



Annual Report 2024-2025

Produced in October 2025

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Version 1.0 (final) - Completed 27th October 2025

1.A Message from the Chair

This report covers the fourteenth year of operations and provides a summary account and review of the Authority's achievements during the financial year 2024/2025.

In my six years as Chair of the Authority, I, with the support of the Chief Officer and my Vice Chair and Chair of the Authority's Byelaw & Permitting Sub-Committee have continued to address the inadequate funding structure of the Authority by engaging with Defra and D&SIFCA's Funding Local Authorities. Defra is in the process of conducting a consultation with these Local Authorities as a component of a review of this funding structure. Progress remains slow and prospective Local Government reorganisation may further adversely impact resolution of this matter.

D&SIFCA has the largest District of all IFCA's with 4,522 km² of sea area and two separate coasts to manage. However, D&S IFCA operates on the lowest mainland IFCA Revenue Budget of £937,500 and from June 2024 had only 12 full time Officers and one part -time Officer to undertake all of the Authority's governance, research and enforcement work. This resourcing is demonstrably severely inadequate.

The Annual Report provides the platform to report on work undertaken as part of the Annual Plan for 2024/2025. There are some significant achievements; however, due to its very limited resources, D&S IFCA is unable to deliver all of its own vision as an organisation and, more disturbingly, all of its mandatory statutory functions. Consequently, there are many tasks and workstreams that D&S IFCA has been unable to complete, undertake or even plan for during 2024/2025. Additionally, decision-making by an IFCA is meant to be evidence based. Due to a lack of financial resource D&S IFCA is now unable to undertake the research necessary to underpin some of its decision-making. Inevitably this can lead to excessive application of the Precautionary Principle and potentially a failure to achieve the duty of balance required by section 153 Marine & Coastal Access Act 2009. These are matters of grave concern.

Despite these funding challenges that I have outlined, I hope that this Annual Report will help all readers to gain a better understanding of the work that is being delivered by the dedicated staff of D&S IFCA and the value that this organisation has, as it continues to strive to meet those of its statutory duties that it can and the expectations of all stakeholders.

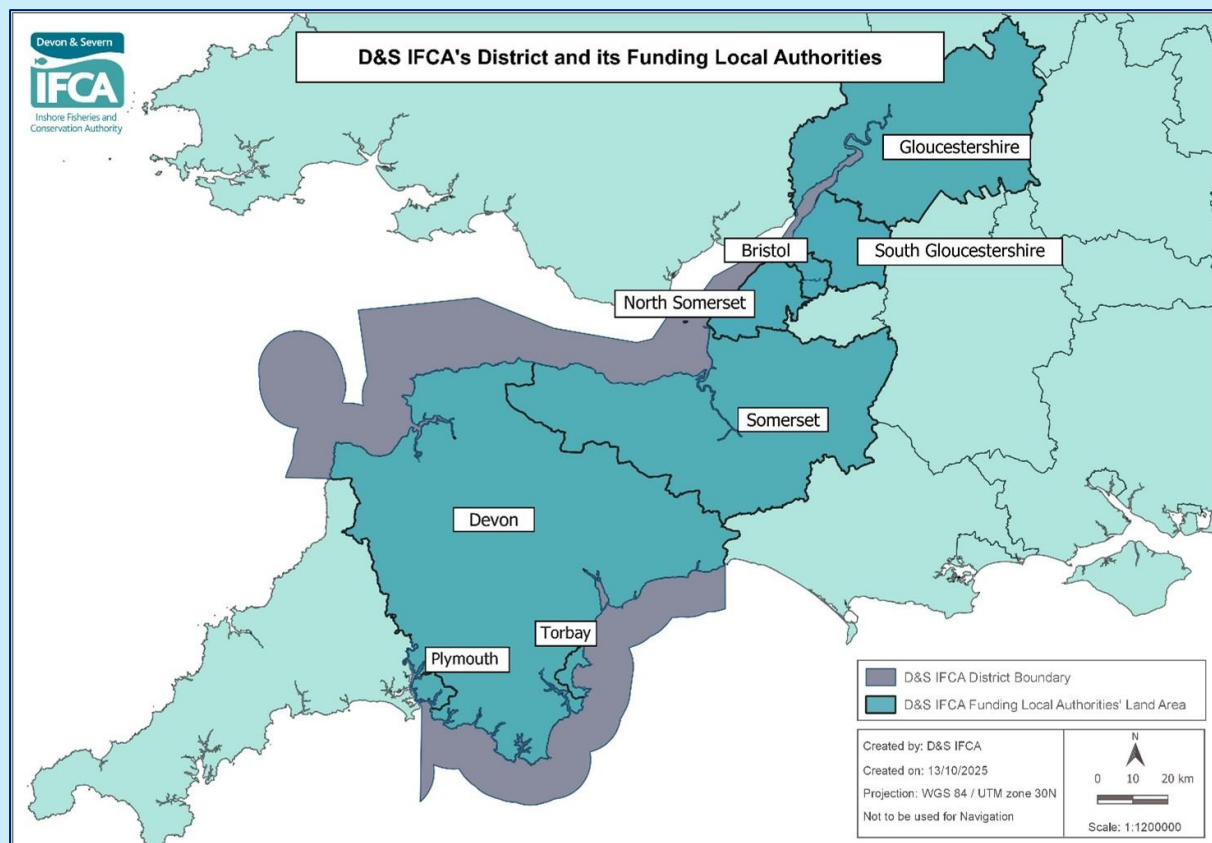


*Professor Mike Williams,
Chair of D&S IFCA*

2. Background and Using this Report

Background

D&S IFCA has the largest of the ten IFCA's districts and has two separate coastlines. The area of the District is 4,522km² and is defined in the Statutory Instrument (2010 No. 2212). D&S IFCA's District includes the areas of Devon and Gloucestershire County Councils; Bristol and Plymouth City Councils; North Somerset District Council; Torbay, Somerset and South Gloucestershire Councils and all adjacent waters out to six nautical miles offshore or the median line in the Bristol Channel with Wales.



The fisheries and marine environment are markedly different on the two coasts. The north coast of the District from Somerset to the east up the Severn estuary is characterised by significant tidal ranges, large amounts of suspended sediment, and extensive mudflat habitats that support a range of different types of net fisheries and significant recreational angling. The Devon coasts and estuaries in contrast are known for their diverse fisheries including significant pot fisheries, the largest mobile fishing fleet operating in any IFCA District and an extensive network of Marine Protected Areas.

The Authority

The Full Authority is comprised of 30 Members drawn from relevant Local Authorities (Councillors), General Members (appointed to the Authority by the Marine Management Organisation (MMO)) and Statutory Appointees representing the Environment Agency (EA) and Natural England (NE).

D&S IFCA is funded primarily from Central Government, with additional contributions from the eight relevant funding Local Authorities. As specified in section 178 Marine and Coastal Access Act (MaCAA), D&S IFCA must prepare a report on its activities each year which will be published and sent to the Secretary of State.

To support the delivery of the national vision, IFCAs agreed with Defra 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 service delivery towards the achievement of the national vision. These national IFCA performance criteria also link directly to the UK Marine Policy Statement.

Reporting Method

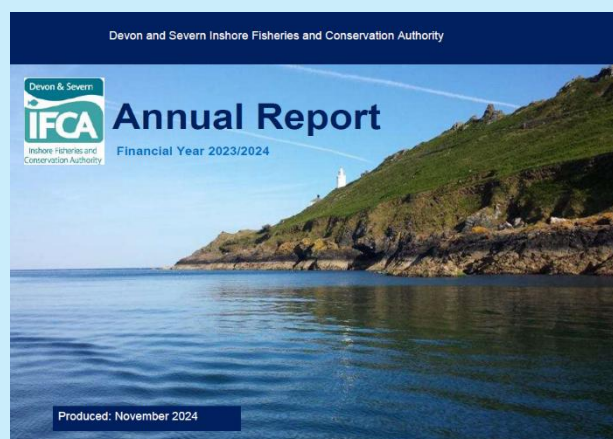
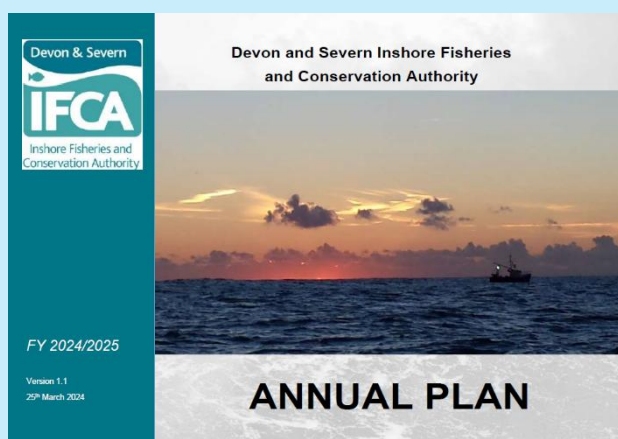
This Annual Report can be read in conjunction with the Annual Plan for 2024/2025. The Annual Plan for 2024/2025 set out key workstreams that were envisaged to be completed within 2024/2025. Regarding the delivery of these key workstreams in this time frame, this is either complete or incomplete as shown by indicators in the reporting tables.

As well as reporting on the Authority's key workstreams, this Annual Report provides a summary of progress for many recurring workstreams as measured against the national IFCA success criteria and high-level objectives (outcomes).

The Annual Report demonstrates work completed by D&S IFCA to recognise additional funding provided by Defra to assist with the delivery of three key national workstreams, Fisheries Management Plans (FMPs), Marine Spatial Prioritisation (MSP) including marine licensing and sustainable development, and Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) including implementation of necessary management measures.

Additional Information

All recent Annual Plans and Annual Reports can be found on D&S IFCA's website:



<https://www.devonandsevernifca.gov.uk/about-us-our-work/annual-business-plans-reports/>

3. Vision

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”.

4. Executive Summary

The financial challenges that D&S IFCA faces, as set out in its Medium Term Financial Plan 2024 to 2028, were mitigated through the receipt of £140,000 of additional funding from Defra. The additional funding, secured through the Association of IFCA's bid to the 2021 Spending Review, required D&S IFCA to deliver against three additional workstreams that are set out in this Annual Report. The additional money was used to reduce the levy contributions from the Local Authorities and consequently the workstreams were delivered by the existing Officers. D&S IFCA recognises that Fisheries Management Plans, Marine Protected Areas and Marine Spatial Planning require regional, inshore management input and recognise that these workstreams are long-term, business as usual commitments.

However, this Annual Report sets out that given the limited funding received by D&S IFCA, Officers have been unable to undertake all the work set out in the corresponding Annual Plan. The inability to undertake all the planned work when combined with the omissions in the Annual Plan has led to the position where D&S IFCA is not fulfilling all its Statutory duties for the second year.

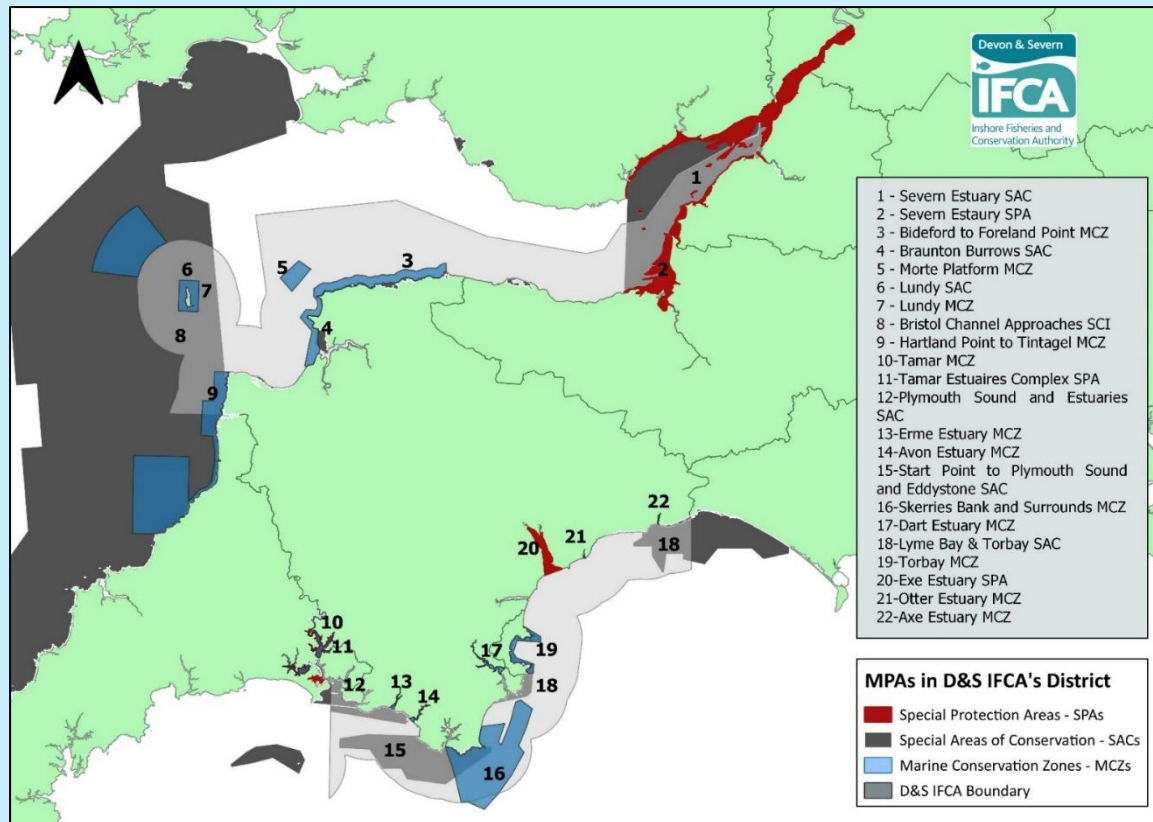
Despite limited resources the team had continued to innovate and develop new ways of working. The Senior Management Team has remained unchanged for the last seven years and this makes a significant difference to the work delivered. The experience and capability of every Officer are critical in delivering the Annual Plan including the national workstreams. The stability in the Environment team and the Enforcement Team means that these Officers have been efficient and effective in delivering their respective duties. Although the experience and capability of the team is its strength, it can also be its biggest weakness. Resignations of one or more of the team have the potential to stop the Authority working altogether. Officers look to build resilience with at least one Officer shadowing the work of a colleague and the Senior Management Team work closely together and share delivery of many workstreams.

