



**D&S IFCA Progress on Marine
Protected Area Work
May to November 2025**

7th November 2025

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D&S IFCA's MPA work May to November 2025

A review of the MPA work undertaken to date was carried out and a report and presentation was produced. These were presented to the D&S IFCA Main Authority meeting in September 2025. The presentation can be viewed on [this link](#). Summary points are:

- 42.29% D&S District is covered by 22 MPAs – 42.34% of the North Coast (and 41.28% of the South Coast)
- 219 MPA assessments have been completed for 2459 gear / designated feature interaction
- 27.40% of D&S IFCA's District is closed to demersal mobile gear
- 91.38% of total area of benthic habitats within MPAs is closed to demersal towed gear (excluding the Bristol Channel Approaches SAC)
- Bristol Channel Approaches SAC is the final site where assessments need to be completed and sent to Natural England for their Formal Advice. These assessments are in the final stages of completion and should be sent off by end of 2025

D&S IFCA is currently conducting a risk assessment and timeline to review previously undertaken MPA assessments and begin the review process for higher-risk assessments as per its Annual Plan 2025/2026

MPA Specific

Bristol Channel Approaches SAC (BCA SAC)

- Undertaking Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) work in particular on bycatch, disturbance, prey availability and supporting habitats. Prey removal assessment has focussed on removal of cod, herring, whiting, sprat and sand eel across the District and landings data (expanding from just north of District) have been analysed using R. With regard to impacts to habitats the overlap between towed gear and the spawning habitat of herring and sand eel habitat (during key times of year) is currently being assessed. In-combination section includes Management Unit scale prey removal and includes impacts of other activities on prey habitats.
- Reviewed and amended the draft netting and towed gear HRAs in relation to bycatch focussing on the whole of the D&S IFCA's District with an in-combination assessment considering bycatch at the Management Unit scale.
- Disturbance to harbour porpoise is being considered within the site along with a small buffer around the site;
- Statistical analysis of IVMS data and landings data undertaken;
- Literature reviewed to feed into assessments – in particular, relating to fish stock status;
- Reviewed MMO management options paper;
- Attended and inputted into three MMO Stage 4 BCA SAC engagement meetings in Ilfracombe, Lyme Regis and Brixham;
- Attended meetings with MMO to discuss progress of the Stage 4 MPA assessments.

Torbay MCZ

- Reviewed the Monitoring and Control Plan for demersal mobile gear in part of the Torbay MCZ;
- Reviewed MCZ assessments in relation to cuttlefish potting on seagrass in Torbay MCZ;

- Undertook GIS work to prepare charts of seagrass in the Torbay MCZ for management considerations;
- Prepared papers to be presented to D&S IFCA's Byelaw and Permitting Sub-Committee meetings in June and October 2025 to consider potential management measures including a voluntary code for potting in seagrass in Torbay MCZ;
- Undertook a further literature review of dragging impacts of pots on seagrass as per outputs from B&PSC meeting in June 2025;
- Engagement with cuttlefish potters in Torbay undertaken to understand their method of hauling pots and potential modifications to gear and method of hauling to reduce drag;
- Organised meeting with potters to co-develop the Voluntary code for potting on seagrass in Torbay MCZ which will take place in November 2025;
- Produced and published a news item relating to Torbay MCZ; which can be read here: <https://www.devonandsevernifca.gov.uk/developing-a-voluntary-code-for-potting-in-torbay-mcz-balancing-fisheries-and-conservation/>

Severn Estuary EMS

- Attended Association of Severn Estuary Regulatory Authority (ASERA) meetings, reviewing the action plan and management scheme for the Severn Estuary EMS;
- Reviewed ASERA Management Scheme consultation;
- Attended the 'Future Proofing the Severn Estuary EMS' meeting;
- Attended a 'Meet the Regulator' meeting to discuss Hinkley Point C Nuclear Power station (HPC);
- Reviewed and responded to the Severn Commission Site Screening Methodology for HPC;
- Liaised with EDF on the trials for new acoustic fish deterrents for HPC.

Taw Torridge Estuary SSSI

- Planned for a Drone Survey of the extent of the mussel beds which are a feature of the Taw Torridge Estuary SSSI and an important food source for overwintering birds;
- Undertook a mussel stock assessment and cockle stock assessment which included survey planning, survey undertaken, analysis of data.

Exe Estuary SPA

- In May 2025 D&S IFCA finalised and published the Exe Estuary Mussel and Cockle Stock assessments undertaken in 2024 which can be read here:

<https://www.devonandsevernifca.gov.uk/exe-estuary-mussel-and-cockle-stock-assessments/>

- D&S IFCA worked with shellfishermen and an aquaculture consultant on a project proposal for FaSS funding;
- The project 'Invasive to Native' provides an opportunity for D&S IFCA to work with industry to assess the efficiency and impact of different techniques to manage and control wild settlement of Pacific oysters within shellfish farm sites in a Marine Protected Area.
- Officers have held several meetings with the fishers and the consultant to discuss potential techniques that could be used to aid the site restoration via Pacific oyster removal, and how such techniques could be used without significantly impacting the features and conservation objectives of the Dart Estuary MCZ as well as the Exe Estuary SPA.

