

Approving the Annual Plan FY 2026/2027

Members' Considerations

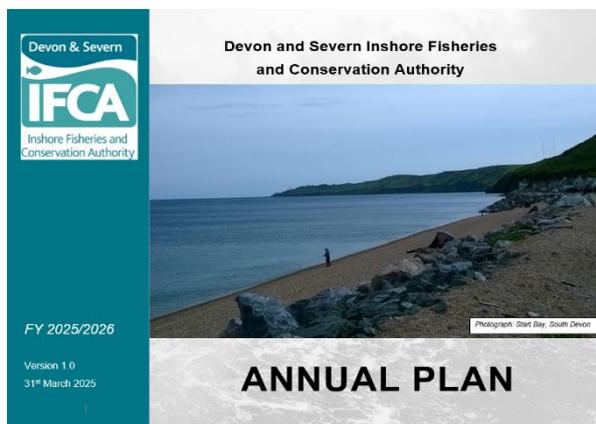
Members to consider the Officers' paper and to determine the tasks to be set out in the Annual Plan for FY 2026/2027.

1. Background

An Annual Plan must be produced as a requirement of S.177 Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009 (MaCAA). The Annual Plan must be published before 1st April 2026, and a copy must be sent to the Secretary of State. This Officers' paper may be used to inform the Annual Plan for 2026/2027, and it sets out key tasks that Officers suggest are included in the Annual Plan FY 2026/2027. Following the Authority Meeting, Officers will finalise the Annual Plan recognising the decision making of Members.

2. Preparation and Presentation

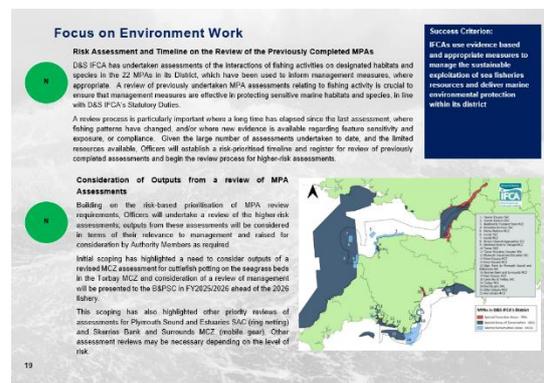
In recent years, Officers have tried to improve the presentation of the Annual Plans. Recent Annual Plans can be viewed on the [D&S IFCA's Annual Business Plans & Reports](#) website page. As well as presentational considerations, Officers have worked to create a usable and repeatable structure to detail the range of work that must be undertaken by the Authority, and tasks that contribute to further progressing the work of the Authority. The Annual Plan highlights work to be undertaken by using a mixture of feature pages (topic based) and planning tables. The following images are from last year's Annual Plan.



Repeatable Topic Based Sections

- Introduction & Our District
- Finance & Income
- Delivery & Staff Structure
- Key Workstreams
- Governance
- Communications
- Management of Fishing Activities
- Enforcement
- Environment – Research
- National Workstreams

Examples of topic-based feature pages.



National IFCA Success Criteria

All tasks set out in the recent Annual Plans are relevant to at least one of the National IFCA Success Criteria.

The content of the recent Annual Plans recognises National IFCA Success Criteria which shape the Annual Plan (tables) into different sections:

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

The Success Criteria are translated into expected outputs each year. For the purposes of discussion by Members, there are many repeating tasks that can be considered as “**Business as Usual**” for D&S IFCA, rather than “**Key Tasks**”. The business-as-usual work must be undertaken in order for D&S IFCA to function. The Annual Plan should identify additional workstreams, **Key Tasks**, that D&S IFCA will endeavour to undertake in an attempt to meet its Statutory Duties within the resources identified in the agreed Revenue Budget for 2026/2027.

Examples of Repeating Business-as-Usual Tasks/Outputs of Success Criteria

- To maintain a database of stakeholder contacts which will be reviewed and updated by 31st March each year.
- To provide an efficient secretariat of D&S IFCA staff to support Authority meetings which are held quarterly and are quorate (for example preparing the Officers' papers)
- Annual appraisals for all staff will have been completed by 31st May each year.
- To work with other regulators to achieve consistent quality, application, and enforcement of management measures.
- Review D&S IFCA strategies and policies annually.
- To produce the Annual Reports and the Annual Plan

The business as-usual tasks take significant amounts of time to achieve. Many, but not all, of these types of tasks are set out in tables at the end of each recent Annual Plan, with each having a reference number, which assists reporting each year. The business-as-usual tasks have not been set out in this Officers' paper for discussion by Members, as they must be undertaken.