D&S IFCA's lack of capacity means that it is difficult to prioritise undertaking research to understand whether management interventions have been successful. Without its own research vessel, obtaining more detailed habitat mapping of MPAs is reliant on the availability of other organisation's vessels. This translates to having to use habitat evidence that is achieved by broadscale mapping surveys that inherently do not provide the resolution that is needed to limit the impact of displacement of fishing activity.

Despite these challenges, the output of the Environment team, set out in this report is remarkable given their resources.

D&S IFCA prioritises its limited compliance monitoring resources to reduce the impacts of illegal mobile gear fishing in Marine Protected Areas and illegal netting in estuaries. Compared to historical records, the low levels of reported illegal activity are testament to the effectiveness of the team in tackling these issues. This means other recreational and commercial fisheries including shellfisheries and bass receive monitoring at a level below which many stakeholders feel is acceptable.

5. Our District at a Glance



District Size:

4,522 km²

1,314 km of coastline

22 Marine Protected Areas

42.39 % of District is covered by MPAs

27.40% of the District is closed to demersal mobile fishing gear

Fishing activity is managed through new and inherited byelaws

Hyper Links to Information:

- [About Us & Our Work](#)
- [Marine Protected Areas](#)
- [D&S IFCA Byelaws](#)

6. Finance and Resources

D&S IFCA's Revenue Budget for 2024/2025 of £937,500 was the lowest Revenue Budget of the nine mainland IFCA's and less than half that received by the best funded IFCA's. The base levy delivered by the funding Local Authorities increased to £785,066 in 2024/25. The levies on six of the funding Local Authorities were 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 has never received all the funding. In 2024/2025 the net NBF to D&S IFCA was £372,463. The 2024/2025 Revenue Budget has been balanced by additional Defra funding of £140,000, not £150,000 as expected.

To achieve 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 fewest number of staff of any of the nine mainland IFCA's. D&S IFCA has continued operating in 2024/2025 with its current staffing level of 12 full-time Officers and one part-time Officer and existing assets.

Levy Funding (FY 2024/2025)

	2023/24 Base Budget £	Base Budget Adjustments £	Inflation £	2024/25 Budget £	Local Authority	2023/24 Levy £	Increase in Levy £	2024/25 Levy £	New Burdens Funding £	Variance to New Burdens £
Employees	727,300	(13,200)	32,000	746,100	Bristol City Council	43,064	1,292	44,356	50,851	(6,495)
Premises	37,100	(1,000)	100	36,200	Gloucestershire County Council	110,290	3,309	113,599	122,428	(8,829)
Transport	14,500	(500)	400	14,400	North Somerset Council	35,290	1,058	36,348	42,574	(6,226)
Supplies & Services	71,100	4,500	1,300	76,900	Somerset Council	121,114	3,633	124,747	133,952	(9,205)
Boat Costs	32,300	1,800	1,500	35,600	South Gloucestershire Council	31,098	933	32,031	38,110	(6,079)
Environmental Research	17,200	0	200	17,400	Sub Total Severn Authorities	340,856	10,225	351,081	387,915	(36,834)
Support Services	55,100	0	900	56,000	Devon County Council	358,920	10,768	369,688	21,382	348,306
Fees, charges, and interest	(40,000)	(5,100)	0	(45,100)	Plymouth City Council	35,823	1,075	36,898	-	36,898
Gross Revenue Budget	914,600	(13,500)	36,400	937,500	Torbay Council	26,601	798	27,399	-	27,399
Budgeted use of Reserves	(2,400)	(34)	0	(2,434)	Sub Total Devon Authorities	421,344	12,641	433,985	21,382	412,603
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	Total Funding	762,200	22,866	785,066	409,297	375,769

7. Resolving D&S IFCA's Funding Crisis

D&S IFCA's 2024/2025 Annual Plan set out that D&S IFCA and the Local Authorities will engage with Defra to seek a change in the contributions each Local Authority makes to the Revenue Budget but more importantly seek a way to increase the Revenue Budget above inflation so that D&S IFCA has more resource available to meet its Statutory Duties.

Report:

The Chair and Chief Officer met regularly with Defra Officials from August to the end of the year. Defra Officials also engaged directly with each of the funding Local Authority. The initial contact with the Local Authorities by Defra was to understand how each Local Authority viewed the funding crisis faced by D&S IFCA and to understand how the Local Authorities thought a resolution could be achieved. Defra's intention was to seek the Local Authorities' response to the different funding options it had drafted and then seek the Minister's approval for a new funding structure before the summer recess in 2025. It was understood that one of the options could be based on splitting the IFCA and create a Devon IFCA and a Severn IFCA.

It was recognised by Defra that a change in the Levy contributions across the eight Local Authorities was needed to better reflect where D&S IFCA used its resources but that a significant increase in the operational budget has also been required. The additional money provided by Defra through the 2021 Spending Review was not used to increase the budget but instead reduce the required income achieved through levies.

D&S IFCA's Funding Authorities:

- Devon County Council
- Torbay Council
- Plymouth City Council
- Bristol City Council
- South Gloucestershire Council
- Gloucestershire County Council
- Somerset Council
- North Somerset Council

Information/Links:

All papers and reports (other than part 2) that are produced for Authority meetings, including funding updates, are published on D&S IFCA's website.

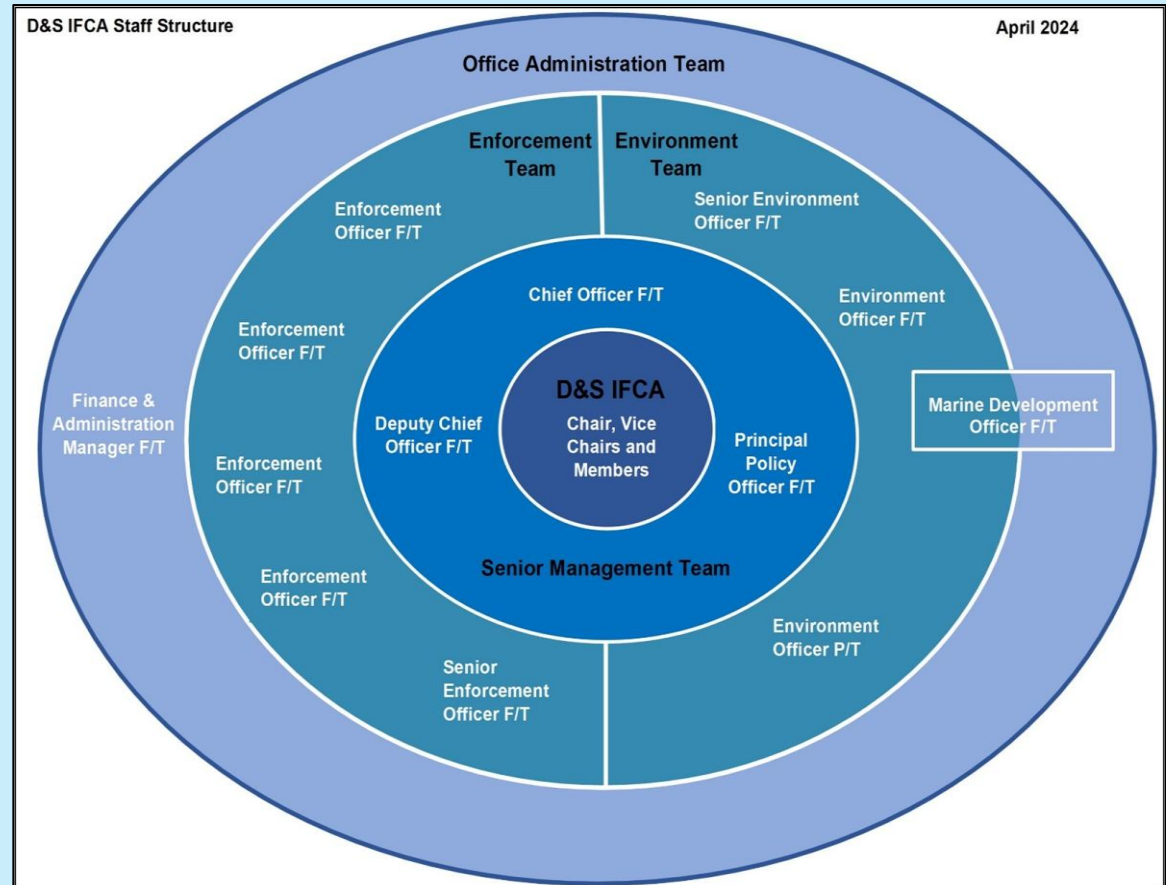
- [Resource Library \(Section B\)](#)
- [Authority & B&PSC meetings page](#)

8. Staff Structure 2024/2025

D&S IFCA Officers:

- 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: Bradley Harris
- 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

Note: Bradley Harris replaced Chris Mills during 2024/2025. Freya Diamond (a twelve month post for maternity cover) resigned in December 2024.



Staff Training

Where required, Officers have undertaken STCW update and Health and Safety training. In February 2025 Environment Team members attended the national IFCA Officer training and in November 2024 two Officers took part in the Habitat Regulations Assessment Masterclass with Derogation, provided by Footprint Ecology. All D&S IFCA employees undertook Conflict Resolution Training which is undertaken every two years. Environment Officers have undertaken additional in-house R statistics training to increase their capability in analysing data.

9. Enforcement Work

Success Criterion 2:

IFCAs implement a fair, effective and proportionate enforcement regime

Definition: The IFCA enforcement regime is risk-based, makes appropriate use of intelligence, meets legislative standards, and complies with the Regulators Code. It should make effective use of the resources available to regulators, complement and align, if possible, with the regimes in adjacent IFCA Districts and management by other organisations including the MMO and Environment Agency. Consistency and fairness are important. Regulatory compliance is promoted. Enforcement action is carried out by trained, professional officers working to clear standards of conduct.

Statistics:

- **Investigations: 40**
- **Sea Patrols: 20**
- **Shore Patrols: 76**
- **Premises Inspected: 18**
- **Joint Operations: 1**



Investigations

Between 1st April 2024 and 31st March 2025, 40 case files were created. Two cases that have progressed for prosecution are still awaiting court dates for the hearing. One case from March 2023 is still progressing through crown court with a date for trial set for June 2026.

Outcomes for investigations between 1st April 2024 and 31st March 2025:

- Number of verbal warnings, verbal re-briefs, advisory letters =6.
- Number of IFCA written warnings including gear offence and seizure notices =15.
- Financial Administrative Penalties issued =1.
- Number of simple cautions =1.
- Court prosecutions =4.
- No further action due to insufficient evidence or unable to identify offenders =11.
- Case forwarded to the Marine Management Organisation (MMO) =0.

Investigations Tables:

<https://www.devonandsevernifca.gov.uk/enforcement-and-legislation/investigation-tables/>

Spatial Monitoring of Towed Gear Vessels

Enforcement Officers have continued to prioritise this work. Illegal incursions into Marine Protected Areas and other restricted areas remains the highest risk activity in the D&S IFCA District. In March 2024, Members of the Authority agreed to support the sustainable development of offshore mariculture sites by prohibiting the use of mobile fishing gear in three mariculture sites, one in Torbay and two in Lyme Bay and as a result the Mobile Fishing Permit Conditions were amended in April 2024. Four new spatial incursion investigations were undertaken and four cases of non-reporting IVMS devices. The spatial incursion investigations are often complex and take considerable Officer time to gather the evidence and prepare the case file.

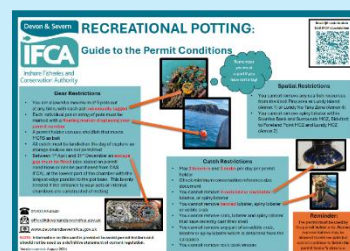
Officers have continued to develop D&S IFCA's REM project focussed on mobile gear vessels with changes to the vessels participating in the trials due to two vessels being sold and one owner leaving the project.

Working with other Regulators

D&S IFCA looks to undertake joint operations with partner agencies including the Police, Environment Agency, adjoining IFCAs, the MMO and Port Authorities. Operations generally relate to illegal netting in estuaries and spatial incursions into MPAs.

Seeking Compliance – Guidance and Notices for Fishermen

In 2024/2025 there were twelve direct notifications for fishers relating to changes in legislation or guidance to help fishers remain compliant with legislation. In September 2024 a wheelhouse card was produced relating to recreational potting and made available as a laminated hard copy.



Emsstrom Angling Zone - Monitoring

This task reflected the introduction of legislation in the Netting Permit Conditions. IVMS data were interrogated, and no fishing activity was identified. Patrols to the eastern end of D&S IFCA's District in Lyme Bay from Brixham meant that Officers passed close to the site on many occasions throughout the year. Officers did not record any fishing activity on the site or the presence of any static gear

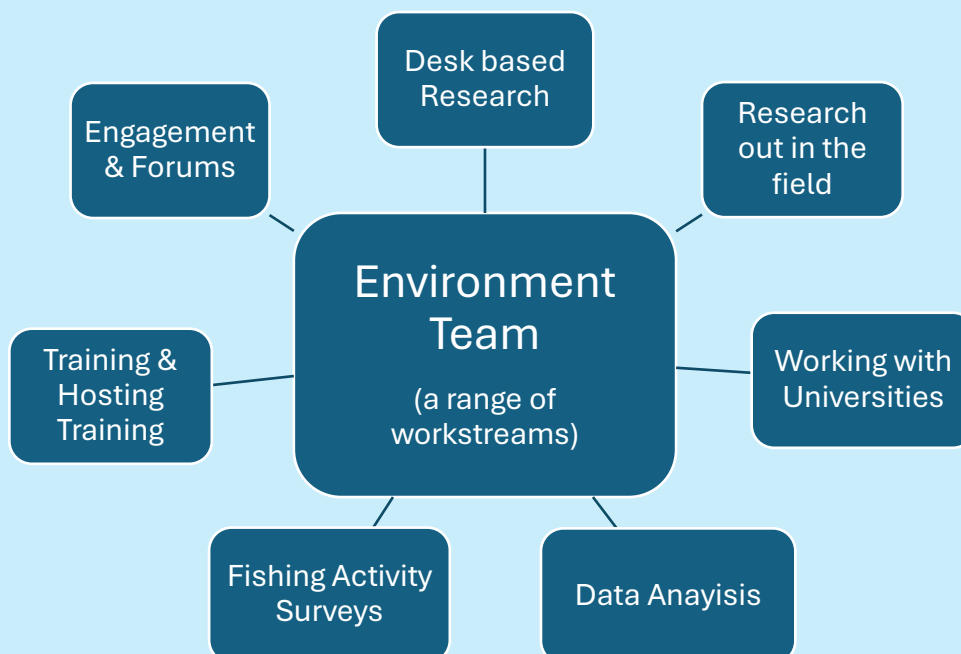
Gathering Intelligence

D&S IFCA continues to adopt a targeted and intelligence led approach to its enforcement work.

