



Eleven Month Progress Report Relating to the Annual Plan - FY 2023/2024

March 2024

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.

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

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

Report:

This task was carried forward from FY 2022/2023 and is a Key Goal for 2023/2024. Since 1st April 2023, work has not progressed on the review of the Communications Strategy. There was one meeting of the GWG between 1st April 2023 and the end of February 2024. The GWG meeting in 2023 did not focus on the review of the review of the Communications Strategy. In June 2023, the GWG were given an additional task by the Authority relating to the job evaluation exercise (task 038). The GWG reviewed the financial package of Officers and reported back to the Authority at the September Authority meeting. Although the review has not begun, it is the view of Officers that the existing Communications Strategy is effective, evidenced by the large response in the formal consultation for the review of the Netting Permit Conditions (task 07), the largest response to a consultation that D&S IFCA has ever had.

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.

Report:

The data base/s of contacts has been maintained. Depending on the circulated messages and information, the contact list/s has been used for targeted direct communications (for example email circular) for different audiences. These groups include permit holders (using specific methods), all permit holders, Members of the Authority, and a contact group of all stakeholders. Since 1st April 2023, there have been 40 direct messages that have included information to Members (for example funding updates), information about FMP engagement events, opportunities to be part of the REM project, consultation (Byelaw review) and guidance for fishers to help them remain compliant with legislation.

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.

03

Website (review) and 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.

Report:

The content of the website is reviewed and updated (when required) every week. Display pages are updated when required and news items are displayed and archived in the website Resource Library (Section G). Although delayed, the website Content Management System (CMS) was upgraded to "Word-press". This change in the CMS impacted on the functionality of some hyperlinks embedded in some pre-published documentation; however, the benefits of the upgrade outweigh any initial complications. Officers have reduced the content of the Members' secure area and invited Members to comment on its layout and what to place in this section for the benefit of Members. Since 1st April 2023, 25 news items have been produced (mix of topics). Officers are encouraged to highlight completed work/reports suitable for publishing which can then be added to the Resource Library and reports, Officers' papers, and minutes from Authority and B&PSC meetings will continue to be added to the Resource Library.

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.

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Report:

Officers have continued to review and respond to Marine Licence Applications (MLAs) and consultations. Twenty two MLA consultations have been reviewed, which have included responses to: a proposed seaweed farm in Charlton Bay, which has since been retracted; a proposal for a Seaweed farm just outside the harbour limits of Torbay which was refused by the MMO; a proposed mussel farm in Bigbury Bay; a proposed seaweed farm in Combe Martin Bay, North Devon; a proposal for green gravel kelp restoration project in the Plymouth Sound, and a marine licence application regarding the White Cross Wind Farm in North Devon. The use of IVMS has been valuable in being able to fully respond to the impact of marine developments on existing uses of the marine space.

Officers have also provided feedback to MMO consultations on the South and South West Marine Plans and participated in a workshop on the marine element of Local Nature Recovery Strategies. Responses were also provided for national proposals for king scallop closures in ICES areas 7d and 7e; managing the sole fishery in Lyme Bay and a seasonal closure for the crawfish fishery in ICES Rectangle 7. D&S IFCA also responded to a consultation on Remote Electronic Monitoring (REM). D&S IFCA participated in an ICES stock identification workshop for the 'Benchmark on selected sea bass stocks' (WKBSEABASS-ID; [report available in ICES library](#)) and participated in the ICES Workshop on Bristol and Western Channel Herring (WKRRBWCH) in December 2023.

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

05

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

Work relating to this workstream is expected to continue into FY 2023/2024 in particular in relation to the development & proposed material changes to the water intakes at Hinkley C. This 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.

Report:

Officers have continued to engage with the Hinkley Point C (HPC) Marine Technical Forum and attend meetings with HPC staff and other regulators to discuss environmental permitting and consents for HPC. Officers have also engaged with relevant scientists to gather additional evidence relating to relevant fish species in the vicinity of HPC. In February 2024, officers responded to an HPC consultation for the pre-application phase of a material change to HPC's major planning consent (Development Consent Order), which included responding to proposals to (i) remove the acoustic fish deterrent from the cooling water intakes, and (ii) provide alternative measures to compensate for the resulting harm caused to fish populations.

06

Crustacea Fisheries Engagement

To engage with potting fishers in the District to listen to their concerns about crab and lobster stocks and consider what further management measures would be appropriate.

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Report:

Engagement with fishers commenced in 2023 whilst D&S IFCA officers were on-board fishers' vessels undertaking lobster surveys. More structured engagement with potters fishing for crab, lobster and whelk commenced in early 2024 where port meetings were conducted in Clovelly, Appledore and Ilfracombe. These meetings were well attended, and potting fishers engaged with officers to discuss their concerns with crustacea stocks and management of these fisheries inside D&S IFCA's District, regionally and nationally. The fishers also provided detailed information on their potting activity and location of their operations in the District, which will help inform marine licence applications and consultation responses as part of the Marine Spatial Prioritisation Programme (task 04). Further port meetings are planned in 2024 for Padstow (fishers from Padstow and Port Isaac operate around Lundy) and ports along the South Coast of Devon. Officers also attended two workshops and two fishing industry meetings regarding crawfish (spiny lobster) management, involving fishers from Devon, Cornwall, and the Isles of Scilly as well as the MMO, Cefas, Natural England and academic institutions.