In addition to business-as-usual tasks listed within the Annual Plan, a lot of work by Officers is not set out in a formal way but must be completed regardless. It is important to ensure that there are sufficient time and resources available to inevitably deal with unplanned, additional work not highlighted in the Annual Plan.

3. Twelve Month Planning of Key Tasks

Key tasks and large workstreams, for example, development of a new byelaw, are broken down into smaller work packages. This is an intentional division of larger workstreams so that individual elements can potentially be completed in a twelve-month period. For example,

engagement (pre-consultation) to inform a new byelaw could be completed in twelve months, but completing all stages of work resulting in implementation of a byelaw cannot be achieved in twelve months.

4. Continuing Key Tasks for Inclusion in the 2026/2027 Annual Plan

Key Tasks for inclusion in the Annual Plan also recognise key tasks from previous years that were not completed as envisaged in the previous twelve months.

Officers have considered workstreams that were not completed by 28th February 2026 as reported on in the Eleventh Month Report and may not be complete by 31st March 2026. In selecting which unfinished tasks from 2025/2026 are suggested by Officers to continue for FY 2026/2027, Officers have considered the benefits of continuing those tasks, many of which have already taken considerable amounts of Officers’ and Members’ time to reach their present status. Officers suggest that some tasks are suspended and not taken forward at this time. This is because the key tasks have not been completed or progressed to any meaningful level, or circumstances have changed lowering the need for priority, or due to a range of factors (including those outside the control of D&S IFCA) they cannot be completed in the next financial year.

Key Task from 2025/2026	Topic	Remaining Work	Roll over 26/27 Yes/No
021	Mobile Fishing Permit Byelaw 2022 (implement)	Admin/roll out	No Work will be completed in March 2026
022	Re-making of Potting Permit Byelaw	All tasks to complete	No
023	Re-making the Netting Permit Byelaw	5 of 6 sub-tasks to complete	No
024	Measures of Equal Environmental Benefit (MEEB)	4 of 5 sub-tasks to complete	This will continue as a Key Task for 2026/2027
025	Lobster – Seasonality of Egg Bearing	Report to complete	No Report will be completed in March 2026
026	Scallop Fishery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Data analysis to complete Report to complete 	No Work to be completed in March 2026 or April 2026
027	Whelk Monitoring	Report to complete	No Report to be completed in March 2026
028	Risk Assessment – MPAs	2 of 2 sub-tasks to complete	This will continue but as business as usual.
029	Consider Outputs of review of MPA assessments	3 of 4 sub-tasks to complete	This will continue but as business as usual

032	M&CPs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Report for Torbay • Report for Lundy • Complete audit trail for 25/26. 	These will continue but as business as usual
036	Taw Torridge Stock Assessments	To complete reports	Reports will be completed in March 2026
		Access Options and Survey Work	Survey work will continue as a Key Task for 2026/2027, depending on access

It is the view of Officers that the following workstreams are excluded from the 2026/2027 Annual Plan for the reasons set out below:

Re-Making Netting Permit Byelaw.

This was a key task for 2025/2026 that was not completed. There are advantages to re-making the Netting Permit Byelaw, including standardisation (layout) with the potential new Mobile Fishing Permit Byelaw 2022 and to consider its scope as the framework for management. However; meeting time for the B&PSC is limited to approximately four meetings per year. The B&PSC Members are aware that creating the new Byelaw would take at least two years and favoured the alternative approach, in the shorter term, of using the current Permit Conditions, with potential amendments, to manage netting. Officers have identified the main risks associated with netting and the use of non-powered vessels, and the B&PSC will be considering changes in management in 2026 to be applied under the current Netting Permit Conditions.