<https://www.devonandsevernifca.gov.uk/reporting-illegal-fishing/>

10. Environment and Scientific Work

The work of D&S IFCA's Environment Team is broad, ranging from undertaking surveys and research in the field (both in the intertidal environment and on-board fishing vessels), to desk-based research, reporting and partnership working with a range of organisations.



Work undertaken by the Environment Team informs D&S IFCA's byelaw review work, including potential changes to management measures (permit conditions). The work of the Environment Team also helps D&S IFCA to input into three national workstreams, with details about this contribution included in this Annual Report.

- **Fisheries Management Plans**
- **Marine Spatial Prioritisation**
- **Marine Protected Areas.**

Officers have continued important input to TAG (Joint IFCA Technical Advisory Group) and have developed and delivered training for Officers from across other IFCAs as part of the first iteration of the annual Environment, Science and Conservation training course. This course is aimed at Environment Officers in all IFCAs to give consistent understanding and training in a number of environment and research components which affect all the IFCAs.

Between January and June 2024, D&S IFCA Officers held port meetings with commercial potting permit holders across the D&S IFCA's District. These meetings had several goals, including to gain a better understanding of the importance of local fishing grounds, and of fishers' concerns around crustacea stocks and fisheries management. The results of this engagement were presented in Agenda Item 10 of the September 2024 B&PSC meeting.

Officers regularly attend meetings of estuary forum groups and management partnerships for areas with protected site designations, including the Association of Severn Estuary Relevant Authorities, North Devon Biosphere Marine Policy Working Group and Partnership Forum, Tamar Estuaries Consultative Forum, and Exe Estuary Management Partnership. Officers work in partnership to further the conservation objectives of such sites, while ensuring fisheries, fish and fish habitats are accounted for in local decision making. Officers also participated in Standing Environment Groups, which are convened to respond to events such as pollution emergencies, with a view to ensuring fisheries are considered in the crisis response.

Officers also attended meetings of the Lyme Bay Fisherman's CIC and monthly meetings of the South Devon and Channel Shellfishermen where engagement with the fishing industry has taken place and the work of the D&S IFCA has been discussed. Officers continue to work with research organisations to fill important evidence gaps, including co-supervising two PhD projects: one at University of Plymouth studying 'essential fish habitat' in the Severn Estuary, and another at University of Exeter studying the restoration and remediation potential of mussels in south west estuaries. Both projects aim to deliver outputs relevant to management of fisheries and the marine environment.

Research – Out in the Field

Mollusca Surveys

An important part of D&S IFCA's research work this year has been surveying bivalve shellfish beds in estuaries across the District. This included stock assessment of mussels and cockles in the Exe (image right), Teign and Taw Torridge Estuaries to inform local fisheries management (catch allowances and review of mussel bed closures). The surveys build on



years of previous surveys at these sites to understand local shellfish changes, and have been supplemented this year by additional research work. On the Teign estuary, local stakeholders kindly provided anecdotal observations of hand-gathering of cockles which Officers were able to analyse alongside cockle stock data. Combining these data sources suggest that current levels of hand-gathering are not having detectable effects on the local cockle stocks. This research and its associated caveats are outlined in the Teign Estuary Cockle stock assessment report.

<https://www.devonandsevernifca.gov.uk/environment-research/research/molluscan-research-in-ds-ifcas-district/cockles/>

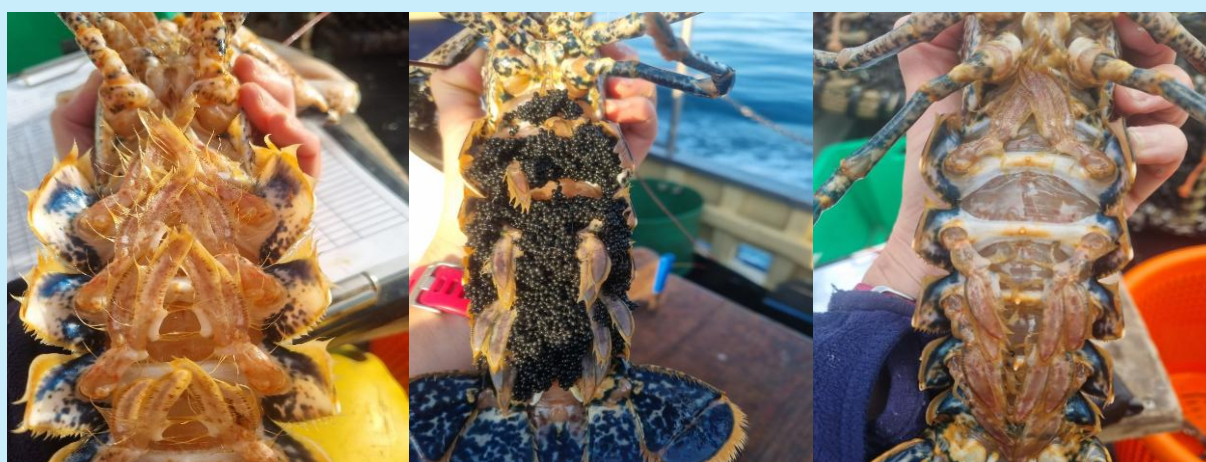
Research into the mussel and cockle beds of the Taw-Torridge was also supplemented by a collaborative project funded by the Marine Natural Capital and Ecosystem Assessment programme. This project uses D&S IFCA's data on the mussel and cockle beds, new observations on use of the beds and other feeding habitats by oystercatchers (collected by EAD Ecology), and a model of oystercatcher food requirements (developed by Richard Stillman, Bournemouth University) to define the ecological requirements of overwintering oystercatchers, which use the Taw-Torridge SSSI, and then outline the remaining mussel that may be available for a fishery. Bournemouth University produced a project report in March 2025 which was presented at a cross-partnership workshop on 26th March 2025 to embed the approach in future fisheries management. The outputs of the project will be utilised by D&S IFCA and Natural England to inform future management of the shellfisheries on the Taw Torridge Estuary, and the project report will be published online by Defra in FY 2025/26.

The latest reports on mussel and cockle surveys conducted by D&S IFCA are available via D&S IFCA's [mussel](#) and [cockle](#) webpages.

Survey Work – Seasonality of Egg Bearing Lobsters

The survey work conducted in 2024/2025 represents the second year of survey work under this workstream. Officers are continued to survey lobsters through the winter to provide more data on the time period in which lobsters are not expected be naturally shedding their eggs, to assist targeting of enforcement effort. Officers have begun to undertake preliminary analysis of the data alongside in-house statistics training, and the analysis will be completed after the survey season ends in April 2025. The outputs of this work will be used to support effective targeting of the chemical testing of the pleopods of lobsters that appear to have been scrubbed of its eggs prior to landing.

Images below: *Underside of three of the European lobsters surveyed by D&S IFCA: the first with no evidence of egg-bearing, the second showing a berried female carrying many eggs, and the last showing a lobster that has recently shed its eggs.*



Surveys – Trials of Durometers

D&S IFCA Officers, together with a research assistant (funded through the Crab and Lobster FMP FISP funded project) and an MSc student from the University of Plymouth, trialled the use of durometers (image right) on board fishing vessels in the D&S IFCA's District. Data collection took place on 23 trips across May-August 2024 onboard five commercial potting vessels operating in south Devon during

typical fishing operations. The research team worked alongside experienced crab fishermen who shared best practice in determining soft and hard crab at sea. The Officers/researchers used a checklist of physical characteristics observable on the crabs that indicate soft versus hard shells. They also utilised a durometer to quantify the hardness of a crab shell. Finally, the relationship between shell hardness and meat yield was investigated, confirming that hard-shelled crabs have substantially higher meat yield than soft or borderline crabs. Based on the outcomes of the project, a range of recommendations have been made to the Crab and Lobster FMP implementation group which include Defra, MMO, and members of the fishing industry to inform the total prohibition of the landing of soft-shelled crab and how this may be enforced:

- 1) A program of sharing of best practice from experienced fishermen to the wider sector in recognising hard- and soft-shelled crab along with resources such as documents and videos.
- 2) A two-pronged approach to defining and enforcing shell hardness in crabs: Firstly, training of enforcement Officers to use the physical characteristics of crab moult stage to determine shell hardness, and then the use of the durometer and a pre-defined hardness threshold on any disputed or borderline individuals.
- 3) The durometer threshold should be co-developed with fishermen, processors, managers and policy makers to determine the appropriate trade-offs around retention of hard crabs over protection of soft crabs.
- 4) A research and development project to manufacture a durometer in the UK that would allow calibration and servicing of durometers without having to ship to the USA, which is the sole supplier currently.

Other Information (D&S IFCA website)

Environment & Research display pages contain a range of information and [Section H of the website Resource Library](#) contains many completed reports and Assessments.

Images: underside of a soft-shelled brown crab & a durometer



11. Fisheries Management Plans

Task:

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 2024/2025 Annual Plan set 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.

D&S IFCA received additional SR21 funding from Defra that was intended to provide IFCA's with additional financial support so that they can assist with the delivery of three key national workstreams, including Fisheries Management Plans (FMPs).

FMP Engagement

Senior Officers have attended many FMP meetings, and were asked to aid the dissemination of information relating to Defra's FMP consultations.

This has been undertaken through D&S IFCA publishing a news item on the website on 16th September 2024 about a MMO online survey. Also, on 11th October 2024 a news item was published relating to consultations on five FMPs including those for Southern North Sea and Channel Skate and Ray FMP and North Sea and Channel Sprat FMP.

<https://www.devonandsevernifca.gov.uk/latest-news-information/>



During 2024/2025 Officers attended 28 Fisheries Management Plans (FMP) meetings both online and in person for those relating to Southern North Sea and Channel Skate and Ray FMP, Celtic Sea and Western Channel Pelagic FMP, Celtic Sea and Western Channel Demersal FMP, King Scallop FMP, Bass FMP, Whelk FMP, Non-Quota Species FMP, and Wrasse and Black Bream FMP. Part of the work relating to these FMPs involved contributing to and commenting on management proposals, inputting knowledge and evidence into the workstream relating to these FMPs and disseminating information to other IFCA's and the AIFCA were relevant. Officers provided evidence from the perspective of an inshore regulator, and the knowledge and understanding of the fisheries, both recreational and commercial, and the challenges those fisheries face in the inshore area.

In addition, D&S IFCA is the lead IFCA for the Crab and Lobster FMP and in 2024/2025 Officers attended 17 meetings including those of the Crab and Lobster Management Working Group, the Science Group and the Implementation Group, and other meetings including those specific to fishing fleet data analysis for this FMP. D&S IFCA contributed extensively to these groups providing expertise on the fisheries, the sectors involved and provided both scientific and technical knowledge. Officers have commented on management proposals and brought the South West industry and regulator perspective to these discussions. D&S IFCA in particular has worked on the FMP FISP funded project which involved many meetings throughout the year and reported outputs from the work undertaken by D&S IFCA Environment Officers and the funded research assistant.

D&S IFCA organised an additional Crab and Lobster FMP meeting with Defra, the MMO and six IFCAs to discuss the potential for regional management of the proposed national Minimum Conservation Reference Size of 90mm for the European lobster. Two meetings were held in relation to the proposed Permit Scheme for the Whelk FMP, one of which was a workshop in London.

12. Marine Spatial Prioritisation

Task:

All IFCAs received additional funding from Defra to assist with work relating to Marine Spatial Prioritisation.



D&S IFCA reviews and responds to consultations on Marine Licence Applications (MLAs), environmental permits and other development consents. Through this work, D&S IFCA seeks to ensure that developers minimise, mitigate or compensate for their impacts on fish and designated habitats, and to ensure that the needs of existing users of the sea (including commercial fishing, aquaculture and the recreational sector) are accounted for.

This work involves engaging with the developers and those stakeholders who may be impacted by the development, and to analyse environmental and fishing activity data to provide the best evidence to inform consultation responses. In FY 2024/2025, 29 Marine Licencing and Environmental Permitting consultation requests were reviewed and responses were provided where necessary and appropriate.

Links to Published Responses in 2024/2025

Not all responses produced by D&S IFCA are in a format for publishing; however, the following can be read by using the links below:

[\(MLA/2023/00113\) - White Cross Wind Farm – 12/08/2024](#)

[\(MLA/2024/00010\) – Riverside Boatyard Teign – 09/05/2024](#)

[\(MLA/2023/00467\) – Bedwyn Sands/Aggregate Dredging \(Follow up\) – 23/07/2024](#)

D&S IFCA has also responded to the Severn Estuary Commission's Call for Evidence relating to tidal power in the Severn Estuary, in May 2024, and a related research survey in December 2024. Officers have attended a pre- application meeting with Bristol Port regarding their plans for the Bristol Wind Terminal at Avonmouth Docks and the associated Compensatory Habitat Creation Scheme at Steart, adjacent to Bridgewater Bay.

Officers have continued to undertake pre-MLA consultation engagement with an aquaculture business and mobile gear fishers on the possible location of a mussel spat collection farm in Babbacombe Bay. This work has involved Officers analysing IVMS for 2023 and 2024 to show the level of impact to the fishing industry of possible locations. The fishers, who are potentially impacted, have liaised with D&S IFCA and provided further information that will help inform D&S IFCA's response to the MLA.

Hinkley Point C Nuclear Power Station

Officers have continued to engage with HPC staff and other regulators to discuss environmental permitting and consents for HPC. Officers have also engaged with relevant scientists and interest groups to gather additional evidence relating to relevant fish species in the vicinity of HPC, potential routes to delivery of the Acoustic Fish Deterrent and the need for an appropriate package of mitigation and habitat compensation under the Habitats Regulations. A presentation was given by the Senior Environment Officer to the Full Authority updating Members on the Officers' engagement with the HPC development. Officers have also engaged with MMO and Defra to demonstrate the need for the fish kill at HPC to be accounted for in the Celtic Seas and Western Channel Pelagic Species Fisheries Management Plan, and in relation to impacts of prey reductions on Harbour Porpoise in the Bristol Channel Approaches Special Area of Conservation.

The intention is for this workstream to continue into 2025/2026, focussing mainly on delivery of the Acoustic Fish Deterrent and measures which may be required from the developer 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.