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.

07

Netting Permit Conditions Review (communication aspect)

KG

As part of the Netting Permit Conditions review, there will be an “open” phase of informal consultation to enable all stakeholders to provide their views on current management and to submit any additional evidence. The findings, along with relevant and collated evidence, both from the informal exercise and research (such as findings from the Bass survivability study) will be discussed by the B&PSC. From those discussions, there is potential that appropriate changes to the Permit Conditions will be identified and, if so, formal consultation will be undertaken.

Report:

The pre-consultation began on 19th May 2023 and ended on 30th June 2023. A report was produced for the B&PSC and discussed on 31st August 2023. To reflect the decision making of B&PSC Members, formal consultation was undertaken on a series of proposed changes to the Netting Permit Conditions. The formal consultation began on 1st December 2023 and ended on 19th January 2024. In both cases, communications for consultations included direct circulation of information (Mail Chimp) and a communication package (news/text) used on both the website (Latest News Page & Engagement Page) and Facebook. Stakeholders were encouraged to contact the Officers if they had any questions about the review. There were 364 responses to the formal consultation – the highest response D&S IFCA has ever had to a consultation. For context, Defra received a total of 255 responses to its national Bass Fisheries Management Plan consultation. Many of those that participated in the review were impressed with the detail and availability of background information that were made available as part of the communication package (including hyperlinks to Officers’ papers and minutes from B&PSC meetings). Officers have confidence that the existing Communications Strategy is effective.

08

Fisheries Management Plan Engagement

KG

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.

Report:

D&S IFCA continued to be the IFCA lead in the Crab and Lobster FMP Working Group, Science Sub-Group and the Shellfish Industry Advisory Group. D&S IFCA has provide input into the development of the FMP and its evidence statement and research priorities. D&S IFCA has disseminated information to all relevant permit holders, D&S IFCA Members and the wider public regarding in person and on-line engagement events. D&S IFCA continued to be the lead IFCA in the Channel NQS FMP and is a member of the NQS FMP’s working group. Since 1st April 2023 there has been 7 separate mail shots (email circular or Mailchimp) to highlight FMP development and engagement opportunities. Two news items have been produced (May and August) to highlight relevant FMP information – to advertise Defra Flyers and Defra consultations on six front runner FMPs. D&S IFCA Officers provided detailed responses to five out of the six frontrunner FMP consultation in 2023 which included Crab & Lobster, Whelk, Scallop, Bass and Channel NQS FMPs. D&S IFCA continues to sit on the groups and is now inputting into short term management interventions. Officers sit on Tranche 2 FMPs for Skates and Rays and have been invited to join the Celtic Sea and Western Channel Pelagic FMP and North Sea and Channel Sprat FMP.

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

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 and/or offences.

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.

09

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).

Report:

Work has not begun on the review of the Compliance and Enforcement Strategy. There was one meeting of the GWG between 1st April 2023 and the end of February 2024. The GWG meeting in 2023 did not focus on the review of the Compliance and Enforcement Strategy.

10

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.

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Report:

Officers have spent considerable time monitoring spatial data from the towed gear vessels operating in its District. Five formal investigations have been started in the reporting period involving one case of non-reporting IVMS device and four cases of suspected illegal incursions by towed gear boats into Marine Protected Areas. Two MPA investigations involved foreign vessels. In addition, a further four cases from previous years have been concluded.

11

Tasking & Co-ordination Group

To hold bi-weekly 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.

Report:

Officers have held regular internal TCG meetings and there has been a total of eight TCG meetings since 1st April 2023. Officers also attend the MMO's south and south west TCG meetings as well as Southern IFCA's TCG meetings.

Since 1st April 2023 officers have produced 141 Intelligence Reports. These have been produced through a combination of officers' own observations and investigations, together with the information being provided from stakeholders including members of the public.

12

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.

Report:

Since 1st April 2023, 44 case files have been created (task 13). Only five of these cases have not yet reached disposal. Officers introduced a triage process map for minor infringements (no permit) making these type of offences less resource heavy and providing the ability to reach disposal in a timelier manner. Officers have also introduced an investigation process map setting out the stages all investigations should follow, which encourages standardisation along with reducing the burden on officers undertaking what could be unnecessary work.

13

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.

Report:

The investigation tables can be viewed on D&S IFCA's website:

<https://www.devonandsevernifca.gov.uk/Enforcement-Legislation/Investigation-Tables>

14

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.

