

AIFCA Chief Officer's Report

ESCaRP

Defra commissioned Natural England to investigate the most likely causes of decline in seabirds in England. The resulting report forms the [English Seabird Conservation and Recovery Pathway](#) – or ESCaRP for short. ESCaRP is a set of 74 actions designed to bring about seabird recovery, grouped into 19 recommendations across four themes. Each action stems from an evidence-led analysis process that factored in seabird distribution, the distribution of 'pressures' resulting from human activities, and the sensitivity of seabirds to those pressures (i.e. how likely they are to be negatively impacted). ESCaRP is part of the Government's [Environmental Improvement Plan](#). The IFCA's are identified as partners to deliver actions which form part of the plan and the AIFCA has been liaising with Defra regarding prioritising actions which result from the plan.

Catchwise Recreational Angling Survey

Catchwise is a project investigating the social and economic impact of recreational sea fishing in England and Wales. The AIFCA is on the Catchwise Steering Group. The project has released a survey and anglers can help the understanding of the social and economic impact of recreational fishing by taking part in a survey. The survey is aimed at any recreational sea angler that have been fishing either on the shore, a private boat or charter boat in the last 12 months in England and Wales. This survey will highlight the importance of recreational sea angling to its coastal communities and on individual mental health and wellbeing. This data is important for making decisions on management and development. To find out more and to participate in the survey please use the following link. <https://www.smartsurvey.co.uk/s/PartnersAngler2024/>

New research published on the role of IFCA's

The research compares and contrasts the progress made in the management of inshore and offshore waters in UK. The evidence demonstrates the effectiveness of the IFCA's. The research published in the leading academic journal, Marine Policy is entitled "Delivering effective and equitably governed marine protected area networks in the UK: The role of Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authorities (IFCA's)".

Why IFCA's are well suited to deliver MPA network vision: 3 interconnected attributes:

1. Relevant regional knowledge (evidence providers and understanding of local context). IFCA's collect and communicate up to date and context specific evidence / tailored knowledge requirements to enhance MPA legitimacy amongst stakeholders
2. Effective engagement and inclusive deliberative platforms: Stakeholder networks and relationships/ facilitators (example HPMA Holy Island, Sussex nearshore trawling byelaw)
3. Empowered policy delivers / legislative powers to design, deliver and enforce: Ownership over the whole process

Read the open access paper here: <https://sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0308597X24004494>

New Research Published on the duties of IFCA's

Dr Emma Bean, Prof Mike Williams and Jason Lowther have published on the interpretation of section 153 MACAA and the parameters of IFCA powers. It is a very positive endorsement of IFCA's at the same time as explaining the pressures they are under. It really

shines a light on IFCAs being 'pace-setters' in terms of the Marine regulatory model. (link to the open access article here <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/14614529241289673>)

Inshore Fisheries Workshops



Securing sustainable inshore and small-scale fisheries: progressing a collective vision and priority action plan.

Residential workshop:
Southern region: RNLI college, Poole. 23rd- 25th Sept 2024

Organisation team: Sarah Coulthard, Newcastle University, Robert Clark, Association of Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authorities (AIFCA), Sam Fanshawe, Joe Richards and Emily Bulled, Blue Marine Foundation, Jerry Percy (formally NUTFA), Joe Redfern, Whitby Lobster Hatchery, Ed Baker, CEO Plymouth Fishing and Seafood Association, Bally Philp, Scottish Creel Fishermen's Federation, Bryce Stewart, Marine Biological Association.

The AIFCA working with a range of partners has delivered two regional workshop which have sought to understand and identify plausible solutions to address the decline in the UK inshore and small-scale fishing fleet. Whilst the fishing industry as a whole is in decline, recent data show that in England the decline is particularly evident in the under 10m sector, who can experience challenges in ways that are currently poorly understood. These workshops seek to create a platform to share knowledge and document the multiple challenges facing the inshore fishing fleet, across the country, and distil fisher-led ideas about priority actions that could help stem the loss of boats. This two workshops, one in Poole (in late September) and the other in Whitby aim to provide engagement with the English fleet.

The workshops bring together fishers who predominantly fish inshore, representatives from fisher organisations, fisheries managers, NGOs, academics, and policy makers, all of whom share concern about the ongoing loss of boats from our fishing fleet and the subsequent erosion of national benefits and heritage that fishing communities provide. We aim to distil from the workshops a set of recommendations to feed into ongoing policy discussions, heightening visibility of the particular needs of the inshore and small-scale fishing sectors. Whilst these first workshops are focussed on the under 10m boats, we envision that outputs will be useful for the wider fleet and could lead to future workshops addressing the decline more generally and in other parts of the UK.