Other

Aggregate dredging: Bedwyn Sands and North Middle Ground, Severn Estuary

D&S IFCA raised concerns with Marine Management Organisation and Natural Resources Wales, regarding the potential impacts to the features of marine protected areas including Annex 1 habitats within the Severn Estuary SAC and Severn Estuary SSSI and the marine fish assemblage of the Severn Estuary SAC. D&S IFCA stated that it believes, by the nature of the aggregate extraction process, the conservation objectives of the site and its features will be directly impacted. D&S IFCA highlighted that the extraction of

volume of approximately 5 million m³ will impact the vertical distribution of sediments and that dredging could lower the substrate across the entire licence area by approximately 35cm, which is a significant change to the designated features. D&S IFCA also raised concerns regarding the low-level monitoring of the macrofaunal changes in the site by the applicant and the poor sampling methodology, both leading to unsatisfactory assessment of the impacts of the dredging activity. D&S IFCA challenged the five-year substantive review baseline being used by the Applicant as it makes it impossible to know what damage to the habitat features has occurred, due to the dredging that has taken place since dredging began over a much longer period than five years (since 2008 in Bedwyn Sands and 2011 at North Middle Grounds). D&S IFCA raised concerns on the impact of fish species such as cod and whiting, and in particular sand eels that are a component of the fish assemblage and of the regional food web. D&S IFCA also responded to a similar consultation held by MMO on aggregate dredging from these sites in English waters.

Responding to Other Public Consultations

D&S IFCA responds to range of public consultations from different organisations. In addition to MLA consultations and Defra's Fisheries Management Plans consultations, D&S IFCA has responded to a range of consultations in FY2024/2025.

Officers have provided feedback to MMO consultations on the South and South West Marine Plans and on the King Scallop Dredge Fishery Closures in ICES area 7d and Lyme Bay area of 7e and to the MMO's Monitoring Surveys for the South and South West Marine Plans.

Officers also responded to the MMO's consultation on the seasonal closure of the Crawfish Fishery in ICES Area 7 for 2024/2025.



Link:

[D&S IFCA Response to MMO Consultation on a Seasonal Closure of the Crawfish Fishery in ICES Area 7 \(8th August 2024\)](#)

Officers held meetings with researchers from the University of Plymouth, who are part of the Centre for Decarbonisation and Offshore Renewable Energy, relating to the ACTOR platform. The ACTOR platform is a testing platform to trial floating wind farm technology. Officers provided information on the possible locations of the testing platform south of Plymouth, by mapping the Mobile Fishing Vessels IVMS data to highlight areas of least impact to the mobile fishing fleet. Officers provided information of the best representatives of the fishing sector with whom the researchers might engage.

As part of a national IFCA training programme, Officers have shared a document with other IFCAs which outlines D&S IFCA's approach to drafting MMO consultation responses, including a general guide to consultations, and key considerations for IFCA

responses such as impacts of proposed activities on fisheries, fish and fish habitats, all with reference to IFCA's core duties and the relevant Marine Plan(s).

13. Marine Protected Areas

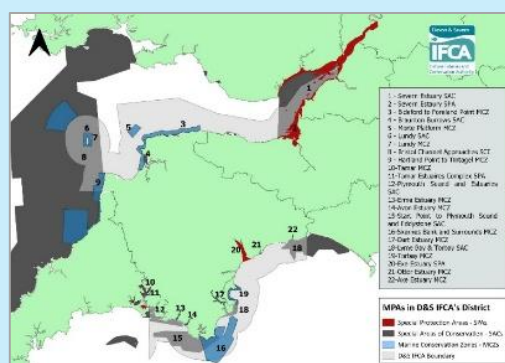
Task:

All IFCAs received additional funding from Defra to assist with work relating to Marine Protected Areas. Work relating to MPAs meets Defra Success Criterion 3 (for all IFCAs).



Overview

Within the D&S IFCA's District there are currently twenty-two MPAs: ten European Marine Sites (SAC, SPA); and 12 Marine Conservation Zones including four Tranche 1 MCZs; two Tranche 2 MCZs and six Tranche 3 MCZs. These MPAs cover 42.39% of the D&S IFCA's District. The MPA site designation and conservation advice for the features are aimed at reducing the potential destruction, damage, or reduction in distribution of marine species and/or habitats.



The designated MPA area with the D&S IFCA's District covers 1917.07 km², of which 68% (1,302.26 km²) is subject to management measures (in particular the prohibition of bottom towed fishing gear) for the protection of sensitive habitats and species, including spatial, temporal, gear and catch restrictions.

EMS/MCZ Assessments

Bristol Channel Approaches Special Area of Conservation:

Draft Habitat Regulations Assessments (HRAs) have been conducted for all fishing activities in or near to the Bristol Channel Approaches Special Area of Conservation (BCA SAC) and sent to Natural England for informal comments. The BCA SAC is a large site which occupies part of the D&S IFCA and Cornwall IFCA Districts, in addition to an area outside of the 6nm limit which is under the MMO's remit. The BCA SAC is designated for harbour porpoise, a mobile species which depends on a range of fish species for food. The assessments therefore consider direct impacts such as bycatch and noise disturbance as well as indirect impacts such as prey removal and impacts of fishing on key habitats of prey species.

D&S IFCA engages regularly with MMO and Cornwall IFCA regarding this site and suite of assessments; throughout FY 2025/26, Officers will be reviewing the draft HRAs with a view to co-developing management options with these other regulators, for subsequent consideration by Members and stakeholders where appropriate. The extension of this work into 2025/26 reflects the complexity of the site and the approach of other regulators

to this site, and will allow time for Members to consider management options, should these be required.

Avon MCZ and Review of Previously Completed Work:

Officers identified the need to undertake an additional MCZ assessment for the Devon Avon MCZ due to a small area (8.75%) of the site that is theoretically open to netting and mobile gear, lying outside of the D&S IFCA's River Avon closing line. This is in draft and will have a final review before being sent to Natural England in April 2025.

Officers have also started to consider the need for future review of previously completed MPA assessments in 2025/26, to ensure that older assessments remain relevant and use the best available evidence on fishing activities, feature condition and interactions of fishing gears on features.

EMS/MCZ Monitoring and Control Plans

Monitoring and Control Plans (M&CPs) are in place for certain fishing activities in some MPAs in the D&S IFCA's District. The sites with M&CPs include Lundy SAC; Torbay MCZ; Plymouth Sound and Estuaries SAC, and Severn Estuary SAC. Officers have reviewed the M&CPs for these sites and have produced reports where needed in line with agreements with Natural England. The M&CP review for potting in Torbay MCZ has identified the need for additional work to be conducted in FY2025/26, which will consider additional evidence gathering and the potential need for measures to reduce the potential interaction between potting activities and the seagrass feature. Some M&CPs are no longer formally reported on unless specified trigger points are exceeded. An audit trail (Excel spreadsheet) is maintained annually for these trigger point assessments, and the trigger points (agreed with Natural England) were not exceeded in FY 2024/2025.

Officers have developed a new M&CP for demersal trawl activity in the Hartland Point to Tintagel MCZ following decisions made by the B&PSC at its meeting on 5th September 2024. Officers liaised with Natural England and produced the M&CP which will monitor the number of Mobile Fishing Permit holders which could potentially fish in the MCZ and review IVMS data on a weekly basis to identify any activity in the site. Officers had previously reviewed IVMS data from 2018 to December 2024 and no towed gear activity took place in the site during this time. Since January 2025, the weekly IVMS monitoring has not identified any mobile fishing activity in the MCZ.

M&CPs will continue to be reviewed as per the requirements set out in the M&CPs.

Additional Information:

To view some of the completed Marine Conservation Zone (MCZ) Assessments and Habitat Regulation Assessments (HRAs) please visit the website:

<https://www.devonandsevernifca.gov.uk/Resource-library/H-Environment-and-Research>

14. Permits and Exemptions

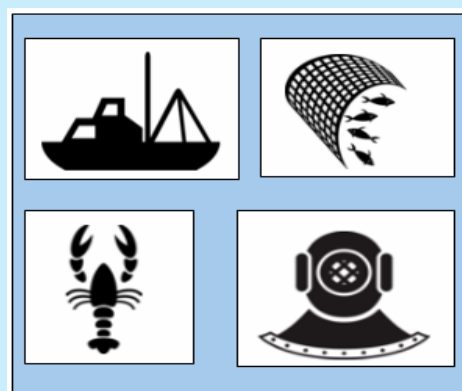
Permits

Permits are needed to conduct mobile fishing, potting, netting, and diving for specific species. Other than mobile fishing, there are permits for both commercial and recreational fishers. The permit conditions contain most of the control measures for each fishing method. The Permit based byelaws, the Permit Conditions, and Annexes can be viewed on the website:

<https://www.devonandsevernifca.gov.uk/enforcement-and-legislation/current-permit-byelaws-permit-conditions/>

Current Permit Holders (31st March 2025):

- Mobile Fishing (at sea): 109
- Mobile Fishing (estuary): 9
- Netting (commercial): 134
- Netting (recreational): 60
- Potting (commercial): 178
- Potting (recreational): 444
- Diving (commercial): 17
- Diving (recreational): 335



In FY 2024/2025 D&S IFCA issued 640 permits which can remain valid for two years. On 31st March 2025 there were 1286 permits in use.

Exemptions

This task is related to the consideration and potential issue of authorisations (Exemptions) under the Exemption Byelaw 2019 (or individual Byelaws) for scientific, stocking and breeding purposes, which must be determined within 60 days of receipt. Work required relating to Exemptions Authorisations is an annual recurring task for Officers.

During FY 2024/2025, Officers processed 19 exemption requests from stakeholders such as the Environment Agency, Cefas, University of Plymouth, Essex University, and the Marine Biological Association. Where the proposed activity involved a gear-feature interaction within a protected area, the necessary protected site assessments were carried out before authorisation. Officers have worked to streamline this process while maintaining protection for protected area features. An up-to-date table of authorised exemptions can be viewed on D&S IFCA's website.

Under the Size of Fishing Vessels Byelaw 2022, Officers may also authorise exemption requests for maintenance activities to be undertaken within the District by relevant fishing vessels over 14.99m in length. Officers have established two specific areas (outside of MPAs and away from typical static gear activity) in which these maintenance

areas may occur. During the FY 2025/2026, Officers will be formalising the application process for such exemption requests and develop an application form.

Additional Information:

The Authorisation request form, to obtain an exemption, is available on D&S IFCA's website – on the Exemptions display page - or can be requested by contacting the Office. *For more information about Exemptions/Authorisations, please visit the website:*

<https://www.devonandsevernifca.gov.uk/enforcement-and-legislation/exemptions-to-byelaws/>

15. Byelaw Work/Management of Fishing Activities

Re-making of Permit Byelaws

A task for 2024/2025 was for the Byelaw and Permitting Sub Committee (B&PSC) to “make” the Potting Permit Byelaw, Netting Permit Byelaw, and the Diving Permit Byelaw, as replacements for the existing byelaws, for potential implementation in 2025. At the end of March 2025, the Mobile Fishing Permit Byelaw 2022 remained in the Quality Assurance phase with the Marine Management Organisation. When confirmed, it is envisaged that this Byelaw can act as the template for the general structuring of the re-made Potting, Netting, and Diving Permit Byelaws; as the legal framework for the issue of applicable Permit Conditions. As the Mobile Fishing Permit Byelaw 2022 has not been implemented, work involved to re-make the other permit byelaws did not progress as expected in 2024/2025. In June 2024 the B&PSC considered options for management for Potting and Netting and concluded that new Byelaws should be developed as planned. In June 2024 the B&PSC reviewed their byelaw review/byelaw making principles, but delayed revising D&S IFCA's explanation of the precautionary principle.

Changes to Permit Conditions

The permit-based Byelaw model adopted by D&S IFCA enables regular review of management measures and appropriate changes to be made to permit conditions when required.

Netting Permit Conditions:

Following over twelve months of work, in July 2024 the review of the Netting Permit Conditions reached its conclusion with amended Netting Permit Conditions issued to permit holders. Changes to the Permit Conditions included prohibiting netting within the Emsstrom Angling Zone and the implementation of additional restrictions for recreational netting including additional catch restrictions (daily bag limits

DEVON & SEVERN IFCA



Emsstrom Wreck: Angling Zone

This Angling Zone has been developed by Devon and Severn IFCA in recognition of the importance and value of recreational sea angling and to secure the wreck for current and future angling activities.

Fishing Mark: A 77m vessel which sank in 2013.
Species: The fish fauna is developing and it is likely to include cod, pollack, conger and bass.
Location: East of Hopes Nose (Torbay).



Points	Latitude	Longitude
1	50° 28.167 N	003° 24.860 W
2	50° 28.100 N	003° 24.755 W
3	50° 28.033 N	003° 24.860 W
4	50° 28.100 N	003° 24.966 W

Chart not for navigational use. © Crown Copyright and/or database rights. Reproduced by permission of The Keeper of Public Records and the UK Hydrographic Office. www.ukho.gov.uk/copyright

Management Measures: (from 1st July 2024)

The Emsstrom Angling Zone is managed by the following:

- **Legislation (Netting Permit Conditions — Annex 6)**
- **Voluntary measures**

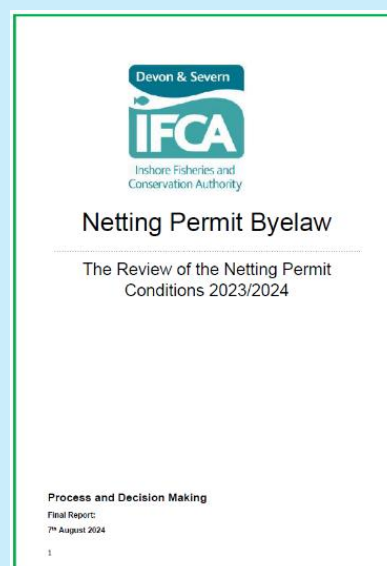
Please see details overleaf.

for some finfish species and sand eels) and a prohibition on the joining of recreational nets.

The formal consultation, that informed the review and decision making of the B&PSC, attracted a large and wide audience with 364 separate responses received. This level of engagement demonstrated how effective D&S IFCA's communications, in particular direct communications using D&S IFCA's contact data base, can be.

All of D&S IFCA's Byelaw work, including the reviews of permit conditions is fully documented. A final report was produced in August 2024 detailing each step of the review, the proposals of the B&PSC, how communication was undertaken, the summarised responses, and details of the decision making by the B&PSC.

The final report can be read [here](#).