Report:

The national code of Conduct is posted on D&S IFCA's website – Section E of the Resource Library (Enforcement Related Guidance Documents - folder).

15

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.

Report:

Four of the officers have completed the RYA Small Ships and Radar course. Two of the officers have completed the RYA Advanced Powerboat course. One officer has completed the RYA Yacht-Master theory course, and one officer has completed the First Aid at Work course. Five officers have undertaken EA/CIFCA Cross Warrant training. There were no STCW training courses undertaken since 1st April 2023.

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.

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.

16

Collaborate with Other Regulators.

To work with other regulators to achieve consistent quality, application, and enforcement of management measures.

D&S IFCA has led IFCA representation on the MMO IVMS project for an extended period of time and provided experience gained from the rolling out of IVMS on all D&S IFCA's Mobile Fishing vessels since 2018. It is envisaged that completion of the MMO's roll-out and D&S IFCA's involvement in the project will continue throughout 2023/2024 to provide consistency in IFCA support.

Report:

Together with the EA and CIFCA, officers attend what has now become a regular annual cross warrant meeting, where each organisation delivers a presentation to cover mutually relevant parts of each organisation's legislation, discuss areas of joint risk to enable us to issue cross warrants. This benefits D&S IFCA, with officers from CIFCA and EA cross warranted, particularly valuable in providing a presence on the North Coast, and in providing mutual support with resource.

Due to other commitments, attendance at NIMEG meetings has not been fully met but to minimise the impact and cost of attending meeting the schedule has been amended so meetings will be virtual with one two-day face to face meetings each year. This will reduce the impact and costs and the ability to attend all meetings. Officers also jointly chair the Inshore Potting Agreement Committee meeting with the MMO. Management measures have been amended through MMO fishing vessel licence conditions and D&S IFCA permit conditions to reflect the decision made at this meeting.

Officers hold regular meetings with the Natural England Area Team and the MMO Marine Licencing Team, in order to ensure efficient approaches to a range of management-relevant issues. Officers have also held meetings with Cornwall IFCA and the MMO to discuss assessment and management of activities in the Bristol Channel Approaches SAC (a cross-border marine protected area designated for harbour porpoise) and attended an MMO run workshop on the potential management of fishing activities to prevent bycatch of harbour porpoise in the two offshore harbour porpoise MPAs. This workshop included representatives from MMO, Natural England, JNCC, NRW, Defra, CIFCA, D&S IFCA and EIFCA. D&S IFCA has also attended meetings with the Duchy of Cornwall to discuss the Waddeton Order on the Dart and the future of intertidal shellfisheries within Duchy owned estuaries in Devon.

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.

17

Review of the existing Netting Permit Conditions

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The Netting Permit Conditions were due for a formal review in 2021. Stakeholder expectations are that this review will be undertaken; however, it is advantageous that relevant information to inform the review is available at key phases of discussion and decision-making otherwise momentum is lost. The task of reviewing the Netting Permit Byelaw and Permit Conditions will begin and involve different phases, which will all be documented. There will be an "open" phase of consultation to enable all stakeholders to provide their views on current management. The findings, along with relevant and collated evidence (such as findings from the Bass survivability study) will be discussed by the B&PSC. From those discussions, there is potential that appropriate changes to the Permit Conditions will be identified. If so, further consultation will be undertaken including setting out what the changes would look like as amended Permit Conditions. The review includes communications, administration, and potential drafting of Permit Conditions.

Report:

The task of reviewing the Netting Permit Byelaw and Permit Conditions has involved different phases. Initially there was an "open" phase of consultation that enabled all stakeholders to provide their views on current management. The findings, along with relevant and collated evidence (such as findings from the Bass Survivability Study) was discussed by the B&PSC in August and November 2023. From those discussions, potential changes to management measures were identified by the B&PSC to be set out in a formal consultation. This included the opening of Salcombe Estuary to fixed netting, a topic not recommended by officers to be included in the formal consultation. This addition as a topic for formal consultation resulted in a significant amount of unplanned additional work for officers, and some financial costs to the Authority including the purchase and testing of technology - tagging of nets. There was a B&PSC meeting on 22nd February 2024 with officers' papers including the findings of the formal consultation. A decision was reached on what changes to make to the Netting Permit Conditions. To complete this task, officers must make changes to the Netting Permit Conditions to reflect the decision making of Members and issue the amended Netting Permit Conditions.

18

Introducing the Size of Fishing Vessels Byelaw 2022

KG

Following additional quality assurance from the BTWG, Officers will prepare a final Impact Assessment that recognises the formal consultation response (discussed by the B&PSC in February 2023). A package of information will be sent to the Marine Management Organisation (MMO) for quality assurance prior to submission to the Secretary of State for potential confirmation. Depending on the feedback provided by the MMO, the B&PSC may decide to undertake further decision making. Additional work will include communications and administration.

