited to nationally agreed standards. They will maintain professionalism and make appropriate interventions to deliver efficient, effective enforcement activity.

The IFCA will have developed consistency in regulations (byelaws) with other organisations.

19

Code of Conduct

The national Code of Conduct for IFCOs to be published on the D&S IFCA’s website. The review is an annual task for NIMEG. Any amendments to the Code will be published on the website.

20

Accreditation and Training

Warranted Officers attain accreditation. All undertake Continuing Professional Development. Further training of Enforcement Officers will be identified through the Personal Development Plans. Internal training will continue, in particular with scenario training, to ensure all warranted officers are effective in their enforcement roles.

21

Collaborate with other Regulators.

To work with other regulators to achieve consistent quality, application, and enforcement of management measures. D&S IFCA intends to engage with Defra on REM and its application on board commercial fishing vessels.

Success Criterion 3: IFCA's use evidence based and appropriate measures to manage the sustainable exploitation of sea fisheries resources and deliver marine environmental protection within its district.

Outcomes

The IFCA will identify issues likely to affect sustainable management of the marine environment in the D&S IFCA District; undertake risk assessment and gap analysis; review appropriateness of existing measures; evaluate management options and develop and implement proportionate marine management solutions.

Workstream & Actions

22	<p>Re- make the Potting Permit Byelaw</p> <p>The task for 2024/2025 is for the B&PSC to “make” the Potting Permit Byelaw as a replacement for the existing Byelaw; with potential implementation in 2025. This task involves discussion by the B&PSC, leading to drafting work and development of an Impact Assessment. When “made” by the B&PSC, formal consultation will be undertaken on the Byelaw (task 09). The B&PSC will discuss the findings of the formal consultation, potentially amending the Byelaw. The Byelaw Technical Working Group will assist officers with the drafting work.</p> <p>Following this process a final Impact Assessment will be created, and other information will be prepared for submission to the Marine Management Organisation. This would complete the task set in the Annual Plan for 2024/2025. The Byelaw cannot be implemented without approval by the Secretary of State.</p>
23	<p>Re- make the Netting Permit Byelaw</p> <p>The task for 2024/2025 is for the B&PSC to “make” the Netting Permit Byelaw as a replacement for the existing Byelaw; with potential implementation in 2025. This task involves discussion by the B&PSC, leading to drafting work and development of an Impact Assessment. When “made” by the B&PSC, formal consultation will be undertaken on the Byelaw (task 10). The B&PSC will discuss the findings of the formal consultation, potentially amending the Byelaw. The Byelaw Technical Working Group will assist officers with the drafting work.</p> <p>Following this process a final Impact Assessment will be created, and other information will be prepared for submission to the Marine Management Organisation. This would complete the task set in the Annual Plan for 2024/2025. The Byelaw cannot be implemented without approval by the Secretary of State.</p>
24	<p>Re- make the Diving Permit Byelaw</p> <p>The task for 2024/2025 is for the B&PSC to “make” the Diving Permit Byelaw as a replacement for the existing Byelaw; with potential implementation in 2025. This task involves discussion by the B&PSC, leading to drafting work and development of an Impact Assessment. When “made” by the B&PSC, formal consultation will be undertaken on the Byelaw (task 11). The B&PSC will discuss the findings of the formal consultation, potentially amending the Byelaw. The Byelaw Technical Working Group will assist officers with the drafting work.</p> <p>Following this process a final Impact Assessment will be created, and other information will be prepared for submission to the Marine Management Organisation. This would complete the task set in the Annual Plan for 2024/2025. The Byelaw cannot be implemented without approval by the Secretary of State.</p>

The IFCA will identify issues likely to affect sustainable management of the marine environment in the D&S IFCA District; undertake risk assessment and gap analysis; review appropriateness of existing measures; evaluate management options and develop and implement proportionate marine management solutions.

The IFCA will develop Fisheries Management Plans for priority species where appropriate. Shared objectives will be developed with identified partners; actions identified, and best practice reflected so that management makes a contribution to sustainable development.