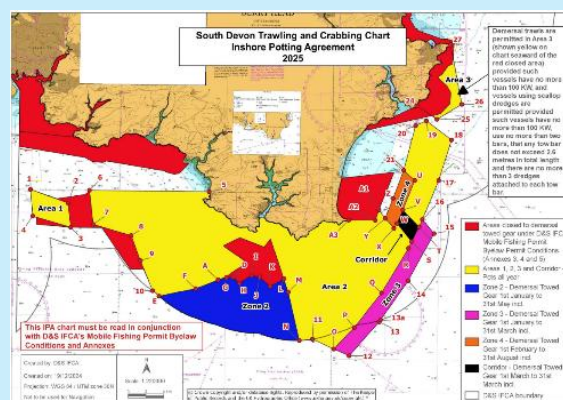


Mobile Fishing Permit Conditions:

With the new Mobile Fishing Permit Byelaw 2022 (and associated permit conditions) not yet in place, during 2024/2025 changes were made to the current Mobile Fishing Permit Conditions on two occasions. In December 2024 the changes included a prohibition on scallop dredging in the Hatland Point to Tintagel Marine Conservation Zone.

In 2025, D&S IFCA reacted to a change in spatial access within the Inshore Potting Agreement (IPA) Area.

The Inshore Potting Agreement Committee agreed to a re-opening of an area known as “the corridor/Area C” that was subsequently legislated for within the MMO Licence Condition. The area is co-managed between the MMO and D&S IFCA, and although D&S IFCA was not obliged to amend its permit conditions to allow access, Members of D&S IFCA's B&PSC considered what action to take. On 27th February 2025, Members of the B&PSC agreed to harmonise legislation and therefore re-open the Area C for the month of March as Mobile Fishing Permit Conditions. Amended Mobile Fishing Permit Conditions (and updated Annexes) were issued on 28th February 2025, with an effective date of 1st March 2025.



Information and Evidence

All papers and reports presented to the B&PSC are published on the website ([Section B of the website Resource Library](#))

Information such as Impact Assessments and final Byelaw Development Reports can be viewed in [Section F of the website Resource Library](#).

16. Authority and B&PSC Meetings

There is a rolling twelve-month schedule of quarterly Authority meetings, that are planned and advertised well in advance of the meeting dates. The membership is comprised of Elected Members from the Funding Local Authorities, Marine Management Organisation (MMO) appointees (General Members), including MMO Officer, and Statutory Members representing Natural England and the Environment Agency. From this Membership, appointments are made to the Byelaw and Permitting Sub-Committee (B&PSC).

There are typically four B&PSC meetings each financial year. All agendas, Officers' papers and minutes from Authority and B&PSC meetings are published on D&S IFCA's website.

<https://www.devonandsevernifca.gov.uk/authority-meetings/>

Meetings

Attendance Record: Authority Meetings

<i>Authority Meeting</i>	<i>20/06/2024</i>	<i>19/09/2024</i>	<i>12/12/2024</i>	<i>20/03/2025</i>
<i>Elected Members Attending</i>	6	5	4	2
<i>General Members Attending</i>	8	9	7	7
<i>Statutory Members Attending</i>	2	2	1	1
<i>Total</i>	16	16	12	10

Attendance Record: Byelaw and Permitting Sub-Committee

<i>B&PSC Meeting</i>	<i>13/06/2024</i>	<i>5/09/2024</i>	<i>5/12/2024</i>	<i>27/02/2025</i>
<i>Members Attending</i>	12	11	14	14

Training for Members

All new Members receive an induction booklet that includes a wide range of information about D&S IFCA and their roles and responsibilities.

In April 2024 Officers prepared a training booklet and a presentation for Authority Members focussed on D&S IFCA's byelaw work.

- There were two online sessions hosted by Officers.
- Following the online sessions, the training booklet and the presentation was directly circulated to all Members.



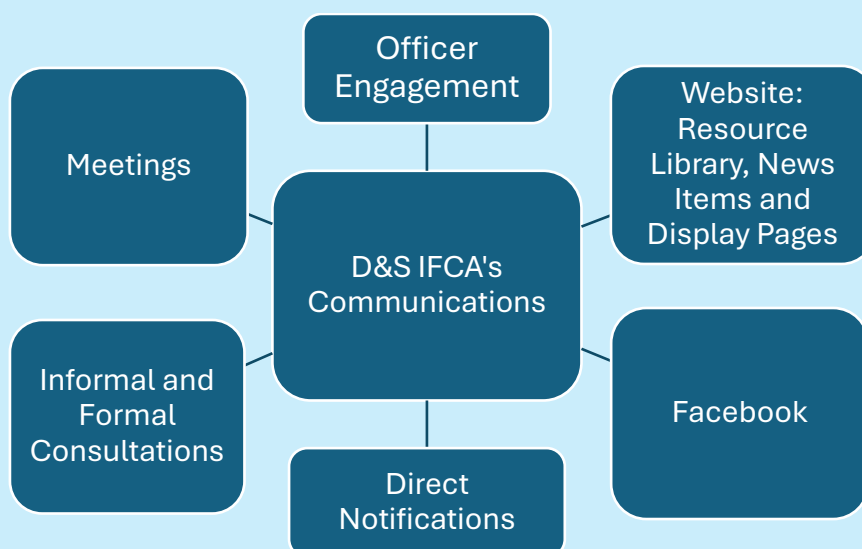
17. Communication and Consultation

Defra's High Level Objectives set out expectations for all IFCA's regarding communications.

- ***IFCA's are recognised and heard, whilst working in partnership and engaging with stakeholders.***

D&S IFCA's Approach to Communications

D&S IFCA must recognise its limited resources with its approach to communications. Communication work is not outsourced and is managed by D&S IFCA's Officers. The Authority's website and social media, such as Facebook, remains a key component of D&S IFCA's Communication Strategy. Electronic engagement, rather than one-to-one communications, is effective and importantly less expensive and less time consuming.



Database of Contact and Communication Options

D&S IFCA maintains a database of contacts that includes a wide range of stakeholders. D&S IFCA's use of permits to manage fishing activity has enabled the collection of contact details, and therefore enables some targeting of communications to different sub-groups.



Mailchimp is often used to reach all D&S IFCA contacts for key messages and for formal consultation. Email (and sub-groups of email addresses) can be effective reaching smaller audiences, such as different groups of permit holders, or Authority Members. Hard copies are sent in the post for those with no access to e-mails.



The Website & Facebook

The website is the central point for a lot of communication work. The website supports a range of display pages to inform stakeholders (and Members) about our role with the marine environment, fisheries legislation, our enforcement activity, meetings, news

(flexible content depending on requirements) and more. There is a dedicated display page for “Engagement and Have Your Say”. D&S IFCA is committed to transparency with information and can demonstrate successful delivery by publishing its outputs (in the Resource Library on its website).

News Items

News items of mixed content can reflect work undertaken by D&S IFCA, and often partner organisations. Website analytics demonstrate that news items attract the attention of visitors to D&S IFCA’s website. News items can link to more detailed information held in D&S IFCA’s Resource Library or other websites.

D&S IFCA Officers produced (17) News Items in 2024/2025.



<https://www.devonandsevernifca.gov.uk/latest-news-information/>

Direct Communication Outputs:

In 2024/2025 Officers sent (27) direct communication emails, of mixed content to different groups of stakeholders, for example information about permit conditions and fisheries legislation, opportunities to engage in consultations, details about meetings, workshops, and for fishers to participate in D&S IFCA’s survey work. Members received (14) notifications about different topics related to D&S IFCA’s work, including funding updates, invitations to training sessions, and opportunities to be involved in D&S IFCA’s governance work.

Supporting Partner Organisations with Communications

News items of mixed content can reflect work undertaken by D&S IFCA, and often partner organisations. In FY 2024/2025 news has been produced to support communications originally produced by Defra, MMO, Natural England, and Cefas. News items were also produced to support other fisheries orientated work undertaken by the University of Plymouth and the University Exeter. News items are often shared on social media, reaching a wide audience. In addition, the content of news items can be directly circulated to D&S IFCA’s contacts. News items are produced in different formats with Blog versions on the main website display. Pdf versions of news items are archived and held in D&S IFCA’s Resource Library (Section G/News Items).

Communications: Byelaw Review/Permit Condition Review

D&S IFCA’s Byelaw and Permitting Sub-Committee (B&PSC) undertakes regular reviews of permit conditions. Changing circumstances makes byelaw/permit condition review work (and associated communication) difficult to plan. During any review, a range of

communications are used to inform the work which can include targeted communications directed to specific groups of contacts and wide ranging communications giving all stakeholders the opportunity to engage. The findings of informal engagement can lead to decision making by the B&PSC and potentially formal consultation on changes to management measures. All reviews of permit conditions are fully documented.

- D&S IFCA's contact database now has over **2200** contacts
- The data base enables some targeted communications to smaller groups (for example permit holders conducting different fishing activities)

Mobile Fishing (engagement work):

In 2024/2025 changes to the Mobile Fishing Permit Conditions needed consideration with a view to aligning the Permit conditions with national legislation. On 1st January 2025 an area of the Inshore Potting Agreement Areas Chart (IPA) was re-opened to demersal mobile fishing gear vessels via an MMO Licence Condition. D&S IFCA formally consulted on amending the Category One Permit Conditions to provide access in the same location as set out within an Annex (Annex 5a) of the Permit Conditions. The Formal Consultation began on 9th January 2025 and ended on 2nd February 2025, with all D&S IFCA contacts notified. A range of communications were used to support the formal consultation.

The Formal Consultation Report, that includes how communications were undertaken can be read [here](#). On 27th February 2025 the B&PSC agreed to amendments to the Mobile Fishing Permit Conditions which were circulated to fishers on 28th February 2025.

Potting (engagement work):

The management of potting dominated a lot of the byelaw review related communications in 2024/2025. Engagement work relating to the management of potting included different phases and different types of engagement as follows:



(1) Port Meetings

Between January and June 2024, D&S IFCA Officers held port meetings with commercial potting permit holders across the D&S IFCA's District. In total 12 meetings were organised with three on the North Coast of Devon and nine along the coast in South and East Devon. The rationale behind these meetings was to discuss three topics to help

D&S IFCA better understand the activities and the concerns of Permit Holders – a) the importance of fishing grounds to local fishermen, b) concerns about management of crab and lobster, and c) fishing in the Bristol Channel (North Devon only). All commercial potting permit holders were contacted directly by e-mail, and news items were produced and published on D&S IFCA's website. Of the 177 Commercial Potting Permit Holders, 41 fishers attended the meetings and one D&S IFCA General Member attended the Appledore and Ilfracombe meetings. There was good engagement and representation from the main ports in North Devon with 13 Permit Holders attending the meetings.

The results of the meetings were presented in Agenda Item 10 of the September 2024 B&PSC meeting and the B&PSC agreed that additional informal consultation be undertaken with all potting permit holders to gauge wider opinion on the concerns and suggestions for management measures regarding crab and lobster fisheries in the District.

(2) Informal Consultation:

The targeted informal consultation began on 18th October 2024 and ended on 15th November 2024. Information was directly circulated to all Category One and Category Two Permit holders. This amounted to 626 people. The majority of potting permit holders were provided the information via email, with a minority receiving hard copy information in the post.

The informal consultation made use for the first time, on a paid on-line survey platform that was made available as a link within the communication material. A QR code was also used as a way to access the survey.



Both the D&S IFCA website and Facebook were used to support the informal consultation. The website “[Engagement & Have Your Say](#)” display page was populated with information. A news item was produced which was duplicated on Facebook. The circulated information included a privacy notice explaining how personal data is protected and how it would be used.

The findings of the informal consultation were documented and presented to the B&PSC on 5th December 2024. The informal consultation report can be read [here](#). At the B&PSC meeting held on 27th February 2025, Members agreed that formal consultation be undertaken on the appropriate management mechanism to prohibit the use of vessels in the District that are fitted with integral, below deck level, tanks having a volume of more than 2m³.

(3) Informal Consultation (preparation):

In March 2025, Officers began preparation for the formal consultation to begin in April 2025. Messaging will be consistent across various platforms, with electronic engagement the main focus. The combination of Mail Chimp, Outlook, postal notification, website and Facebook will ensure D&S IFCA reaches the largest possible audience that it can.

18. National IFCA Success Criteria

To support the positive delivery of the national vision, IFCA's 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 IFCA's 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.

Success Criterion 1:
<i>IFCA's are recognised and heard, whilst working in partnership and engaging with stakeholders.</i>
Success Criterion 2:
<i>IFCA's implement a fair, effective and proportionate enforcement regime.</i>
Success Criterion 3:
<i>IFCA's use evidence based and appropriate measures to manage the sustainable exploitation of sea fisheries resources and deliver marine environmental protection within their districts.</i>
Success Criterion 4:
<i>IFCA's have appropriate governance in place and staff are trained and professional.</i>
Success Criterion 5:
<i>IFCA's make the best use of evidence to deliver their objectives.</i>

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 the Authority's Annual Plan. The 2024/2025 Annual Plan was adopted by Members on 21st March 2024.

Reporting Tables and Indicators:

The following pages set out the tasks in the 2024/2025 Annual Plan and provide a summary report relating to each task. The indicators (tick or cross) demonstrate if the task (or elements of a task) were achieved as expected by 31st March 2025. Many of the tasks are repeating requirements for D&S IFCA as indicated within the reports.

19. Tasks Related to Success Criteria 1

Success Criterion 1:

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

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

Following familiarisation with current documentation and establishing a drafting team, which have been completed, the GWG is due to move on to developing a new draft of the Strategy. In 2024/2025, the GWG will additionally consider recent consultations to inform this work. The final objective is the adoption of the Communication Strategy by the Authority, which is not anticipated to be completed this year.

Report

A new draft of the Communications Strategy has not been completed by the GWG. The GWG met on 13th December 2024 to focus on another task in the Annual Plan (the review the Enforcement and Compliance Strategy). The review of D&S IFCA's Communication Strategy & Delivery Plan has been an ongoing task since 2022. Time constraints for Members have delayed progress; however, the Authority has recognised that the Communications Strategy needs review and therefore the suggestion by Officers is for the task to be carried forward into the Annual Plan FY 2025/2026.

Task 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 database of contacts is updated regularly. The contact details have enabled targeted communications for permit holders, per method of fishing (mobile fishing, potting, netting, or diving for specified shellfish species) or commercial or recreational fishing sectors. Communication, using contact details, can and does include pre-consultation to inform byelaw review and fishing activity surveys that can also inform environmental assessment work. A master database of all stakeholders is used for Formal Public Consultations with Mailchimp email circulars utilising imported contacts from the database.

There were 46 direct notifications in 2024/2025. This included 17 direct notifications issued to Members relating to different issues, for example updates on funding, invitations to attend events, or circulation of information, including presentations. Direct

communications made possible by the database included pre-consultation and formal public consultation relating to D&S IFCA's byelaw work, as well as notifying fishers about the opportunities to attend port meetings, with the findings informing discussions on managing pot fisheries in the District. The permit database is maintained every week, with collated information used for a range of work, including informing the B&PSC regarding levels of fishing activity. This is a repeating task as per national IFCA success criteria.