**Report:**

A package of information (proposed Byelaw, Impact Assessment, proof of advertising, minutes of meetings) were sent to the MMO (byelaw review/legal team) in late May 2023. The MMO confirmed receipt of the proposed Size of Fishing Vessels Byelaw 2022. The MMO was unable to provide feedback and advice within the expected 45-day period for Quality Assurance; however, on 3rd August 2023, the MMO provided feedback on the proposed Size of Fishing Vessels Byelaw 2022 and the accompanying Impact Assessment. Changes to both the Byelaw and the Impact Assessment were recommended by the MMO before the Byelaw was submitted to the Secretary of State. Officers analysed the comments and discussed the feedback with the Byelaw Technical Working Group. Officers applied minor changes to the Byelaw. The Byelaw was sent back to the MMO with a revised Impact Assessment on 13th December 2023. The Byelaw was submitted to Defra on 15th December 2023 with a recommendation from the MMO that it is signed by the Secretary of State. The Byelaw cannot be introduced until it is signed.

19**Introducing the Mobile Fishing Permit Byelaw 2022****KG**

Following additional drafting work by the BTWG to recognise the objections (relating to the associated Permit Conditions) submitted during the formal consultation (discussed in February 2022), Officers will prepare a final Impact Assessment that recognises the formal consultation response and the adjustments to the Byelaw (and Permit Conditions) as proposed in the formal consultation. A package of information will be sent to the Marine Management Organisation (MMO) for quality assurance prior to submission to the Secretary of State for potential confirmation. Depending on the feedback provided by the MMO, the B&PSC may decide to undertake further decision making. Additional work will include communications and administration and changes to the on-line permit application facility.

**Report:**

The MMO (byelaw review/legal team) was provided with a package of information in late May 2023 which included the proposed Byelaw, Impact Assessment, proof of advertising, minutes of meetings and (for context) the proposed Permit Conditions. The MMO confirmed receipt of the proposed Mobile Fishing Permit Byelaw 2022; however, the MMO was unable to provide feedback and advice for quality assurance purposes within the expected 45-day period. D&S IFCA officers received a package of information relating to MMO comments and advice in December 2023 (Byelaw feedback) and in January 2024 (Impact Assessment feedback). Officers have worked with the Byelaw Technical Working Group and subsequently amended the Byelaw. Officers have produced an amended Impact Assessment and completed the MMO/D&S IFCA comments spreadsheet. On 22nd February 2024 the revised package was returned to the MMO. Officers have requested an additional meeting with the MMO to complete the financial element of the Impact Assessment. After this it is the expectation of officers that the byelaw will be sent to Defra for confirmation. Remaining tasks include re-drafting the associated permit conditions. The Byelaw includes a delayed commencement of 14 days after signature. If the Byelaw is approved by the Secretary of State, officers would use this time to issue new permit conditions and associated Annexes.

20

Bass Survivability

To continue to investigate the survival of bass tagged in 2022/2023 after being caught by nets and to maintain the acoustic monitoring of the use of the Salcombe estuary by tagged bass. The acoustic and vitality data collected will be analysed and a report published on this work which will be presented to the B&PSC.

Report:

Officers published the final report 'Understanding Mortality of European Sea Bass (*Dicentrarchus labrax*) in Small-Scale Inshore Netting' on 22nd August 2023. This report was followed by a supplementary data file on 25th August 2023 in response to a request for additional information from an Authority Member. The report was presented as Agenda Item 6 at the B&PSC meeting on 31st August 2023. The report was discussed at length, and the evidence informed later discussions on the review of Netting Permit Conditions. It was agreed at the B&PSC meeting that there should be some minor amendments made to the report and the amended report (version 1.1) was finalised on 1st November 2023.

21

EMS/MCZ Assessments

To complete outstanding MCZ assessments and review MPA assessments as and when required. This is a workstream that continues into the Annual Plan 2023/2024 as assessments are reviewed in light of MPA conditional assessments provided by Natural England and designation of new features. Defra has provided IFCAs with additional funding to support its expectation that all MPA assessments will be undertaken by the summer of 2024.

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Report:

Almost all the outstanding assessments for all Tranches of MCZ have been completed. The only outstanding MCZ assessment, which is drafted and almost ready to send to Natural England for formal advice, is for netting in the Devon Avon Estuary MCZ. The MCZ assessments for potting and netting in the Torbay MCZ were completed and formal advice was received from Natural England on 23rd November 2023. Natural England agreed that further evidence and information needs to be gathered to understand the fishing behaviour in the MCZ and the degree to which seagrass beds and long snouted seahorses may be impacted by static gear fisheries. D&S IFCA officers are conducting meetings with fishers in the District to ascertain the level of effort and to provide more details on their fishing activity. The meetings for Torbay will be undertaken in 2024 and updated assessments will be produced in light of the information gathered. Monitoring and Control Plans are also in place and have been actively reviewed for several gear-feature interactions. The only outstanding Habitat Regulations Assessments that need to be completed are for the Bristol Channel and Approaches SAC, where Harbour Porpoise is the designated feature. D&S IFCA has been in discussions with the MMO and CIFCA, who share responsibility for management of fishing activities within the site, and have attended meetings and workshops, the latest of which was in February 2024 to understand the MMO's approach to managing fishing activity in this site. The MMO has shared their Harbour Porpoise Impacts Evidence Statement with D&S IFCA which will help inform Officers' assessments. Additional HRAs (three) and MCZ assessments (two) have been undertaken as part of the process of determining requests for exemption from D&S IFCA's Byelaws, and an HRA and MCZ assessment was conducted for aquaculture activities in the Dart. Officers have also provided details of all the MPA assessments completed since 2012 to the AIFCA and Defra, explaining the formal advice received from Natural England, what management is in place and whether those outstanding will be completed with management in place by 2024 to fulfil UK commitment under the Environmental Improvement Plan. Officers have also attended several meetings with the MMO regarding the MMO's potential approach to managing offshore MPAs that straddle the 6nm boundary of D&S IFCA's District.



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.

EMS / MCZ Assessments

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 2023/2024 as M&CPs are reviewed annually to inform whether additional management is required.

Report:

Officers produced Monitoring and Control Plans (M&CPs) for netting and potting on the features (seagrass and long-snouted seahorse) in Torbay MCZ in September 2023 which support the formal advice from Natural England for these activities in the site. The M&CPs for towed gear in Lundy SAC and Torbay MCZ are reviewed annually in February/March. Draft updated reports have been produced and will be sent to Natural England for comment by the end of the FY 2023/2024.

The remaining M&CPs are netting vs shad (Severn Estuary SAC), netting vs shad (Plymouth Sound and Estuaries SAC), and potting vs seagrass (Plymouth Sound and Estuaries SAC). These are no longer formally reported on unless specified trigger points are exceeded. Trigger points, for the netting vs shad within Severn Estuary SAC and Plymouth Sound and Estuaries SAC, were set following the publication of the Monitoring and Control Plans in 2021-2022 and agreed by Natural England. The trigger points relate to increases in the number of permit holders from localised ports, undertaking the specific activity. D&S IFCA encourages permit holders to report bycatch of shad through its bycatch reporting initiative which fulfils the M&CPs' agreed actions. For potting on seagrass within the Plymouth Sound and Estuaries SAC, NE agreed the trigger point of an increase of 25% in active potting permits with the base ports of Plymouth, River Yealm and Saltash using the 2021 baseline reported number of permits issued. For these M&CPs if trigger points are exceeded then a review of the HRAs will be undertaken. An audit trail (Excel spreadsheet) is maintained annually for these trigger point assessments. The Audit trail for 2023/2024 is currently being updated.

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 and landings data for analysis to measure compliance with the Commercial Diving Permit Conditions during these months.

Report:

Data collation, including IVMS data, Catch app data, sales notes, and landings data, for the vessels operating in the commercial dive fishery during July, August, and September 2023, has not been undertaken. Collation, analysis, and reporting from the two previous years will take place in 2024/2025. Additional research on the timing of scallop spawning in the District was undertaken up to October 2023, to provide further evidence to the report on scallop spawning published in May 2023. This report has yet to be updated. Since sampling began in late March 2023, 18 samples (each of 30 scallops from Torbay) have been processed and data collected will be analysed in 2024/2025.

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.

24

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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. 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.

Report:

D&S IFCA has reviewed all the consultation documentation associated with the five front-runner FMPS that are relevant to the D&S IFCA District. This involved thorough review of the FMP itself together with the Evidence statement and fisheries data, research requirements and Strategic Environmental Assessments. Officers provided written responses on the Bass FMP, Whelk FMP, King Scallop FMP, Crab and Lobster FMP and Channel Non-quota Species FMP frontrunner FMPs and shared these with Members of the B&PSC for comment. Responses were submitted to Defra before 1st October 2023. D&S IFCA continues to sit on the groups and is now inputting into short term management interventions. Officers attended Defra's conference on identifying evidence gaps in the Frontrunner FMPs in February 2024. Officers sit on Tranche 2 FMPs for Skates and Rays and have been invited to join the Celtic Sea and Western Channel Pelagic FMP.

25

Taw Torridge Bivalve Mollusc Stock Assessments

To assess the intertidal mussel and cockle stocks in the Taw Torridge Estuary. Officers will survey 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.

Report:

Officers have surveyed the cockle beds and three out of the five established mussel beds on the Taw-Torridge. Officers have also identified and surveyed a newly settled area of mussel that had not previously been surveyed. Logistical constraints in accessing mid-channel beds (Pulleys and Sprat Ridge) meant that officers worked with a drone operator who undertook an aerial survey of the remaining beds, at the end of September 2023. Analysis of the footage has commenced to determine if the footage can be used to identify live and dead mussels and input into the stock assessment for the Taw Torridge mussel beds. Analysis of these data will continue in 2024/25 to inform planning of future surveys. Officers visited the Pulleys bed at low water on a big spring tide in February 2024 to ground-truth some of the data gathered by the aerial survey and were encouraged with the amount of mussel that was present on this bed. However, given tidal time restraints, a full survey was not undertaken but the discovery of the mussel settlement will help inform the survey work for 2024/2025.