Re-Making Potting Permit Byelaw

This was a key task for 2025/2026 that was not completed. As with the objective of re-making the Netting Permit Byelaw, re-making the Byelaw has advantages to include a widened exemptions clause, a change in permit fees, an improved review process for Permit Conditions and fees, and scope for the introduction of REM. The existing Potting Permit Byelaw Permit Conditions have recently been amended and can be given a chance to bed in. A planned delay re-making the Potting Permit Byelaw will allow Officers to monitor FMP related work with a view to early interventions and for Officers to potentially work with the MMO’s QA Team with a view to improvements being made to the QA process, potentially simplifying and speeding up future byelaw making work, and potentially changing how byelaws are formally advertised.

Monitoring of Whelk Fishery

This was a key task for 2025/2026, that was not completed. Although the conclusions of the draft report indicate that there are benefits in extending the research work, there are insufficient resources to continue the work in 2026/2027.

Risk Assessment and Timeline on the Review of the Previously Completed MPAs Assessments

Consideration of Outputs from a Review of MPA Assessments

These two tasks were key tasks for 2025/2026 but were not completed. Officers have completed an audit of those MPA assessments that have been completed with relevant information such as number of assessments undertaken, number of fishing interactions with designated features, dates assessments were completed and formal advice received. However, it has become apparent that many of these assessments will not require review or re-assessment due to no changes in the fishing activity and level of interaction. Officers have and will continue to review assessments as and when required, such as when new information is gathered on impact, new features are added to the MPA conservation advice or when new or reviewed condition assessments are produced by Natural England. An examples of the work undertaken in 2025/2026 on the cuttlefish fishery in the Torbay MCZ and the co-development of a Code of Conduct is an example of the review process and the case-by-case nature of this work

Officers believe that this is a ‘business as usual task and will be undertaken on a case-by-case basis. Officers will continue to meet regularly with the Natural England area team to understand changes in the condition of relevant protected sites and will consider and discuss necessary reviews through this engagement.

5. Potential Key Tasks for Inclusion in the 2026/2027 Annual Plan

The following are new or continuing key tasks that Officers suggest are included in the 2026/2027 Annual Plan, with detail of what these tasks are and why they should be considered for inclusion.

Byelaw Work:

To begin development of a Molluscan Shellfish Hand Gathering Permit Byelaw

For several years there has been an expectation by many stakeholders that D&S IFCA will seek to develop a Hand Working Permit Byelaw. This long-term aim is highlighted in many D&S IFCA MPA Assessments, and the implementation of a Hand Working Permit Byelaw has been supported by Natural England. The Byelaw, as originally envisaged, would have managed hand gathering, bait digging, and the use of crab tiles within the District. Due to a range of complications, including a lack of resources, development of a Hand Working Permit Byelaw was suspended in 2020.

Officers have the view that a Molluscan Shellfish Hand Gathering Permit Byelaw can be developed and can focus on removal from a fishery of a limited range of molluscan species, for example cockles, mussels, winkles, and clams. The Byelaw would not extend to the management of crab tiles or bait digging in the District and therefore it will be easier to draft and require less resources to enforce it, if and when implemented. The Byelaw can be the framework for the issuing of a commercial permit with conditions; however, it is envisaged that recreational collection for personal use will be restricted (bag limit per calendar day) by provisions within the Byelaw, rather than a recreational permit. This management approach will reduce administration burden. It may be possible to incorporate a provision for the temporary closure of shellfish beds, within the Byelaw to replace the current Temporary Closure of Shellfish Beds Byelaw.

Officers have the view that it is possible during 2026/2027 to develop the Byelaw to a stage where it could be “made” by the B&PSC, triggering formal consultation. The 2026/2027 Annual Plan will identify key phases for its development by Officers and the B&PSC, including planning; potential pre-consultation; drafting work; and creation of an Impact Assessment.

The limitation on developing (or re-making) byelaws in 2026/2027 recognises a series of formal consultations already planned (potential changes to mobile fishing permit conditions) and the limited agenda time for decision making by the B&PSC.