Task 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.



Report

The website provides the platform to display a range of information, and to showcase the achievements of the Authority. The website is reviewed every week. The content of the website library is added to on a regular basis, with additional content that includes, but not limited to, meeting papers, minutes from meetings, consultation publications, environmental assessments, and legislation.

The website Resource Library provides the foundation to hold information that can be used on display pages, and for links in reports and other publications. In 2024/2025 a total of 17 news items were produced in blog and pdf formats, which included supporting Defra (FMP's) and Cefas communications (Tuna Economics survey).

The website is used to gather information, relating to applications for permits, persons and organisations seeking authorisations (exemptions), and, with a new page being built in July 2024, now provides an online platform for stakeholders to report suspicious illegal fishing activity,

An audit of the website content (Resource Library) and the display pages was conducted in November 2024, and it has been recognised that some pages contain information that could be updated. Dates on individual pages indicate when content was last updated. Website analytics can help officers and Members consider which areas of the website could be prioritised for updates, or to help determine if there should be consideration regarding reducing the number of display pages that need to be managed.

Improving the website, potentially replacing it, and considering how best to use the website as a communication tool may be discussed during the review of the Communications Strategy by the Governance Working Group. Website Review, communications and information sharing is a repeating task as per national IFCA success criteria.

Task 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.



Report

Officers have continued important input to TAG and have developed and delivered training for Officers from across other IFCAs as part of the first iteration of the annual Environment, Science and Conservation training course. The training delivered builds on local expertise in assessing fishing activities in MPAs and delivering IFCA duties in relation to Marine Spatial Prioritisation. This course is aimed at Environment Officers in all IFCAs to give consistent understanding and training in a number of environment and research components which affect all the IFCAs.

Officers attend the South West Regional Fisheries Group organised by the MMO. It provides an opportunity to raise the awareness of the work D&S IFCA is undertaking and learn about the concerns and positions of representatives of the commercial fleet on key national management issues.

D&S IFCA is the lead IFCA at the national recreational sea angling forums and provides feedback to the other IFCAs.

Participation in National and Regional Fisheries and Conservation Activities is a repeating task as per IFCA success criteria.

Task 05 Hinkley Point C Nuclear Power Station – HPC Marine Technical Forum - MLA Applications

This workstream is expected to continue into 2024/2025, mainly focussing 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.



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 and interest groups to gather additional evidence relating to relevant fish species in the vicinity of HPC, potential routes to delivery of the Acoustic Fish Deterrent and the need for an appropriate package of mitigation and habitat compensation under the Habitats Regulations. A presentation was given by Senior Environment Officer to the Full Authority updating Members on the Officers' engagement with the HPC development. Officers have also engaged with MMO and Defra to demonstrate the need for the fish kill at HPC

to be accounted for in the Celtic Seas and Western Channel Pelagic Species Fisheries Management Plan, and in relation to impacts of prey reductions on Harbour Porpoise in the Bristol Channel Approaches Special Area of Conservation.

The intention is for this workstream to continue into 2025/2026, 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. This task will be carried forward into 2025/2026 as there will be further input required from Officers.

Task 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.



Report

Twenty-nine MLA consultations have been reviewed for their potential impacts to fisheries, fish and the habitats on which they depend. Officers use a triage process to determine the level of response required, and this has been applied to streamline the work. The MLAs requiring most substantial engagement related to an offshore windfarm with a cable corridor making landfall in North Devon, and aggregate dredging in the Severn Estuary. The former has required Officer input into two further responses following on from the initial D&S IFCA's response to the MLA in 2023. The latter has required several rounds of consultation and ongoing engagement with both the MMO and Natural England.

Officers have provided feedback to MMO consultations on the South and South West Marine Plans and on the King Scallop Dredge Fishery Closures in ICES area 7d and Lyme Bay area of 7e. Officers have also engaged with the Severn Estuary Commission on their scoping for tidal power schemes in the Severn Estuary.

Officers have attended a pre-application meeting with Bristol Port regarding their plans for the Bristol Wind Terminal at Avonmouth Docks and the associated Compensation Habitat Creation Scheme at Steart adjacent to Bridgewater Bay.

Officers held meetings with researchers from the University of Plymouth, who are part of the Centre for Decarbonisation and Offshore Renewable Energy, relating to the ACTOR platform. The ACTOR platform is a testing platform to trial floating wind farm technology. Officers provided information on the possible locations of the testing platform south of Plymouth, by mapping the Mobile Fishing Vessels IVMS data to highlight areas of least

impact to the mobile fishing fleet. Officers provided information of the best representatives of the fishing sector with whom the researchers might engage.

Officers have continued to undertake pre-MLA consultation engagement with an aquaculture business and mobile gear fishers on the possible location of a mussel spat collection farm in Babbacombe Bay. This work has involved Officers analysing IVMS for 2023 and 2024 to show the level of impact to the fishing industry of possible locations. The fishers, who are potentially impacted, have engaged with D&S IFCA and provided further information that will help inform D&S IFCA's response to the MLA once it is on the public register.

Officers also responded to the MMO's consultation on the seasonal closure of the Crawfish Fishery in ICES Area 7 for 2024/2025.

As part of a national IFCA training programme, Officers have shared a document with other IFCA's which outlines D&S IFCA's approach to drafting consultation responses, including a general guide to consultations, and key considerations for IFCA responses such as impacts of proposed activities on fisheries, fish and fish habitats, all with reference to D&S IFCA's core duties and the relevant Marine Plan(s).

Participation in National and Regional Fisheries and Conservation Activities is a repeating task as per IFCA success criteria.

Task 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.



Report

Between January and June 2024, D&S IFCA Officers held port meetings with commercial potting permit holders across the D&S IFCA's District. In total 12 meetings were organised with three on the North Coast of Devon and nine along the coast in South and East Devon. All commercial potting permit holders were contacted directly by e-mail, and news items were produced and published on D&S IFCA's website. There was good engagement and representation from the main ports in North Devon. Representation was received from ports across the south coast, but proportional representation was slightly lower than achieved on the north coast. Of a total of 177 Commercial Potting Permit Holders, 41 fishers attended the meetings and one D&S IFCA General Member attended the Appledore and Ilfracombe meetings.

These meetings had several goals, including to gain a better understanding of the importance of local fishing grounds, and of fishers' concerns around crustacea stocks and fisheries management. Alongside the discussions and notes taken at the port meetings, 30 fishers (mostly those attending the meetings) completed survey forms, annotated charts providing details of their activities, and also detailed concerns relating

to their fisheries and suggested potential management measures. The results of this engagement were presented in Agenda Item 10 of the September 2024 B&PSC meeting.

In October 2024, Potting Permit holders were contacted with an informal 'Have Your Say' consultation, encouraging them to raise any concerns relating to pot fisheries in D&S IFCA's District and how to address the issues. In total, D&S IFCA received 29 responses, which were summarised in Annex 1 to Agenda Item 6 of the December 2024 B&PSC meeting.

Following the December 2024 B&PSC meeting, and to inform this work, Officers contacted the 24 permit holders that had been identified to operate more than 1,000 pots in the District. The purpose of the consultation was to understand whether the pot numbers declared on the permit application were correct and whether there was any seasonal variation in the use of the various types of pots.

Task 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 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.



Report

Officers, who attend the FMP meetings, were requested to disseminate information relating to Defra's DFMP consultations. This has been undertaken through D&S IFCA publishing a news item on the website on 11th October 2024 relating to consultations on five FMPs including those for Southern North Sea and Channel Skate and Ray FMP and North Sea and Channel Sprat FMP. This task will be carried forward into 2025/2026 as there is an on-going responsibility for D&S IFCA to be involved in the development and implementation of national FMPs.

Task 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.



Report

Work to remake the Potting Permit Byelaw is dependent on the successful implementation of the new Mobile Fishing Permit Byelaw 2022, which is still in the Quality Assurance phase with the Marine Management Organisation.

It was envisaged that the new Mobile Fishing Permit Byelaw would act as the template for the general structuring of a re-made Potting Permit Byelaw – as the legal framework for the Potting Permit Conditions. Without a new Potting Permit Byelaw being developed, and “made” by the B&PSC, the communication tasks cannot be completed.

The task is carried forward into the Annual Plan FY 2025/2026.

Task 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.



Report

Work to remake the Netting Permit Byelaw is dependent on the successful implementation of the new Mobile Fishing Permit Byelaw 2022, which is still in the Quality Assurance phase with the Marine Management Organisation. It was envisaged that the new Mobile Fishing Permit Byelaw would act as the template for the general structuring of a re-made Netting Permit Byelaw – as the legal framework for the Netting Permit Conditions. Without a new Netting Permit Byelaw being developed, and “made” by the B&PSC, the communication tasks cannot be completed.

The task is carried forward into the Annual Plan FY 2025/2026.

Task 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.



Report

Work to remake the Diving Permit Byelaw is dependent on the successful implementation of the new Mobile Fishing Permit Byelaw 2022, which is still in the Quality Assurance phase with the Marine Management Organisation. It was envisaged that the new Mobile Fishing Permit Byelaw would act as the template for the general structuring of a re-made Diving Permit Byelaw – as the legal framework for the Diving Permit Conditions. Without

a new Diving Permit Byelaw being developed, and “made” by the B&PSC, the communication tasks cannot be completed.

This engagement task is suspended, as work developing a re-made Diving Permit Byelaw is not included in the 2025/2026 Annual Plan.

Task 012 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.



Report

The new Mobile Fishing Permit Byelaw 2022 is still in the Quality Assurance phase with the Marine Management Organisation. Until it is implemented, any further engagement work, with a view to changes to the associated permit conditions (a potential introduction of REM) cannot be undertaken.

This engagement task (relating to permit conditions, not yet implemented) is suspended.

Additional Work Related to Success Criteria 1

Officers regularly attend meetings of estuary forum groups and management partnerships for areas with protected site designations, including the Association of Severn Estuary Relevant Authorities, North Devon Biosphere Marine Policy Working Group and Partnership Forum, Tamar Estuaries Consultative Forum, and Exe Estuary Management Partnership.

Officers work in partnership to further the conservation objectives of such sites, while ensuring fisheries, fish and fish habitats are accounted for in local decision making. Officers also participated in Standing Environment Groups, which are convened to respond to events such as pollution emergencies, with a view to ensuring fisheries are considered in the crisis response.

Officers also attended meetings of the Lyme Bay Fisherman CIC and monthly meetings of the South Devon and Channel Shellfishermen where engagement with the fishing industry has taken place and the work of the D&S IFCA has been discussed. Officers also attend six-weekly meetings with Natural England to discuss MPAs assessments, any concerns relating to MPAs work and D&S IFCA’s management of fishing activities in MPAS. These are useful meetings and allow a two-way dialogue of marine conservation matters.

20. Tasks Related to Success Criteria 2

Success Criterion 2:

IFCAs implement a fair, effective and proportionate enforcement regime.

Task 013 Review the Compliance and Enforcement Strategy

To review the current strategy and consider introducing new ways of operating. This task is the priority workstream for the Governance Working Group (GWG) in 2024-2025.



Report

The review has begun and the GWG met on 13th December 2024. Members of the GWG examined and commented on the circulated Enforcement and Compliance Strategy that was last updated in October 2019.

Discussion at IFCA Chief Officer Group (COG) meetings has led to other IFCAs recognising that a review of all IFCAs' Enforcement and Compliance Strategies is needed. It has been agreed that a collective review would be the best way forward. D&S IFCA will share its draft review when completed so that it can be used as the basis for developing a national IFCA Enforcement and Compliance Strategy.

Finalising the draft Enforcement and Compliance Strategy is a task in the Annual Plan FY 2025/2026.

Task 015 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.



Report

This task reflected the introduction of legislation in the Netting Permit Conditions. IVMS data were interrogated, and no fishing activity was identified. Patrols to the eastern end of D&S IFCA's District in Lyme Bay from Brixham meant that Officers passed close to the site on many occasions throughout the year. Officers did not record any fishing activity on the site or the presence of any static gear. It is known however that the site remains important for both the commercial and recreational rod and line vessels.

Task 016 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.



Report

Officers held 12 internal TCG meetings and attended 30 external TCGs during the year. Attending the TCG meetings is a requirement for Enforcement Officers and is a repeating task as per IFCA success criteria.

Task 017 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

Forty new investigations were undertaken. Officers investigated a complex case involving multiple charges against those suspected of illegal netting in estuaries that involved CIFCA, and the MCA. The investigation took a considerable amount of Officer resource to complete, and the case is to be heard in the Crown Court in June 2026.

Creation of case files is a requirement of the work undertaken by the Enforcement Officers and is a repeating task as per IFCA success criteria.

Task 018 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 are published on D&S IFCA's Website ([Investigations Tables Page](#)) which was last updated in February 2025. Records of enforcement activity are provided to AIFCA annually. Providing the information is a repeating task as per IFCA success criteria.

Task 019 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 Code of Conduct for IFCO's is available on D&S IFCA's website (Section E of the Resource Library) and can be read [here](#). It has not changed since 2012. However, the

Code of Conduct is supported by Standard Operating Procedures that reflect the specific ways in which D&S IFCA Enforcement Officers undertake their work. Recognising potential changes to the Code of Conduct, and, when required, adapting the Standard Operating Procedures is a repeating task as per IFCA success criteria.

Task 021 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.



Report

Officers have discussed D&S IFCA's REM project with Defra, MMO and Natural England. In order for D&S IFCA to be in a position to consider whether to formally introduce REM requirements on the mobile gear vessels it needs to amend its Mobile Fishing Permit Byelaw. Officers have engaged with MMO's IFCA Byelaw Quality Assurance team during the year to progress the development of the Byelaw. Officers are awaiting a response from Defra to confirm its position regarding D&S IFCA's potential use of REM. Officers attended a joint meeting with CIFCA's and the Environment Agency's warranted Officers to learn of ongoing issues and any changes to legislation and the use of their cross warranted powers.

Working with other regulators is a repeating task as per IFCA success criteria.

Additional Work Related to Success Criteria 2

Report:

All IFCA's started to submit intelligence to the national CLUE system. The CLUE system uses investigation and intelligence management software to maximise the use and value of intelligence shared across enforcement bodies. Inspections by IFCA Enforcement Officers continued to be submitted and shared with other agencies through the Monitoring Control Surveillance System (MCSS).