25

MPA Assessments

To complete outstanding MPA assessments, in particular those relating to the Bristol Channel and Approaches SAC where Harbour Porpoise is the designated feature, and review MPA assessments as and when required. This is a workstream that continues into the Annual Plan 2024/2025 as assessments are reviewed in light of MPA conditional assessments provided by Natural England and designation of new features.

Defra has provided IFCA's with additional funding to support its expectation that all MPA assessments will be undertaken by the end of 2024.

26

MPA Monitoring and Control Plans

To review data and evidence collected regarding fishing activity within four MPAs in the D&S IFCA's District to inform the Monitoring and Control Plans for these MPAs. To use Monitoring and Control Plan (M&CP) findings to review MPA assessments as appropriate. This is a workstream that continues into the Annual Plan 2024/2025 as M&CPs are reviewed annually to inform whether additional management is required. To maintain an Audit trail for three M&CPs reviewed where trigger points have been set but annual reporting is not required unless trigger points are exceeded. New M&CPs may be required for the Bristol Channel and Approaches SAC depending on the conclusions of the HRAs to be undertaken.

27

Monitoring of Commercial Scallop Dive Fishery

To monitor the commercial dive vessels operating in D&S IFCA's District during July, August and September using IVMS and to gather catch/ landings and Catch App data for analysis to measure compliance with the Commercial Diving Permit Conditions during these months. This will be done for years 2022, 2023 and 2024.

28

Fisheries Management Plans (FMPs)

D&S IFCA sits on the national FMP groups and has inputted into the development of six FMPs. Officers will continue to provide evidence and expertise to help the progress of further FMPs. As part of this work D&S IFCA disseminates information to stakeholders in its District so that they can engage with the FMP process through in person and on-line events. Officers will also engage on the development of the Tranche Two FMPs relevant to the D&S IFCA's District and South West. These include the Skates and Rays FMP, the Celtic Sea and Western Channel Pelagic Species FMP and North Sea and Channel Sprat FMP. All IFCA's have received additional funding from Defra to undertake work to support the development and implementation of national Tranche 1 and Tranche 2 FMPs.

The IFCA will identify issues likely to affect sustainable management of the marine environment in the D&S IFCA District; undertake risk assessment and gap analysis; review appropriateness of existing measures; evaluate management options and develop and implement proportionate marine management solutions.

29

Seasonality of Egg Bearing of the European Lobster, *Homarus Gammarus*

To conduct survey work, on-board fishing vessels operating in the D&S IFCA's District, in order to ascertain the months of the year lobsters carry eggs, the stages of development of these eggs, the shedding period and the months where there is no egg bearing by lobsters.

30

Measuring the Hardness of the Shell of Edible Brown Crab, *Cancer pagurus*

To develop a methodology to measure the hardness of the shell of the edible brown crab, as part of the Crab & Lobster FMP FISP Project. This will be trialled using a tool called a durometer and to test its application to aid monitor compliance with regulations. D&S IFCA officers, together with a research assistant (funded through the project) and an MSc student from the University of Plymouth, will be trialling the durometers on board fishing vessels in the D&S IFCA's District.

31

Catch, Landings and Effort Data

To gather catch, gear and activity data whilst undertaking surveys at sea to feed into other Crab and Lobster FMP FISP projects and to provide data on catch and landings per unit effort and potentially provide evidence to support considerations in the management of pot fisheries in the District. This work will provide information on the potting activity and encourage fishers to share their views and concerns regarding the crustacea fisheries in the District. Officers will also be collating data from the Catch App, log books and IVMS to compare with the data gathered from fishers and on-board survey.

32

Taw Torridge Bivalve Mollusc Stock Assessments

To assess the intertidal mussel and cockle stocks in the Taw Torridge Estuary. Officers will survey, through walking the beds and drone survey (where appropriate) and assess the bivalve mollusc stocks on the intertidal beds of the Taw Torridge SSSI. The SSSI is designated for its over-wintering birds and the mussels and cockle are an important food for the birds. The results of these assessments will feed into the food availability model and will be used to determine the amount of mussels that can be removed by shellfish operators.