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MPA Work:

Measures of Equal Environment Benefit (MEEB)

In 2024/2025 D&S IFCA began discussions with Natural England and Defra relating to the use of on MEEB which D&S IFCA is looking to apply in the Skerries Bank and Surrounds MCZ and Start Point to Plymouth Sound and Eddystone SAC. The Annual Plan for 2025/2026 highlighted the importance of continuing with this workstream and it became a Key Task, divided into five sub-tasks. Although discussions have continued with Natural England, the workstream is not complete. To retain momentum and to highlight the importance of completing this workstream, Officers suggest that finalising a submission to Defra on evidence and information relating to the possible use of MEEB within MPAs in the District remains as a key task for 2026/2027. Further consideration on how the information gathered to date can feed into the MEEB process and whether more is required before the submission can be finalised. The importance and consideration of MEEB will be partly dependent on the outcome of the MMO’s Stage 3 MPA Consultation and future management of areas open to demersal fishing vessels.

Waddeton Site Restoration (MPA Work)

The Waddeton Regulating Order in the Dart Estuary has been held by D&S IFCA since 2001 and expires in April 2026 and has supported mussel and pacific oyster cultivation by shellfishermen over that time. D&S IFCA leased the Waddeton Order area from the Duchy of Cornwall who own the fundus of the Dart Estuary, and this lease also expires in 2026. D&S IFCA Officers have previously been in discussions with the Duchy, regarding their decision to no longer support pacific oyster cultivation in the Duchy owned estuaries in the Southwest. In order to try and maintain sustainable shellfisheries in the Dart and Devon Avon Estuaries, D&S IFCA Officers will re-engage with the Duchy on this matter to see if this is still their position on pacific oyster cultivation, or whether they have reconsidered this stance to allow the shellfisheries to continue which will aid maintenance of the foreshore through commercial removal of wild pacific oysters.

Officers will engage with the Duchy of Cornwall, Natural England and Waddeton plot holders (shellfishermen) to agree and undertake appropriate works, if necessary, to return the site to a more natural state, including the potential removal of artificial infrastructure and farmed stock. The Dart Estuary is an MCZ and any activity on the features of the MCZ would need to consider the conservation objectives of the site.

D&S IFCA will be looking at the outputs of the proposed project on the Exe Estuary to remove pacific oysters through a trial of different removal methodologies. It is hoped that the outputs from the project will highlight the best method that could be roll out to remove wild pacific oysters from estuarine MPAs in the District, including the Dart Estuary MCZ, without significantly impacting the features and conservation objectives of these MPAs. The project on the Exe Estuary was initially developed in 2025 when shellfishermen on the Exe Estuary

and a consultant, with the support of D&S IFCA, developed a funding bid which was submitted to the Fisheries and Seafood Scheme (FASS). In 2025, unfortunately, minor changes were needed and the fund closed before the proposal could be resubmitted. In 2026 it is the intention to resubmit the updated proposal to the FASS once the scheme is opened. The project will trial the different techniques and will involve a Before-After-Control-Impact study for each technique trialled. The level of impact of each method will be assessed so that its applicability for the removal of wild pacific oysters in other estuaries, which are also MPAs, can be determined. The outputs from the project will be key to look at how estuaries can benefit from using these oyster removal techniques without damaging protected features. D&S IFCA Officers will support the project and may help with the trials if required.

Introduction of REM on Mobile Fishing Vessels

The Mobile Fishing Permit Byelaw 2022 was confirmed by the Minister on 4th March 2026. One of the key new provisions in the Byelaw is the power to introduce mandatory requirements for Remote Electronic Monitoring (REM) on mobile gear vessels.

D&S IFCA has been trialling REM since 2022 on nine different mobile gear vessels. The trials have shown that there is an alternative, low cost, more efficient and effective way to monitor fishing activity at sea.

D&S IFCA will look to engage with the mobile gear vessel sector to provide further information on the REM trials to date. Similar to the lead up to D&S IFCA's introduction of IVMS in 2018, Officers believe that the sector is well aware of the trials that have been taking place and the progression towards the potential mandatory introduction of REM should not be a surprise to most.

Crucially, D&S IFCA will look to identify funding sources to purchase and install the REM system onboard vessels and also determine whether it can fund the annual maintenance, data transmission and data management costs. For example, it may be possible to use some of the money received from Defra for MPA and FMP workstreams.

Officers believe that the use of REM to automatically and remotely monitor all the mobile fishing vessels provides the public purse with much better value compared with the cost of at sea patrols and delivers much greater protection to the MPA network.