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.

26

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 Byelaw permit conditions and MMO Licence Variation.

Report:

A meeting of the Inshore Potting Agreement (IPA) Committee was held on Monday 30th October 2023, where D&S IFCA and MMO jointly chair the meeting. Updates at the meeting included any spatial infringements in the IPA, rollout of the REM trials in the D&S IFCA's District and management of the Skerries Bank and Surrounds MCZ and Start Point to Plymouth Sound and Eddystone SAC which co-locate with the IPA areas. Minutes of the October 2023 meeting were taken, and draft minutes shared with Committee Members in December 2023. Due to the infringement identified in 2023 in the Corridor of the IPA Area (Area C of D&S IFCA's Mobile Fishing Permit Annex 5a) the Committee made the decision to close the Corridor for 2024. D&S IFCA officers have amended the Mobile Fishing Permit Byelaw Category One Permit Conditions and the chart for Annex 5a to show this change, following a brief period of consultation with Mobile Fishing Permit holders. The amended Mobile Fishing Permit Byelaw Category One Permit Conditions and annexes were circulated to permit holders on 28th February 2024.

27

Exemption Authorisations

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

Report:

Officers assess and process exemption requests as required and within 60 days of receipt. Where the proposed activity involves a gear-feature interaction within a protected area, the necessary protected site assessments are carried out and sent to NE for formal advice before the exemption is authorised. D&S IFCA's website is updated to reflect all current and ongoing exemptions. Twenty authorisations have been issued since the beginning of April 2023, and officers have held discussions with regulators on upcoming exemption requests. A table of Exemptions/Authorisations can be viewed on D&S IFCA's website.

<https://www.devonandsevernifca.gov.uk/Enforcement-Legislation/Exemptions-to-Byelaws>

28

Trialling New Technologies

KG

To secure external funding to continue the trial of REM and cameras and sensors on 10 scallop dredgers operating within the D&S IFCA's District to further test its success and application. This is with a view to potentially use these technologies to further manage the exploitation of sea fish resources in Marine Protected Areas in the District and protect sensitive designated features.

To extend the REM trial onto potting vessels in the District to assess the suitability of this technology on these vessels.

Report:

This project was expected to start in April but for various reasons has not progressed as quickly as first envisaged. Seven vessel owners volunteered to be part of the second phase of the Remote Electronic Monitoring trials. To date cameras and gear sensors have been fitted to five vessels during September and October 2023. An extension to the Fisheries and Seafood Scheme funded project was granted until end of April 2024 due to the late start of the project. The vessels involved in the second phase of the trial included both otter trawlers and scallop dredging vessels. The varying size of the vessels and the different fishing methods will help to demonstrate the applicability of the technology across all demersal towed gears.

Work has not begun on extending the trial to potting vessels due to delivering other workstreams.

29

Crustacea Research (1)

KG

To gather data on crustacean catches, fishing effort and gear used and to determine the seasonality of egg bearing of lobsters.

Officers will undertake surveys on board fishing vessels operating in the D&S IFCA's District, throughout the year, 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. This evidence will help inform the use of the enforcement tools that may be used to identify if a berried lobster has been scrubbed of its eggs.

Report:

Officers have undertaken lobster surveys regularly throughout the summer and autumn 2023, on board several fishing boats operating in the North and South of the District. A total of 16 surveys have been undertaken at time of writing. Morphometric data have been collected on carapace length, sex, abdomen width and claw size and, for those lobsters that are egg bearing, the condition and developmental stage of the eggs has been recorded. All data collected have been inputted in spreadsheets for analysis later in 2024. Further survey work to be undertaken in 2024 to gather a second year's worth of data.

30

Crustacea Research (2)

KG

Measuring the Hardness of the shell of edible 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 Researcher (funded through the project) will be trialling the durometers on board fishing vessels in the D&S IFCA's District.

Report:

The progress of this workstream has been delayed in 2023 but will be progressed in 2024. D&S IFCA has been involved in the project, together with Bangor University and South Devon and Channel Shellfishermen and has undertaken two rounds of interviews to recruit a Research Assistant that will be funded by the Fisheries Industry Science Partnership (FISP) project. A candidate was selected in the second round of recruitment in December 2023, and they accepted the position. This ensures that the project can commence in late spring 2024. Durometers, which will be trialled to determine the harness of the shell of brown crab, have been purchased. Officers, together with the Executive Officer of the South Devon and Channel Shellfishermen, visited the Blue Sea Company to trial the durometers on crabs that were about to be processed. They appeared to work well and Bangor University (who is lead on the Project) will be developing some weights that can be fitted to the durometer to ensure consistency in the pressure applied to the shell. This is an on-going workstream for 2024 and results will feed into the development of early interventions for the Crab and Lobster FMP.