ICES conference

In September the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES) held their annual conference in Gateshead. Hosted by GB Government and alongside Northumberland IFCA, the AIFCA sponsored the conference. The AIFCA joined the panel discussion for the opening keynote presentation by Louisa Evans of Exeter University, on advancing the frontiers of transdisciplinary marine science. The IFCA's research was very well represented on this international stage with presentations from Sussex IFCA and Northumberland IFCA. For the duration of the conference the IFCA welcomed scientists from around the globe onboard Northumberland vessel St Aidan. This provided an excellent opportunity to provide information about the work we carry out across and to share insights into fisheries management & conservation practices with people working to protect our seas.

ICES Annual Science Conference 2024 - a look back! - YouTube



Natural England publishes "State of Natural Capital Report"

The State of Natural Capital Report for England 2024 : Risks to Nature and Why it Matters, a new report from Natural England. The report brings together scientific evidence on the state of our natural capital in England for decision-makers. It describes why nature is relevant to broad policy areas. Making the invisible visible and providing the missing evidence needed by setting out the state of ecosystem assets, assessing their risk levels, and identifying opportunities and actions to address these risks. It highlights the consequences of risks to nature for economic resilience, net zero, climate adaptation, food security, water security, and health and wellbeing.

“Tackling the nature crisis will require action across all sectors to reduce risks to society. This report is your guide to action. I encourage you to read it, use it, and secure the benefits nature provides into the future, not just for yourself but for society as a whole and the natural world which sustains us.”- Tony Juniper

To read the full report, click the link State of Natural Capital Report. [State of Natural Capital Report](#)

Expansion for UKWIF network

The UK Women in Fisheries (UKWIF) network is expanding its services following a number of key appointments. The network, which is open to women working throughout the industry, elected three additional directors at its AGM on Wednesday, 16 October - Emma Plotnek, executive director of Fishing into the Future, experienced industry member Julie Waites, and Offshore Shellfish's head of sales and marketing Sarah Holmyard. The new directors will work alongside Hannah Fennell and Clare Leverton, to help chart the future direction of the organisation. UKWIF has also appointed a network coordinator, Stephanie Lucas, and a digital communications officer, Norfolk-based fisherman Ashley Mullenger. Stephanie will help to

deliver UKWIF's aims and objectives for 2024/25, including working more closely with its members to strengthen connections, organise online events, webinars and training courses, and ensure women's voices are being heard across the sector. Ashley, who has 13,000+ followers on her own Instagram, will help to bring a fresh approach to the network's growing online presence and keep members up to date with news and opportunities to get involved. Immediate plans for UKWIF include scoping areas of research to identify and address gender issues, create a searchable member directory, and set up a mentorship scheme to connect women in fishing, more information is available [here](#).

Defra regulation review.

Defra has appointed economist Dan Corry to carry out an internal review to see if the current regulatory landscape is preventing investment. The review will examine whether the inherited regulatory landscape is fit for purpose and develop recommendations to ensure that regulation across the Department drives economic growth while protecting the environment. Questions to be explored include whether Defra regulators are equipped to drive economic growth, secure private sector investment and protect the environment; the customer and stakeholder experience of regulation, including the impact on those who are regulated; and the efficiency of regulation, whether the current regulatory landscape involves any duplication and/or contradiction, and whether there are opportunities to make improvements. The review is part of wider work to position Defra as a key economic growth department with regulatory reform to improve the water sector, drive down waste, protect the environment, improve flood defences and importantly for the shellfish sector, cut red tape for farmers and boost Britain's food security. This review is part of the government's growth mission to create jobs, improve living standards, and make communities and families across the country better off. Full details of the review can be found [here](#).

National Parks at 75 Parliamentary Reception.

On the evening of the 21st of October Natural England hosted a parliamentary reception to celebrate this landmark achievement and set out a new vision for the next 75 years. With speeches from their Chair Tony Juniper, Chief Executive Marian Spain and the Secretary of State Steve Reed MP. Attendees also heard from Young Wilders an inspirational non-profit focused on facilitating youth-led nature recovery projects. A packed room listened to Natural England set out how growing nature for health, wealth and security will sit at the heart of NE's work and that they will be working together across society to invest in nature and sustain future generations.

Celebrating the occasion is of course very important and, on land, National Parks are some of our most important landscapes. They are however facing challenges, not least in achieving the conservation objectives of the protected features within the parks. It was of note that the meeting made no reference to any aspiration or intention with regards to marine national parks and it was noticeable that the national parks themselves, nor their representative bodies spoke at the event.



Future of Fishing after 2026 Parliamentary Debate.

Rupert Lowe MP Great Yarmouth (Reform) secured a debate on 05/11/2024. This is a summary of Daniel Zeichners' speech to the debate, which I hope is helpful as it provides a policy direction for IFCAs.

There was a recognition of how significant the fishing industry is to coastal communities and their cultural significance therein. It was acknowledged that fishing is a dangerous industry and paid tribute to the fishermen.

Reference was made to the missions of government. Fishing is food security and helping to protect and restore the environment through EIP. It was noted that fishing and associated industries can play an important role in securing economic growth.