The annual costs for a REM system are approximately £700 per vessel. Currently up to 52 mobile gear vessels are recorded to use scallop dredges exclusively or as an alternative to trawling. To automatically and fully monitor these vessels for a year would cost approximately £36,400.

The primary purpose of the REM system trialled to date is to introduce an effective means to monitor the activity of mobile gear vessels in respect of MPAs. However, the introduction of REM has potential to improve access to mobile gear vessels, protect the static gear vessels from gear losses and gather environmental and fisheries data to better inform management decisions.

Torbay MCZ – Code of Conduct Monitoring – MPA Work

In 2025/2026 Officers presented papers to the B&PSC for Members to consider the results of Torbay Marine Conservation Zone (MCZ) assessments which gathered evidence and assessed the potential impacts of fishing with traps for cuttlefish on protected features of the MCZ, specifically seagrass and the long snouted seahorse (*Hippocampus guttulatus*). Members agreed to the implementation of a Code of Conduct, to be co-developed between

Officers and fishers. A Code of Conduct has been produced, and Officers have detailed the work required in 2026/2027 which includes:

- To develop a robust research plan and begin research work in Spring 2026 to further assess impacts of pots and traps on seagrass; this will be assisted by fishers as per their commitments in the Code of Conduct.
- To undertake boat-based research working with fishers and financially contributed to the fishers undertaking the research with D&S IFCA. The work will include attaching GoPro cameras to cuttlefish traps to observe them underwater and when they are hauled to assess the impact of hauling different number of pots per string and potentially use a remotely operated underwater vehicle to observe the traps and end weights on the seabed. D&S IFCA's Environment Team will undertake this work with support from the Enforcement Team.
- To engage regularly with fishers to improve collective knowledge and understanding of the cuttlefish fishery and hold an annual meeting with fishers to review evidence gathered.
- To develop and implement a plan for efficient monitoring of adherence to the Code of Conduct, including via IVMS, direct observation and intelligence reports submitted by stakeholders.
- To update B&PSC Members on the monitoring of the Code of Conduct in September/October 2026,

Fisheries Management Plans:

FMPs: Providing Evidence and Development of Management Measures

The Joint Fisheries Statement sets out the proposal to develop 43 Fisheries Management Plans (FMPs). To date eleven Fisheries Management Plans have been published, and four FMPs have recently gone out to public consultation which closes in May 2026. D&S IFCA Officers have been involved in the development of 10 of these plans to date. For those FMPs already published the implementation stage is being discussed which includes the development of management measures and how and when these will be implemented. D&S IFCA receives funding from Defra to undertake work associated with the FMPs.

Officers will respond to the consultation on the four FMPs more recently produced. Officers will continue to sit on management groups and implementation groups for those published FMPs and provide evidence and information to help inform the development of management measures. Some of the work will focus on the Crab and Lobster FMP and the impact of the octopus influx on these stocks. D&S IFCA Officers analysed data in 2025/2026 to identify the impact of the octopus influx on the landings and value of landing of crab, and lobster on D&S IFCA's Potting Permit Holders. Further analysis work will be required in 2026/2027. In addition to the analysis of permit holders landings and sale data, IVMS data will be interrogated where available to identify the spatial impact and distribution of the octopus influx. Further work is planned to gather data from individual permit holders impact by the octopus bloom.

Using Defra's contribution to this workstream, D&S IFCA will fund permit holders on a monthly basis to gather data on crab, lobster and octopus catches which will include the whole catch of adults and juveniles. Officers may initially help with this data gathering on board the vessels. These data will help fill the research gaps identified in the Crab and Lobster FMP as well as

potential management measures in the FMP. The research will provide evidence as to whether the octopus are breeding and spawning in the District, help inform whether octopus levels are being maintained and what management of the fishery might be required. D&S IFCA Officers will compare catch data collected during surveys in 2023/2024 with data collected in 2026 to potentially provide a comparison of size distributions and catches of crab and lobster pre- and post- octopus influx.