31

Crustacea Research (3)

KG

Catch/Landings Data

As part of the 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.

Report:

Officers have been gathering data on lobster catches whilst on-board fishing vessels as part of Crustacea Research (1). Due to the failure to recruit the FISP funded Research Assistant early in 2023, the gathering of data for crab catches, landings and activity has been pushed back into 2024. The gathering of the crab catch data on board fishing vessel will be combined with testing the use of durometers to measure the hardness of the shell of brown crab so that officers use their time on board fishing vessel to gather as much information as possible.

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. Officers will also gather information on the different methods of marking gear by the sectors operating in the areas and help disseminate this information to the angling sector who use the site.

Report:

Following on from the call for information on the Skerries Bank Angling Zone undertaken in FY 2022/2023, officers have reviewed all responses, and a consultation report was published in April 2023. The surveys to date have identified a greater need to be able to accurately determine the use of the site and the seasonality of activity within the site. The wider (national) rollout of IVMS devices to netting vessels will provide detailed information on the fishing activity in the site and Catch App and landings data can be analysed together with IVMS data in 2024/2025. A long-term plan will then be developed.

Intentionally blank

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.

33

Annual Plan (and submit to Defra)

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

Report:

The approved Annual Plan for 2024/2025 will be published on the website by 31st March 2024. It is anticipated that it will be the same structure and presentational design as the Annual Plan for FY 2023/2024. Although the task is not completed yet, and therefore marked red, it will be completed by 31st March 2024, providing the Annual Plan is approved by the Authority at the March Authority meeting.

34

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.

Report:

The official Annual Report FY 2022/2023 was published at the beginning of this financial year and sent to the Secretary of State. It was completed well before the deadline of 30th November 2023. This eleven-month report for FY 2023/2024 will help officers prepare the Annual Report for FY 2023/2024 that will be submitted to Defra after April 2024 and published on D&S IFCA's website.

35

Workstream Reporting

To accurately record time spent by Officers in different areas of work to inform the Annual Report and to assist with the Annual Plan.

Report:

All officers continue to report hours worked and this is used to calculate weekly totals and to monitor TOIL accumulated. The recording system has been simplified and is less detailed than originally planned; however, it is the view of officers that the level of detail now obtained from a reduced number of task codes is sufficient for reporting purposes without being overly time consuming for officers.

36

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.

Report:

The Chair wrote to the Secretary of State and on a further two occasions to the Minister for Farming, Fisheries and Food setting out the financial crisis that D&S IFCA is experiencing. Defra has confirmed that it has engaged with D&S IFCA's funding Local Authorities and that it intends to continue discussion with the Local Authorities in 2024/25 to seek a revised funding structure for D&S IFCA. A three-year financial plan (2025/26 – 2027/28) that identified the scale of the crisis facing D&S IFCA was produced for D&S IFCA Members in January 2024 and provided to the Minister and Defra in February 2024.

37

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.

Report:

All officers have undertaken personal development plan review and appraisals this year. The plans have highlighted where training is required. Environment officers have undertaken additional R statistics training to increase their capability in analysing data. A new assessment method for appraisals has been introduced and used for the Senior Management Team. This is based on the newly updated Job Profiles, resulting from the recent Job Evaluation process (task 38). It is envisaged that this new approach for the appraisals will be rolled out for all Officers.

38

Job Evaluation Exercise for all D&S IFCA Staff

A job evaluation process was undertaken in FY 2022/2023 by Cornwall County Council (CCC). CCC were also tasked to undertake a benchmarking exercise to review current pay scales compared with other organisations. The outcome of the Job Evaluation exercise will be reported to the Authority later in 2023, potentially at the AGM.

Report:

A report summarising the outcomes of the job evaluation was presented to Members at the AGM on 15th June 2023. Following Members' agreement at the meeting, a further officers' paper was developed with the assistance of the Authority's Governance Working Group. The paper was presented at the September Authority meeting and as a result of the Members' decision, D&S IFCA has adopted a new pay scale, including unsocial payments where relevant. In addition, officers have developed and implemented a policy to cover work undertaken in exceptional circumstances. Updated Job Profiles and Role Information Questionnaires were prepared as part of the Job Evaluation process.

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.

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.

39

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.

Report:

Authority meetings have taken place this financial year on 15th June 2023, 21st September 2023, and 25th January 2024. All information other than Part 2 information is published on the website – Meetings tab and within the Resource Library. Draft minutes that have been initially reviewed by Members are also published, along with minutes that have been approved at the following meeting.

B&PSC meetings have taken place this financial year on 31st August 2023, 16th November 2023, and 22nd February 2024. All papers and reports for B&PSC are published in the same way as the Authority papers. It is the same process for minutes of the B&PSC meetings as it is for the Authority meeting minutes with both draft minutes and approved minutes being accessible to the public.