To that end the Minister affirmed commitment to FMP process. There was reference to the TCA and the renegotiation of the "temporary adjustment"; it seemed that there was an emphasis placed on this language; the temporary adjustments referring (I think), to access to waters, being allowed in exchange for access to markets. The Minister acknowledged the challenges associated with the renegotiation.

Mr Zeichner emphasised the opportunities to look at reframing fisheries management through a social, economic and environmental lens. FMP a route to this. Long-term sustainability to be achieved through FMPs. Reform to discards, REM, allocation of quota, opening of new fisheries i.e. BFT. How to best support u/10; additional quota and quota trials. Reference to the use of RFGs to encourage dialogue.

Study into the engagement experiences and opportunities for fishers, fisheries management and marine conservation staff.

Natural England/Marine Management Organisation project: MMO 1277 has been published. The project focuses on two English case studies: Cromer in Norfolk and Hastings in East Sussex. In the study the authors review how the MMO, NE and the IFCAs engage with fishers and wider stakeholders and provide examples of good and less good practice.

IFCA officers are interviewed in for the review The study makes a series of recommendations, which whilst they are specific to the MMO and NE they may be useful for the IFCAs to reflect upon include.

Individual level: Personal awareness, resilience, and wellbeing

Local team level: Strategic and operational engagement competencies

Organisational level: Working towards co-management.

The following finding resonated with me, not least as this is not how it feels that we are often portrayed by certain protagonists, and it is that all the agency staff interviewed articulated respect for the fishers:

- Bravery and hard work - working in a high-risk job and being pushed to the limit.
- Their skills as businessmen and entrepreneurs can often be overlooked, many fishers are multi-talented and very enterprising - making the most out of a difficult living.
- The ingrained commitment to fishing as a way of life was respected.
- Staff want fisheries to succeed and be viable. Although committed to marine conservation via quotas, regulation and project work, all agency staff recognise the need for a proportionate legislative solution that benefits everyone. There is no lack of advocacy for fishers - some staff, notably the IFCA, wish that they could advocate more for fishers.
- Fishers are seen as vital conservation partners, with much in common with marine conservationists, although there is much frustration that they don't easily embrace this commonality. This was expressed particularly by NE staff.

A copy of the report is available for download [here](#)

Marine Protected Areas Designations (MPAD) Steering Group

The government has pledged to deliver its 'clean power mission'; this includes a commitment to radically increase offshore wind production by 2030. The Department for the Environment,

Food & Rural Affairs (Defra's) Offshore Wind Environmental Improvement Package (OWEIP), will help ensure that marine environmental protection and nature recovery is at the heart of plans to deliver UK government's clean power mission. The work of COWSC has identified Marine Protected Area (MPA) designation as the only current ecologically effective and feasible form of 'strategic compensation' for seabed habitat (benthic) loss or damage generated by the expansion of offshore wind. OWEIP will allow developers to collaborate to compensate for unavoidable damage to MPAs at a strategic rather than project-by-project level. As with all compensatory measures, this measure can only be applied after ways of avoiding and then mitigating against seabed habitat loss or damage have been exhausted. The AIFCA is a member of the MPAd Working Group and fisheries sub-group. The WG includes Natural England, JNCC, MMO, Cefas, AIFCA, and others – and is working on drafting site selection guidance for Marine Protected Areas to compensate for offshore wind.

Marine Net Gain PAG

Net gain is an approach to development that aims to leave the natural environment in a measurably better state than beforehand. This means protecting, restoring, or creating environmental features that are of greater ecological value to wildlife, habitats and people than any losses associated with the new development.

After a hiatus in the programme, due to the change in government, the programme has reconvened and the AIFCA is representing the IFCAs on the group and working with the projects consultant to ensure that the role, value and capacity of the IFCA is understood.

MMO Report: Fisher Engagement Capacity Needs

The MMO has published a report it commissioned. The aim of the report is to improve the way the MMO communicates and engages with the fishing industry, this project was commissioned to explore the engagement and capacity needs of fishers and fisher communities and the barriers engaging with government, specifically the MMO, using a behavioural lens approach.

The report is useful for the IFCAs to consider and reflect on as it relates to their engagement processes, capabilities and capacity.

The report concludes that there is no quick fix to increasing engagement as the barriers ranged along the behavioural pathway, and the MMO will need to implement a range of interventions and solutions rather than relying on a single approach, for example emails to named individuals for an invitation to a meeting could increase the participation at that meeting. Testing of solutions is recommended to maximise the effectiveness and efficiency. Recommendations include further work for the MMO to implement the potential solutions and evaluate any interventions tested. Specific recommendations include the following: a) understand the attitudes and experiences of front-line staff b) undertake research to understand the structure of MEO teams to include turnover, training, operational support etc, c) undertake research to understand the prevalence of barriers and d) implement interventions and prioritise increasing trust in the MMO, increasing the belief that consultation exercises will have an impact, improving the cost-benefit of taking part in consultations and ensuring events are easy to attend.

The report can be downloaded here. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/fisher-engagement-capacity-needs-mmo1383>