Following notification that D&S IFCA had been unsuccessful with its bid for Defra funding in December, Officers began the process of purchasing a drone using D&S IFCA's Capital Reserve funds and undertaking the necessary training and development of the Safe Systems of Work and Standard Operating Procedures. It is envisaged that most of the cost associated with the purchase of the drone will be offset by the sale of D&S IFCA's RIB 'Enforcer'.

21. Tasks Related to Success Criteria 3

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.

Task 022 Re-make the Potting Permit Byelaw

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.

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.



Report

The new Mobile Fishing Permit Byelaw 2022 is still in the Quality Assurance phase with the Marine Management Organisation. It was envisaged and planned that this Byelaw would act as the template for the general structuring of the re-made Potting Permit Byelaw as the legal framework for the issue of Potting Permit Conditions. As the Mobile Fishing Permit Byelaw 2022 has not been implemented, work involved to re-make the Potting Permit Byelaw has not progressed as intended. On 13th June 2024, the B&PSC discussed and agreed to amended principles that underpin byelaw review/development work.

The task is carried forward into the Annual Plan FY 2025/2026, with rationale for the inclusion set out in the Annual Plan FY 2025/2026.

Task 023 Re- make the Netting Permit Byelaw

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.

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.



Report

The new Mobile Fishing Permit Byelaw 2022 is still in the Quality Assurance phase with the Marine Management Organisation. It was envisaged and planned that this Byelaw would act as the template for the general structuring of the re-made Netting Permit Byelaw as the legal framework for the issue of Netting Permit Conditions. As the Mobile Fishing Permit Byelaw 2022 has not been implemented, work involved to re-make the Netting Permit Byelaw has not progressed as intended. On 13th June 2024, the B&PSC discussed and agreed to amended principles that underpin byelaw review/development work.

The task is carried forward into the Annual Plan FY 2025/2026, with the rationale for the inclusion set out in the Annual Plan FY 2025/2026.

Task 024 Re- make the Diving Permit Byelaw

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.

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.



Report

The new Mobile Fishing Permit Byelaw 2022 is still in the Quality Assurance phase with the Marine Management Organisation. It was envisaged and planned that this Byelaw would act as the template for the general structuring of the re-made Diving Permit Byelaw as the legal framework for the issue of Diving Permit Conditions. As the Mobile Fishing Permit Byelaw 2022 has not been implemented, work involved to re-make the Diving Permit Byelaw has not progressed as intended.

On 13th June 2024, the B&PSC discussed and agreed to amended principles that underpin byelaw review/development work. The task is suspended and is not included in the Annual Plan FY 2025/2026.

Task 025 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.

Report

All MPA assessments have been completed for sites within the D&S IFCA District apart from those relating to the Bristol Channel and Approaches SAC.

Habitat Regulations Assessments have been conducted for all fishing activities in or near to the Bristol Channel Approaches Special Area of Conservation (BCA SAC) and sent to Natural England for informal advice. The BCA SAC is a large site which occupies part of the D&S IFCA and Cornwall IFCA Districts, in addition to an area outside of the 6nm limit which is under the MMO's remit. The BCA SAC is designated for harbour porpoise, a mobile species which depends on a range of fish species for food. The assessments therefore consider direct impacts such as bycatch and noise disturbance as well as indirect impacts such as prey removal and impacts of fishing on key habitats of prey species.

D&S IFCA engages regularly with MMO and Cornwall IFCA regarding this site and suite of assessments, and Officers are currently reviewing the assessments with a view to co-developing management options with these other regulators, for subsequent consideration by Members and stakeholders where appropriate. Discussions relating to the BCA SAC are likely to continue into 2025/26, mirroring the approach of other regulators to this complex site, and to allow time for Members to consider management options, should these be required.

Officers identified the need to undertake an additional MCZ assessment for the Devon Avon MCZ due to a small area (8.75%) of the site that is theoretically open to netting and mobile gear, lying outside of the D&S IFCA's River Avon closing line. This was completed in March 2025 and sent to Natural England on 11th April 2025.

Officers have also started to consider the need for future review of previously completed MPA assessments in 2025/26, to ensure that older assessments remain relevant and use the best available evidence on fishing activities, feature condition and gear/feature interactions.

Task 026 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.



Report

Monitoring and Control Plans (M&CPs) are in place for certain fishing activities in some MPAs in the D&S IFCA's District. The sites with M&CPs include Lundy SAC; Torbay MCZ; Plymouth Sound and Estuaries SAC, and Severn Estuary SAC. Officers have reviewed the M&CPs for Lundy and Torbay, and have produced draft reports for these, which were finalised will be finalised in March 2025 and sent to Natural England in early April 2025. The review of the M&CP for potting in Torbay MCZ has incorporated new information on the fishing activity within the site. This has triggered a review of the MCZ assessment for this gear/feature interaction. The MCZ assessment review is currently in draft form, and will be sent to Natural England at the beginning of FY 2025/2026. This assessment has concluded that management is likely to be required for cuttle traps in Torbay MCZ, in order to ensure that D&S IFCA fulfils its duties to further the Conservation Objectives of the site. The evidence gathered and review of the assessment will feed into a paper to be presented to the B&PSC in 2025 to determine the future management of potting for cuttlefish in the Torbay MCZ.

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. An audit trail (Excel spreadsheet) is maintained annually for these trigger point assessments. The Audit trial for 2024/2025 was completed in March 2025, in line with the existing annual audit timeline.

Officers have developed a M&CP for demersal trawl activity in the Hartland Point to Tintagel MCZ following decisions made by the B&PSC at its meeting on 5th September 2024. Officers liaised with Natural England and produced the M&CP which will monitor the number of Mobile Fishing Permit holders which could potentially fish in the MCZ and review IVMS data on a weekly basis to identify any activity in the site. Officers had previously reviewed IVMS data from 2018 to December 2024 and no towed gear activity took place in the site during this time. Since January 2025, the weekly IVMS monitoring has not identified any mobile fishing activity in the MCZ. M&CPs will be reviewed on an annual basis as per the requirements set out in the M&CPs.

Task 027 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.



Report

This workstream has been delayed by a requirement to focus on other workstreams within the Annual Plan and with limited staff resources the other molluscan and crustacea survey work took priority. The required data are being acquired from the MMO and the online Themis VMS portal in February 2025, with a view to analysing and reporting on this workstream later in 2025.

The task is carried forward into the Annual Plan FY 2025/2026.

Task 028 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.



Report

This workstream has received funding from Defra for D&S IFCA's involvement. D&S IFCA's participation in the development and implementation of the FMPs has been an important workstream and has required a great deal of Officers' time. Officers have attended 28 Fisheries Management Plans (FMP) meetings both online and in person for those relating to Skates and Rays FMP, Celtic Sea and Western Channel Pelagic FMP, Celtic Sea and Western Channel Demersal FMP, King Scallop FMP, Bass FMP, Non-Quota Species FMP, Whelk FMP, and Wrasse and Black Bream FMP. Part of the work relating to these FMPs involved contributing to and commenting on management proposals, inputting knowledge and evidence into the workstream relating to these FMPs and disseminating information to other IFCA's and the AIFCA were relevant. Officers provided evidence from the perspective of an inshore regulator, and the knowledge and understanding of the fisheries, both recreational and commercial, and the challenges those fisheries face in the inshore area.

In addition, D&S IFCA is the lead IFCA for the Crab and Lobster FMP and Officers attended 17 meetings including the Crab and Lobster Management Working Group, the Science Group and the Implementation Group. Other meetings supporting the implementation of the Crab and Lobster FMP were attended and included workstreams relating to fleet data analysis. D&S IFCA contributed extensively to these groups providing expertise on the fisheries, the sectors involved and provided both scientific and technical knowledge. Officers have commented on management proposals and brought the South West industry and regulator perspective to these discussions. D&S IFCA, in addition, has worked on the FMP FISP funded project which involved attendance at many project meetings, and reported outputs from the work undertaken by D&S IFCA Environment Officers and the funded research assistant into the final project report.

D&S IFCA organised an additional Crab and Lobster FMP meeting with Defra, the MMO and six IFCAs to discuss the potential for regional management of the proposed national Minimum Conservation Reference Size of 90mm for the European lobster. Two meetings were held in relation to the proposed Permit Scheme for the Whelk FMP, one of which was a workshop in London. Continuing to provide evidence and expertise to help the progress of further FMPs is an on-going task for Officers in 2025/2026.

Task 029 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.



Report

The survey work conducted in 2024/25 represents the second year of survey work under this workstream. Officers are continuing to try to survey lobsters through the winter to provide more data on the time period in which lobsters are not expected be naturally shedding their eggs, to assist targeting of enforcement effort. Thirteen surveys on board fishing vessels have been conducted in 2024/25. Officers have begun to undertake preliminary analysis of the data alongside in-house statistics training, and the analysis will be completed after the survey season ends in April 2025. The outputs of this work will be used to support the chemical testing of the pleopods of lobsters that appear to have been scrubbed of its eggs prior to landing.

Task 030 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.



Report

D&S IFCA Officers, together with a research assistant (funded through the Crab and Lobster FMP FISP funded project) and an MSc student from the University of Plymouth, trialled the use of durometers on board fishing vessels in the D&S IFCA's District. Data collection took place on 23 trips across May-August 2024 onboard five commercial potting vessels operating in south Devon during typical fishing operations. The research team worked alongside experienced crab fishermen who shared best practice in determining soft and hard crab at sea. The Officers/researchers used a checklist of physical characteristics observable on the crabs that indicate soft versus hard shells. They also utilised a durometer to quantify the hardness of a crab shell. Finally, the relationship between shell hardness and meat yield was investigated, confirming that hard-shelled crabs have substantially higher meat yield than soft or borderline crabs. Based on the outcomes of the project, a range of recommendations have been made to the Crab and Lobster FMP implementation group which include Defra, MMO, and members of the fishing industry to inform the total prohibition of the landing of soft-shelled crab and how this may be enforced:

- 1) A program of sharing of best practice from experienced fishermen to the wider sector in recognising hard- and soft-shelled crab along with resources such as documents and videos.
- 2) A two-pronged approach to defining and enforcing shell hardness in crabs: Firstly, training of enforcement Officers to use the physical characteristics of crab moult stage to determine shell hardness, and then the use of the durometer and a pre-defined hardness threshold on any disputed or borderline individuals.
- 3) The durometer threshold should be co-developed with fishermen, processors, managers and policy makers to determine the appropriate trade-offs around retention of hard crabs over protection of soft crabs.
- 4) A research and development project to manufacture a durometer in the UK that would allow calibration and servicing of durometers without having to ship to the USA, which is the sole supplier currently.

Task 031 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.



Report

This workstream has been negatively impacted by the delayed national rollout of IVMS on board fishing vessels, and by perceived poor reliability of Catch App data. However, Officers engaged with fishers during all onboard surveys to hear their views and concerns regarding crustacea fisheries in the District, which has informed subsequent engagement and papers to the B&PSC. Where possible, Officers collected Catch per Unit (CPUE) data on crab and lobster fisheries during on-board surveys which relate to the catches per strings hauled. These data will be analysed in 2025. Whilst the data collected may help inform future work of D&S IFCA, they are limited to the five vessels surveyed and the limited number of days at sea.

Task 032 Taw Torridge Estuary 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.



Report

Cockle and mussel surveys in the Taw-Torridge were undertaken in May and August 2024. The reports were published on D&S IFCA's website in March 2025. The conclusions of these assessments will feed into the food availability model to determine the quantity of mussels that are available for removal by shellfish operators whilst ensuring that there is sufficient food available to the overwintering birds that rely on the estuary for their food.

This workstream will be repeated in 2025/26 to monitor the mollusc stocks, and to utilise the new model developed by Bournemouth University under the Marine Natural Capital and Ecosystem Assessment Project (see additional workstream) in determining the feasibility of a local mussel fishery

Task 033 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.



Reports

Mussel Surveys:

Mussel surveys were conducted on 8th April 2024 for the Exe Estuary and on 24th July 2024 for the Teign Estuary. Finalised reports for both estuaries were published in March 2025.

The density and tonnage of mussel on the Exe Estuary's Bull Hill mussel bed have declined since 2022 and remains very low compared to historic levels. Mussel tonnage on the Salty (Teign Estuary) appears to have increased since 2022 but is also very low compared to historic levels.

It is recommended that stock assessments continue to be carried out on at least a biennial basis to monitor any future changes and inform the ongoing need to continue with the current closures of mussel beds in the Exe and Teign Estuaries; these closures have been in place since 1st May 2019 under D&S IFCA's Byelaw 9 – Temporary Closure of Shellfish Beds.



Cockle Surveys:

The Teign Estuary and Exe Estuary cockle surveys were undertaken on 20th September 2024 and 17th October 2024 respectively. Finalised reports for both estuaries were published in March 2025.

Cockle densities remain low but relatively stable at both sites, and beds still do not appear to have recovered substantially since large-scale mortalities in 2011 and 2014. Officers are grateful to local stakeholders for providing information on local hand-gathering activities, which has provided useful context for the research into these beds.

Stock assessments for both mussel and cockles will continue to be carried out on at least a biennial basis to monitor any future changes and inform future work on a potential Hand Working Byelaw if resources allow in future years. The surveys will not be undertaken in FY 2025/2026.

Task 035 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.



Report

D&S IFCA continues to chair the IPA meetings and provide secretarial support in the tasks of arranging the meeting, liaising with Members, producing minutes and updating the Annual IPA chart. The minutes of the meetings since 2020 have been published on D&S IFCA website. In September 2024, the IPA Committee made the decision to re-open an area within the IPA known as 'the Corridor'. D&S IFCA has in place Mobile Fishing Permit Conditions that align with the management of areas with the IPA. The change agreed by the IPA Committee was recognised by D&S IFCA's Byelaw and Permitting Sub-Committee who agreed to D&S IFCA going out to formal consultation on this change.

A formal consultation commenced on 9th January to the end of February 2025 and proposed the re-opening of Area C (Annex 5a), also known locally as the "corridor". Seven objections were received and documented in a report for the B&PSC. On 27th February 2025 the B&PSC considered the objections and information set out in an Officers' paper (Agenda Item 6). Members agreed with the Officers' recommendation to re-open the area for demersal mobile fishing gear (1st March to 31st March inclusive). Following the meeting Officers amended the Category One Mobile Fishing Permit Conditions and Annexes to reflect the B&SPC decision. The amended information was circulated to permit holders on 28th February 2025.

Task 036 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. Officers have worked to streamline this process while maintaining protection for protected area features. Nineteen authorisations have been issued since the beginning of April 2024. An up-to-date table of authorised exemptions can be viewed on D&S IFCA's website.