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.

40

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.

Report:

A mixture of in-person and virtual meetings is now in place, including the monthly staff meeting. Virtual meetings continue to provide flexibility and have been used for team meetings and also working group meetings that have included Members of the Authority. There have been virtual meetings of the Governance Working Group, Byelaw Technical Working Group and pre-meetings (preparation for formal meetings) involving the Chair, Vice Chair, and the Chair of the B&PSC. Virtual meetings have been of use to help prepare the officer papers for the formal meetings.

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.

41

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.

Report:

A range of research planning and survey work has been undertaken, including: intertidal mollusc surveys (task 25); on-board crustacea surveys (tasks 29 & 30); and scallop spawning research (task 23). Additional survey planning was carried out for a drop-down video (DDV) and still camera survey in part of the Start Point to Plymouth Sound and Eddystone (SPPSE) Special Area of Conservation (SAC). This survey investigated the location and quality of the coarse sediment in the area. It will also be used to ground truth some of the most recent habitat maps provided by NE for the rock feature. Cornwall IFCA completed 12 of the survey sites with the DDV and still camera on 24th August 2023. Poor weather limited further survey work. Officers have also contributed to the planning of a PhD research programme to fulfil evidence needs on essential fish habitat; this work (led by the University of Plymouth) commenced in October 2023 and focusses largely on the Severn Estuary. Reactive research planning has also been undertaken for emerging research such as linking IVMS and landings data to demonstrate the economic importance of specific areas to the inshore fleet. Planning for the potting and netting activity surveys with fishers has taken place and meetings commenced in January 2024 (task 21).

42

Research Reporting

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

Report:

Additions to Sections H (Research) of the website Resource Library since 1st April include:

- Understanding Mortality of European Sea Bass (*Dicentrarchus labrax*) in Small-Scale Inshore Netting (August 2023)
- Supplementary data for above report (Aug 2023).
- Understanding Mortality of European Sea Bass (*Dicentrarchus labrax*) in Small-Scale Inshore Netting (updated Version 1.1 November 2023)
- Erme Estuary. Devon Avon Estuary & Otter Estuary MCZ Assessments (mixed assessments) & Fishing Activity Reports.
- Timing of King Scallop Spawning in D&S IFCA's District (April 2023)
- Skerries Bank Angling Zone – Call for Information (2022) - Consultation Response (published April 2023)

Officers have contributed to mariculture research undertaken by Exeter University and fed into a publication 'Positive tipping points for sustainable growth of bivalve shellfish mariculture in England and Wales' in the journal Marine Policy.

43

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.

Report:

A virtual TAG meeting was attended in May 2023. The MMO gave an overview of their proposed MPA management progress project. AIFCA gave an update on the Marine Natural Capital and Ecosystem Assessment programme. Cefas gave an update on their One Health Project and some IFCA's gave updates on various projects including permitting systems. Officers also attended an in-person TAG meeting in London in November 2023 and a virtual meeting in February 2024. These meetings provide the forum for all IFCA's and other agencies, such as Natural England, Environment Agency, Cefas, Welsh Government and the MMO, to provide updates and share their expertise and research needs, developments in methodologies for research and discuss training needs. Presentations are also given by academic institutes who have worked closely with IFCA's to help gather evidence and inform the IFCA's' research role. TAG members share research and developments undertaken through a national mapping tool which provides the opportunity to learn from each other.

44

Standard Operating Procedures

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

Report:

Officers continue to review and develop SOPs as and when required. D&S IFCA fed into a national inventory of all IFCA's' Health and Safety policies, procedures, and SOPs. Risk assessments continue to be reviewed when necessary and a new accident reporting procedure has been developed. All Health and Safety policies, procedures and risk assessments are shared with officers and are available on the Members part of the website so are accessible to all officers in the field. The IAuditor system is used to undertake vessel checks, vehicle checks and accident, incident and near misses reporting.

45

MEDIN

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

Report:

MEDIN is updated to reflect updated data availability from relevant D&S IFCA habitat and mollusc surveys. Relevant data for surveys undertaken during 2023 are yet to be uploaded, but officers are working towards integrating MEDIN metadata uploads into the usual reporting workflow to improve efficiency in the future.

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.

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

46

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.

Report:

D&S IFCA officers worked with many universities including Plymouth, Exeter and Bangor to provide data and research information and letters of support for research funding opportunities. D&S IFCA has also received enquiries from fishers, scientists, students, and other stakeholders and provided relevant fisheries and conservation information.

47

Research Databases and Literature Review

D&S IFCA gathers and uses a wide range of literature to undertake and inform its research work. This is maintained in the internal filing system within the relevant topic specific folders. Officers also 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.

Report:

Officers use a wide range of evidence in their work; all reports list the research papers and other evidence sources used.