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Management of Fisheries Work:

Razor Clam Fishery

In February 2026 , D&S IFCA's Byelaw and Permitting Sub-Committee agreed to support a new fishery for razor clams in the specific areas of Lyme Bay in the South of the D&S IFCA's District. Members also agreed that Officers should go out to formal consultation on the proposal to open the razor clam dredge fishery including a proposed definition of a razor clam dredge and a mandatory requirement for REM to be fitted on the harvesting vessel to monitor the fishing activity.

The formal consultation will set out that the activity can only take place on sandy habitats in shellfish harvesting classified areas outside of the MPAs.

REM and installations costs will be covered by D&S IFCA, and a Monitoring and Control Plan (M&CP) will be developed. The M&CP will include monitoring of footage and data from REM and IVMS to ensure the fishery takes place on sandy ground and to monitor the location of the fishery. Landings data will be gathered and linked to IVMS data to develop a preliminary stock assessment forming a baseline against which Officers will be able to assess spatial and seasonal changes in landings per unit effort. D&S IFCA Officers will undertake a limited number of onboard catch monitoring to assess the catch, the proportion of juveniles seen and the damage rates of catch and bycatch.

Molluscan Surveys

Taw Torridge Estuary Mussel Stock Assessment:

The Taw Torridge Estuary is an SSSI, and its intertidal mussel are important for the overwintering birds that frequent the estuary. Annual stock assessments of these shellfish are used alongside a bird food availability model to establish the amount of mussel that may be commercially harvested without impinging on bird survival and the health of the mussel beds. The bird food model was updated in 2024/2025, and the surveys in 2025/2026 have fed into the model to determine the food resource available and potentially to inform ongoing management of a commercial mussel fishery.

In the last few year, the mussel beds on Sprat Ridge and Pulleys in the mid-channel have not been surveyed due to health and safety concerns. However, D&S IFCA Officers will endeavour to survey these beds in 2026/2027 because without this information, the stock assessment and bird food model are not complete and do not provide the level of accurate data required. Officers will continue to liaise with North Western IFCA who have been trialling drone surveys using multispectral imaging cameras that can distinguish live mussel from dead mussel on the foreshore, as this was the limiting factor in previous D&S IFCA's drone surveys. Access to the beds via boat will also be investigated and D&S IFCA will liaise with the Environment Agency to help facilitate this.

Exe and Teign Estuaries Mussel and Cockle Stock Assessments:

Mussel and cockle stock assessments on the Teign and Exe Estuaries are undertaken on a biennial basis. In 2026/2027 these beds will be surveyed, and assessments may inform potential management of these intertidal resources. The Exe and Teign Estuaries currently have temporary closures in place, prohibiting the removal of mussels from public beds in both estuaries. The last surveys were undertaken in 2024 and therefore assessment of the stocks of mussels and cockles in these estuaries will take place on the spring tides in 2026.

In the Exe Estuary, which is a Special Protection Area for overwintering birds, the focus of research will be on Bull Hill where a decrease in mussel stock was identified in 2024 although the overall area of the mussel bed was greater. The decrease in density may have been a result of hydrographical changes in the main estuarine channels and changes in erosion and accretion on the bank. A cockle survey will take place on the Cockle Sands. The 2024 survey identified a 25% decrease in total tonnage across the bed compared to 2022 but noted that there is great variability across each sampling location. Officers will liaise with local fishers to aid access to the beds as channel changes have made access more challenging. No commercial harvesting of cockles takes place on the Exe Estuary, but recreational hand gathering does take place and therefore assessing of cockle stock is important to ensure sufficient food availability for the overwintering birds.

Mussel and cockle surveys are undertaken in the Teign Estuary on beds below the Shaldon Bridge and outside of the Teign Regulating Order. The density of juvenile cockles decreased significantly between 2022 and 2024 but there was no significant difference in adult density between these years. There was also high variability in the density of cockles across the beds and sampling points. The 2026 will identify if these trends have continued. The mussel stock on the Teign crashed between 2012 and 2019 and the public mussel beds have been closed since 2019. Further biennial surveys are required to assess whether stocks are starting to recover and estimate the scale of any observed recovery. Sampling methodology will be reviewed to ensure the best methods are being used on small, low density and disparate beds.