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

Work required relating to Exemptions Authorisations is an annual recurring task for Officers.

Task 037: 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.

Report



REM

The REM project that started in 2022, continued through 2024. The available FASS funding in 2023 had funded the purchase of four additional REM systems. The ongoing airtime costs were met by D&S IFCA and additional time for meetings with suppliers was provided free of charge. The delay in progressing the remade Mobile Fishing Permit Byelaw meant that further development work with the suppliers was not progressed as had been anticipated. Officers continued to seek potential sources of funding to support the ongoing costs of REM systems, but this was not prioritised because of the delay with the Byelaw.

D&S IFCA's Officers did reach out to the commercial potting permit holders to seek volunteers to trial REM on their vessels. No volunteers were identified but some feedback was received. In at least some cases, the reluctance to trial REM was based on the sense that the inshore commercial fleet was over regulated particularly when compared to the offshore fleet. It was understood that the use of REM would be to monitor the number of pots hauled and deployed and many felt this was better suited to trialling on the vessels that fish offshore. D&S IFCA Officers will be promoting the inclusion of REM on potting vessels as part of the Crab and Lobster FMP Western Channel crab fishery unit trials.



Durometers

As part of the Crab and Lobster FMP FISP funded project Officers together with a researcher from Bangor University trialled a durometer to test if this methodology could quantify the hardness of a crab shell. This trial of technology was part of the wider project to also identify the characteristics of the different moult stages of crab, record the physical characteristics of the softness of the shell as identified by fishers and to look at

the meat yield of crab with different hardness of the shell. A range of recommendations have been made to the FMP based on the outcomes of the project which include the use of a durometer as a potential enforcement tool. Defra will now decide on how the prohibition of soft-shelled crab will be enforced and compliance monitored.

A research and development project to manufacture a durometer in the UK has been suggested as one of the outputs of the project which would allow calibration and servicing of durometers within the UK.

Task 038: 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.



Report

Effective delivery of this task requires extensive data showing use of the site by fishing vessels across the year, and Officers had planned to use IVMS data, particularly from Netting Permit holders, to inform this work. However, the delay to the national rollout of IVMS across this part of the fleet has delayed this work, is likely to cause continued delay in this workstream and is not achievable in the foreseeable future.

Additional Work Related to Success Criteria 3

Report:

Marine Natural Capital and Ecosystem Assessment Programme

Additional work was undertaken by Officers feeding into a partnership project which seeks to improve the evidence base for management of a local mussel fishery. The partnership project involves work with ornithologists from EAD Ecology, Richard Stillman of Bournemouth University, AIFCA and Natural England, and is funded under the marine Natural Capital and Ecosystem Assessment programme. This project uses D&S IFCA's data on the mussel and cockle beds, new observations on use of the beds and other feeding habitats by oystercatchers (collected by EAD Ecology), and a model of oystercatcher food requirements (developed by Richard Stillman) to define the ecological requirements of overwintering oystercatchers, which use the Taw-Torridge SSSI, and then outline the remaining mussel that may be available for a fishery. Bournemouth University will be producing a project report in March 2025 which will be presented at a cross-partnership workshop on 26th March 2025 to embed the approach in future fisheries management.

The outputs of the project will be utilised by D&S IFCA and Natural England to inform future management of the shellfisheries on the Taw Torridge Estuary.

Potting for Scallops

D&S IFCA has liaised with a company called FishTek on their project to trial pots with lights used to catch scallop, known as scallop potting, in South Devon. Following an initial on-line meeting, Officers attend a meeting with FishTek, who have developed this type of pot, and fishermen from Salcombe, to discuss the potential locations of pots, what data will be collected and what interest there is by the industry to start to use these pots in earnest and for the long term. D&S IFCA has been asked to join the Scallop Potting Project Advisory Group, and the first meeting took place on 6th March 2025. The uptake of potting for scallops by D&S IFCA Potting Permit Holders will be monitored in 2025/2026.

Measures of Equal Environmental Benefit (MEEB)

In addition, D&S IFCA had discussions with Natural England and Defra relating to the use of Measures of Equal Environmental Benefit which D&S IFCA is looking to apply in the Skerries Banks and Surrounds MCZ and Start Point to Plymouth Sound and Eddystone SAC.

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22. Tasks Related to Success Criteria 4

Success Criterion 4:

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

Task 039 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.



Report

The key workstreams for inclusion in the Annual Plan 2025/2026 was discussed and agreed at the Authority meeting on 20th March 2025. The Annual Plan was then finalised. It was published and sent to the Secretary of State (Defra) on 31st March 2025.

This is a repeating task as required by Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009.

Task 040 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

An Eleventh Month Progress Report was presented to Members in March 2025 and helped to inform this formal Annual Report for 2024/2025. The Annual Report for 2024/2025 was sent to the Secretary of State (Defra) before 30th November 2025 and is published on D&S IFCA's website. This is a repeating task as required by Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009.

Task 041 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 the accumulation of TOIL and un-social working hours.



Report

This workstream has been delivered by all D&S IFCA Officers and help monitor the Officers work including those workstreams funded by Defra. It supports working from home and allows monitoring of TOIL and un-social hours worked.

Task 042 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 and Chief Officer have had regular meetings with the Defra team responsible for reviewing the funding of D&S IFCA since August. The Chair and Chief Officer have been asked to fact check information used by Defra in their communications with the funding Local Authorities.

The Chief Officer attended two meetings with Defra and Local Authorities to discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the current structure of D&S IFCA ahead of sharing options for change. The Chair and Chief Officer stressed that whatever funding options were to be considered it is vital that the changes resulted in more funding being made available.

Work, including meetings, to find a potential resolution to D&S IFCA's funding crisis will continue in FY 2025/2026.

Task 043 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 in management measures.



Report

The Byelaw related module was conducted in April 2024. A booklet and presentation slides were circulated to all Members and posted on the Members Area (Training for Members page) of the D&S IFCA website.

Two virtual sessions were organised for by Officers and all Members of the Authority were invited to attend the presentations and discuss the content of presentations with Officers. The two on-line sessions were attended by a total of five Members.

Task 044 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

The process for the annual appraisals of all Officers began before 31st May 2024. New appraisal forms that reflect updated job descriptions, introduced as part of the job evaluation process completed in 2023, were circulated to Officers. The appraisals included one to one meeting with Line Managers. Time constraints prevented completion of all aspects of the appraisal process by 31st May, with appraisals for Senior Management Team completed in June 2024. Conducting annual appraisals is a requirement of the IFCA success criteria and the task is carried forward into the Annual Plan FY 2025/2026.

Task 046 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

This is a repeating task, needed for effective working by staff and Members and the need to be aware of differing issues. There were 17 direct notifications issued to Members relating to different issues, for example updates on funding, invitations to attend events, and circulation of information, including presentations. Officers have regular meetings, some in person, but most are on-line.

Additional Work Related to Success Criteria 4

Report:

Environment Officers have undertaken additional in-house R statistics training to increase their capability in analysing data. Officers have undertaken STCW update training where required.

Environment Team members also attended the national IFCA Officer training that took place in February 2025. This was the first year that Environment Officers have been involved in this National training as part of the first iteration of the annual Environment, Science and Conservation training course. The training delivered builds on local expertise in assessing fishing activities in MPAs and delivering IFCA duties in relation to Marine Spatial Prioritisation. This course is aimed at Environment Officers in all IFCAs to give consistent understanding and training in a number of environment and research components which affect all the IFCAs.

Two Officers took part in the Habitat Regulations Assessment Masterclass with Derogation, provided by Footprint Ecology, over two days in November 2024. The training will help D&S IFCA ensure that the Habitat Regulations are correctly applied to its assessments of fishing activities in MPAs and help inform consultations on developments in MPAs.

All D&S IFCA employees undertook Conflict Resolution Training which is undertaken every two years and provides the tools to deal with various types of conflict Officers may be faced in their work.

A recently employed Enforcement Officer undertook all the Health and Safety Training modules that all Officers are required to undertake.

The Health and Safety Duty Holder also produced a Staff Induction Handbook Checklist which details all Health and Safety requirements and policies that new Officers are required to read, understand and follow.

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23. Tasks Related to Success Criteria 5

Success Criterion 5:

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

Task 047 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

The Annual Plan for FY 2024/2025 set out areas of research that were undertaken, with individual plans developed relating to those workstreams. A range of research planning and survey work has been undertaken, including intertidal mollusc surveys and the partnership project informing mussel fishery management in the Taw-Torridge; on-board crustacea surveys; fishing activity surveys to inform pot fisheries management; and a range of research required to inform MPA assessments and D&S IFCA's contribution to marine spatial prioritisation work such as that required for Hinkley Point C.

Officers have also contributed to the planning of a PhD research programme to fulfil evidence needs on essential fish habitat, in addition to a PhD research programme on the restoration of mussels to south west estuaries.

Research planning is a repeating task, as required by national IFCA success criteria. The task is carried forward into the Annual Plan FY 2025/2026.

Task 048 Research Reporting

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



Report

Research undertaken by D&S IFCA Officers is reported in the Annual Report. Individual reports have been added to relevant areas of the website in 2024/2025 including:

- Monitoring & Control Plan – Hartland Point to Tintagel MCZ (published Nov 2024)
- Five HRA Assessments – Plymouth Sound & Estuaries – relating to fish traps (published in Dec 2024).
- Teign and Exe Estuary Mussel Stock Assessment Reports
- Taw Torridge Mussel Stock Assessment Report
- Teign and Exe Estuary Cockle Stock Assessment Reports

- Taw Torridge Mussel Stock Assessment Report

Substantial research reporting has been included in Officers papers to Members, including for example:

- Information on potting activity in the District to inform B&PSC agenda items on Potting Permit Conditions (B&PSC meeting February 2025)
- Updated information on Torbay MCZ seagrass beds, supporting a recommendation to reduce access to demersal towed gear in the site (Agenda Item 9, B&PSC meeting December 2024)
- Information on concerns and suggestions for management of pot fisheries (Agenda item 10a, B&PSC meeting September 2024).

Officers have contributed to a peer-reviewed publication on the ecology of wrasse, titled 'Low trophic redundancy among temperate wrasse species implies ecosystem risks associated with a multi-species inshore fishery', published in the journal *Marine Ecology Progress Series*.

Publishing research reports is a requirement of the national IFCA success criteria. The task is carried forward into the Annual Plan FY 2025/2026.

Task 049 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

Two in-person TAG meetings have been attended in the last year. These meetings provide the forum for all IFCAs and other agencies, such as Natural England, Environment Agency, Cefas, Welsh Government and the MMO, to give 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 IFCAs to help gather evidence and inform the IFCAs' research role. TAG members share research and developments undertaken through a national mapping tool which provides the opportunity to learn from each other.

A TAG meeting was attended at the Cornwall IFCA offices in June 2024. This was a two-day meeting with TAG business being carried out on day one and the AIFCA hosted a meeting focussed on the Cefas Coastal Health and Livelihoods (CHLE) project on the second day. Another two-day TAG meeting was attended in Bristol in November 2024. This venue was organised by a D&S IFCA Environment Officer as it was held within the

D&S IFCA District. The first day was attended by IFCA Officers only and was used to develop the IFCA Environment, Science and Conservation Course which would run in parallel with the IFCA Competent Officer Course which is aimed at Enforcement Officers. The second day was attended by IFCA officers and other organisations for general TAG business.

An outcome of TAG this year was the development of the IFCA Environment, Science and Conservation Course which two D&S IFCA Officers had a role in developing. Two modules were run by D&S IFCA Environment Officers, the Fishery/Feature Interactions in MPA module and the Marine Licensing and Planning module. The course was run in February 2025. Attending TAG is a requirement of national IFCA success criteria. The task is carried forward into the Annual Plan FY 2025/2026.

Task 050 Standard Operating Procedures

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



Report

SOPs were reviewed and updated where necessary. D&S IFCA's Health and Safety Duty Holder completed an IFCA national database of the SOPS, risk assessments and Health and Safety Policies developed by D&S IFCA. This is a repeating task, as required by national IFCA success criteria. The task is carried forward into the Annual Plan FY 2025/2026.

Task 051 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 and 2024 have been uploaded, and Officers are integrating MEDIN metadata uploads into the usual reporting workflow to improve reporting efficiency. This is a repeating task, as required by national IFCA success criteria. The task is carried forward into the Annual Plan FY 2025/2026.

Task 052 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.

Officers provided evidence to consultants including information on the D&S IFCA's management of the Lyme Bay MPA, potting and netting activity within the D&S IFCA's District as part of an impact study commissioned by the MMO. Officers provided evidence to Seafish to aid their analysis of the potting fleet in relation to effort of viviers and provided Natural England with information on fisheries displacing from MPAs. Other work included a meeting with a researcher looking at alternatives to plastic in fishing and provided information to Blue Marine Foundation on bottom towed gear impact in MPAs. The task is carried forward into the Annual Plan FY 2025/2026, reflecting the importance of time spent engaging with a range of stakeholders interacting with D&S IFCA's remit.

Task 053 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.



Report

This is a repeating task which forms an important part of all evidence gathering and reporting. Officers use a wide range of evidence in their work; all reports list the research papers and other evidence sources used.

Additional Work Related to Success Criteria 5

Report:

Officers engage in a range of webinars, workshops, working groups, estuary forum events and stakeholder discussions, as well as reading scientific literature, in order to build the evidence base available to D&S IFCA for decision-making. An Officer represented the views and interests of D&S IFCA at the ICES conference in Newcastle in September 2024 and gathered information on fisheries and marine science that is relevant to the work of Officers. D&S IFCA collaborated with two PhD students to improve the evidence base around flatfish habitat in the Severn, and mussel restoration in southwest estuaries; both projects aim to deliver outputs relevant to management of fisheries and the marine environment. Officers worked with regulators and scientists to secure external funding to support research into oystercatcher use of the Taw-Torridge Estuary SSSI which, combined with D&S IFCA's ongoing research into intertidal mollusc stocks, will inform sustainable fisheries management in the estuary.

Officers were also involved in the Ropes to Reefs Project partnering with University of Plymouth, Shellfish Association of Great Britain, Offshore Shellfish and other aquaculture businesses. An Officer took part in a live panel discussion as part of the final project outcome webinar. Officers were also involved in meetings relating to the proposed closure for crawfish in ICES sub-area 7 for 2024-2025. Officers also attended the ICES multi-species stock advice meetings held earlier in the year, the Cefas Science briefing and a meeting organised by Cefas to discuss fish moving north.

End of Annual Report 2024/2025.