33

Exe Estuary and Teign Estuary Bivalve Mollusc Stock Assessments

To assess the intertidal mussel and cockles stocks on the Teign and Exe Estuaries. The Exe and Teign Estuary currently have temporary closures in place, prohibiting the removal of mussels from public beds in both estuaries. Surveys of the intertidal mussels and cockles on the Teign and Exe Estuaries will be undertaken in 2024. The Exe Estuary is a SPA, designated for its overwintering birds and shellfish on this estuary are an important food source. The results of these assessments will feed into food availability models and inform the ongoing closure of the estuary to the removal of mussels. Surveys will be undertaken on the Teign Estuary in the area outside of the Teign Regulating Order. Survey results will be used to assess if the recreational gathering of cockles is having a detrimental effect on the stock and inform the closure of the public beds to the removal of mussels.

The IFCA will identify issues likely to affect sustainable management of the marine environment in the D&S IFCA District; undertake risk assessment and gap analysis; review appropriateness of existing measures; evaluate management options and develop and implement proportionate marine management solutions.

34

Pacific Oyster Removal Trials in Exe Estuary and in the Waddeton Order on Dart Estuary

To trial a low impact methodology for the removal of pacific oysters from estuaries in Devon. Pacific Oysters, *Magallana gigas*, are an invasive non-native species. In the Exe Estuary there has been a large settlement of wild pacific oysters and there is concern from Natural England regarding the impacts to the intertidal beds. Offices will work with fishers and Natural England to trial the removal of pacific oyster on the Exe Estuary and if successful this could also be rolled out on the Dart Estuary. D&S IFCA holds the Waddeton Regulating Order which lies within the Dart Estuary MCZ and expires in 2026' and is responsible for the removal of all equipment and wild pacific oysters that may have settled within the Order areas as a result of pacific oyster cultivation.

35

Inshore Potting Agreement Areas

To chair the South Devon Inshore Potting Agreement (IPA) Committee, produce minutes of the meeting, produce an annual chart of the IPA area, disseminate any changes in management of the IPA to permit holders and to the MMO for licence variation purposes. D&S IFCA, MMO and fishers from the potting and mobile gear sectors meet to discuss co-management options for the IPA. This fisheries conflict resolution management system has been in place for decades and allows for fishing opportunities for both sectors through a combination of D&S IFCA's Mobile Fishing Permit Byelaw permit condition and MMO Licence Variation.

36

Exemption Authorisations

To review all Exemption Authorisation applications under D&S IFCA Byelaws and determine them within 60 days of receipt.

37

Trailing New Technologies

Officers intend to engage with the mobile gear sector to discuss the introduction of REM on towed gear vessels as a mandatory requirement. Officers will explore external funding opportunities to procure and install the equipment on all mobile gear vessels but also to support the ongoing costs associated with the automated monitoring of the system, the warranty and maintenance of the hardware and the airtime. Officers may be in a position to put forward REM recommendations to Authority Members in 2024/2025.

In partnership with Southern IFCA, Officers intend to test similar REM technology to monitor potting effort in the static gear fleet. The project will evaluate if REM technology, in combination with a simple application of Artificial Intelligence, can be used to automate the counting of pots being hauled and deployed. The project intends to support and inform the management consideration in the Crab and Lobster FMP and Whelk FMP.

To trial the use of durometers to measure the hardness of the shell of edible crab as part of a Crab and Lobster FMP FISP funded project.

38

Skerries Bank Angling Zone

Officers will investigate the use of the Skerries Bank Angling Zone and gather data on the fishing activity taking place and the level of catches /landings by the different sectors. This will involve the use of the MMO Catch App and landings data and IVMS through the national roll out.

Success Criterion 4: IFCA's have appropriate governance in place and staff are trained and professional.

Outcomes

The IFCA will demonstrate its long-term strategic approach to sustainable marine management by having appropriate plan-making, review, update and amendment procedures in place.

Staff performance management systems will be in place that link to the IFCA success criteria. There will be an induction procedure for new joiners. Staff training and development needs will be identified. Performance will be managed and, where necessary, improvement procedures will be followed.