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Governance Work:

Strengthening D&S IFCA’s Access to Information and Increasing Transparency

The IFCA Conduct and Operations Report (2018-2022) published by the Government highlights several areas where IFCAs, as a collective, can improve including being more transparent with information. D&S IFCA is already committed to being transparent with information and utilises its website, including a large Resource Library, to display a large range of information.

Officers have identified that more can be achieved by increasing the level and frequency of publishing of D&S IFCA produced information and documentation. Officers will need to dedicate time to achieve the goal, and this task will be treated in a similar way to how the IFCA approaches external requests for information. To date this has been done as business as usual but now needs to be considered as a key task.

It is the view of Officers that assessing past work for publication, potential redaction of personal data for publishing, and developing alternative approaches for the display of information should be a key task for 2026/2027. Dedicated time in 2026/2027 can cement a new approach for the publishing of information, the display of information, and the upkeep of displayed information, with ongoing benefits in future years.

This task may include:

- To review completed MPA assessments and publish them on the D&S IFCA's website;
 - To publish, on the website, an audit of Monitoring and Control Plans and the annual review reports;
 - To produce and regularly update a more detailed Enforcement Outcomes website display;
 - To expand the publishing and availability of D&S IFCA's responses to Marine Licence Applications;
 - To report regularly on the work D&S IFCA undertakes to support the delivery of the three Defra funded National Workstreams (MPAs, FMPs, and Marine Spatial Prioritisation) via the website.
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Enforcement Priorities:

Spatial Monitoring:

Spatial Monitoring of mobile gear vessels remains the priority for the Enforcement team. The damage to the environment and to static gear caused by incursions by demersal towed gear means that this type of illegal activity must be prioritised. In the absence of REM, Officers rely on the data available from IVMS, VMS and AIS to support investigations following reported incursions into MPAs. Where there is sufficient evidence, in approximately 50% of the cases, investigations will be pursued. The complexities of these types of cases and the evidence that is required to support them means that considerable amount of Officers' time is allocated to this work.

Bass Regulations:

A recommendation emerging from the Bass FMP is that the various management measures that underpin the regulation of the bass fishery needs to be enforced more robustly. Officers intend to undertake more patrols focussing on the Bass Nursery Areas and recreational bag limits. Bass Nursery Area surveillance will be undertaken by remote monitoring from the drone and patrols on the Authority's RIB, whilst adherence to bag limits is likely to be conducted on the shore.

Escape Gaps:

Whilst targeting octopus, fishers are not required to use escape gaps in parlour pots normally used to catch crab and lobster. Survey work carried out by Officers last year reinforced the benefits of using escape gaps in crustacea fisheries. Parlour pots with escape gaps were found to have very few undersize lobster present when hauled. However, many more undersize lobsters were present in pots without escape gaps. The reduced stocks of lobsters due to octopus predation, and the increased retention of undersize lobster, significantly increases the risk that juvenile lobster will be retained and landed by some fishers to the detriment of others and impact recovery of the stock. Officers will undertake more focussed patrols to ensure that compliance with the minimum conservation reference size remains high.

Research and Monitoring Support:

Enforcement Officers will support the monitoring of the cuttlefish fishery in Torbay by crewing the Authority's patrol vessel whilst the Environment Team undertake their survey work. The patrol vessel will be the survey platform for much of the research and monitoring work.

Enforcement Officers may be required to support the Environment Team on the intertidal shellfish survey work within the District.

Berried Lobster:

Officers will be working with CIFCA to standardise the collection of evidence relating to berried lobsters that have had their eggs removed by fishers through scrubbing and other means. The introduction of a national prohibition on landing berried lobster that supported spatial enforcement and the current pressure on stocks, increases the risk that more berried lobster will be landed.

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6. Publicising Annual Reports and Annual Plans

The D&S IFCA’s website includes a display page - [ANNUAL BUSINESS PLANS & REPORTS](#). This page sets out information about the requirements for the Authority to produce both an Annual Plan and Annual Report each year and provides links to Annual Plans and Reports so they can easily be viewed and downloaded. When Annual plans and Reports are produced, officers highlight this within news items for the website and Facebook.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

Background Papers

- Authority meeting minutes ([D&S IFCA Website Resource Library](#))
- [D&S IFCA Annual Plan 2025 - 26](#) (that includes national success criteria)
- [The Final Annual Report FY 2024/2025](#)