Workstream & Actions

39

Annual Plan

To publish a Plan on its website by 31st March, setting out the main objectives and priorities for the next financial year. A copy will be sent to the Secretary of State.

40

Annual Report

To publish a Report after the end of the financial year, on its website describing its activities, performance and a summary of audited financial information in that year, by 30th November. A copy will be sent to the Secretary of State.

41

Workstream Reporting

To accurately record time spent by Officers in different areas of work to inform the Annual Report, to assist with the Annual Plan and to establish to accumulation of TOIL and un-social working hours.

42

Long Term Funding and Organisational Stability

D&S IFCA will continue to support Defra and its Funding Local Authorities in finding a resolution to its funding crisis. Defra has committed to engaging directly with the Local Authorities to find a way forward to alleviate the financial challenges D&S IFCA faces.

43

Familiarisation & Training for Members

Officers will host multiple virtual training and familiarisation sessions for Members. The sessions will set out the role of Members in the decision making and overall governance of the Authority. This will also include the provision of an overview of current management byelaws and how permitting byelaws function as a legal framework for the introduction of management measures (permit conditions). In addition, the sessions will explore how pre-consultation and formal consultation can be used to inform decision making relating to changes to management measures.

44

Staff Performance Planning

To develop and implement annual performance management plans for all staff members. Annual appraisals for all staff will have been completed by 31st May each year.

The IFCA Committee will be supported by an organised, efficient, and effective secretariat. New members will receive an induction pack and briefing from the Authority. There will be a rolling twelve-month schedule of quarterly Authority meetings. Notices of meetings and documentation will be made available in line with Standing Orders.

The IFCA Committee meetings will be held in public unless material is either confidential or exempt within the meaning of the Local Government Act 1972.

45

Authority Secretariat

To provide an efficient secretariat of D&S IFCA staff to support Authority meetings which are held quarterly and are quorate. Meeting documentation will meet Standing Orders. To hold Committee meetings in public unless material is either confidential or exempt within the meaning of the Local Government Act 1972.

46

Internal Meetings & Communications

To hold internal meetings with staff and prepare papers for and attend IFCA working group meetings and communicate with Authority Members and staff.

Success Criterion 5: IFCA's make the best use of evidence to deliver their objectives.

Outcomes

A strategic research plan that contributes to greater understanding of the marine environment and delivery of cost-effective management of sea fisheries resources.

Standard Operating Procedures describe how data is captured and shared with principal partners.

Non-confidential meta-data collected through the IFCA research programme should be recorded in a database available to the marine research community.

Workstream & Actions

47

Research Planning

To include within D&S IFCA's Annual Plan areas of research that will be undertaken.

To develop individual plans for survey work and research workstreams.

48

Research Reporting

The IFCA will publish research reports annually that demonstrate how evidence has supported decision making.

49

TAG & National Evidence Need

D&S IFCA officers will attend TAG meetings and contribute to the progress of national evidence programme requirements. Officers will give presentations on relevant workstreams to TAG members. Work undertaken will be reported in D&S IFCA's Annual Report.

50

Standard Operating Procedures

To review and develop Standard Operating procedures (SOPs) as required and share with other IFCA's and partner organisations.

51

MEDIN

To collect research/ survey meta data and upload it to the Marine Environmental Data and Information Network (MEDIN) using nationally agreed formats.

A strategic research plan that contributes to greater understanding of the marine environment and delivery of cost-effective management of sea fisheries resources.

52

Respond to Research Enquiries and Information Provision

To engage with academic institutions, Cefas and other research programmes, respond to enquiries and share information and data, where appropriate, to further marine research and evidence gathering.

A list of research databases held by the IFCA and the frequency of their review.

53

Research Databases and Literature Review

D&S IFCA officers gather and use a wide range of literature to undertake and inform D&S IFCA research work. This is maintained in the internal filing system within the relevant topic specific folders. Officers will continue to catalogue all the literature used in a portal called Zotero, which is a data repository for science outputs, allowing researchers to preserve and share their science research. Where appropriate databases of research and stakeholders inputting into the research are kept and maintained.



D&S IFCA Annual Plan 2024/2025

Version Control

March 2024: Version 1.0