- Engaged with the Exe Estuary Partnership and reviewed the Exe Estuary Management Plan.

Lundy MPA

- Reviewed and inputted into the Lundy MPA website pages.
- Attended meetings of the Lundy MPA Advisory and Management groups

Dart Estuary MCZ

- Reviewed literature on the impacts of Pacific oysters on intertidal habitats particularly in relation to the Waddeton Regulating Order which D&S IFCA holds within the Dart Estuary MCZ;
- Liaised regularly with the Duchy of Cornwall on the status and benefits of Pacific oyster cultivation in relation to the shellfisheries taking place in the Dart Estuary MCZ and the Devon Avon Estuary MCZ;
- Produced a timeline of key events, status changes and legislation relating to Pacific oysters which was sent to the Duchy of Cornwall for their consideration of on-going Pacific oyster production in the Dart Estuary and Avon Estuary MCZs;
- Reviewed Natural England's Condition Assessment of the Dart Estuary MCZ and provided evidence and comments in response to the condition assessment;
- Link to D&S IFCA's Website to review the response: [D&S IFCA Review of Dart Estuary MCZ: Condition Assessment and Compatibility with Small-Scale Oyster Cultivation.](#)

Consultations, Events and Meetings

MMO Stage 3 MPA Consultation

- Reviewed all MMO Consultation documents relating to fishing activity; swept area ratio; fishing gear impacts, site assessment methodology; site assessments and specifically management proposals for the Bideford to Foreland Point MCZ, Skerries Bank and Surrounds MCZ and Start Point to Plymouth Sound and Eddystone SAC;
- Undertook a literature review to feed into D&S IFCA's response;
- Prepared and produced an in-depth response to the MMO's Stage 3 Consultation on the three MPAs mentioned above in September 2025;
- Link to D&S IFCA website page to review the response : [MMO Stage 3 MPA Consultation](#)

Defra's Consultation on Offshore Wind Environmental Compensatory Measures Reforms

- D&S IFCA reviewed the consultation document on Defra's Offshore Wind Environmental Compensatory Measures Reforms and provided a detailed response in August 2025;
- Link to D&S IFCA's Website to review the response: [Defra's consultation on Offshore Wind Environmental Compensatory Measures Reforms](#)

Proposed Compensatory MPAs in D&S IFCA's District

- D&S IFCA provided information on two proposed compensatory MPAs (pCMPAs) that lie within the District IFCA's;
- These related to extension of the Lundy SAC and an extension of the sub-tidal mud feature of the Torbay MCZ;

- Information provided included the level of fishing activity taking place in the sites; the local dependence of fishing within the pCMPAs; fishing gear types used, species targeted and ports likely to be impacted;
- Link to D&S IFCA's Website to review the response: [D&S IFCA Response to Request for Information on Proposed Compensatory MPAs in D&S IFCA's District \(June 2025\)](#).

Devon Local Nature Recovery Strategy

- Attended meetings and consultation events;
- Reviewed the draft LNRS and inputting comments November 2025;
- Link to D&S IFCA's Website to review the response: [Devon Local Nature Recovery Strategy](#)

Regular meetings with Natural England

- Attended meetings with Natural England to update on MPA work being undertaken and planned work. These meeting provided useful updates on both organisations' work.

Estuary Forum Meetings

- Attended meetings of the Salcombe / Kingsbridge Estuary (SSSI) Forum; Lundy Marine Protected Area Advisory and Management Groups; Avon Estuary (MCZ) Forum; Tamar Estuaries (SAC, SPA, MCZ) Consultative Forum; Exe Estuary (SPA) Management Partnership; Dart Estuary (MCZ) Forum; North Devon UNESCO Biosphere Partnership (covers the Hartland Point to Tintagel MCZ, Bideford to Foreland Point MCZ, Morte Platform MCZ, Lundy MPA).

Enforcement and Compliance Monitoring

In 2018, D&S IFCA introduced a requirement, using permit conditions, for all vessels 6.99 metres and over in overall length operating in its District to have a fully functioning remotely accessed electronic reporting device (vessel monitoring device) fitted to the vessel which reports the required information. D&S IFCA has monitored IVMS data to measure compliance with MPA closures to demersal towed gear, as set out in the Mobile Fishing Permit Byelaw, Permit Conditions and Annexes. D&S IFCA has one pending crown court prosecution for an infringement by a mobile fishing vessel in a prohibited area within MPA.

On 12th August 2025, Succorfish, one of the two remaining suppliers of type approved IVMS devices, stopped sending data to the UK VMS Hub. Following the MMO's introduction of a national fishing licence condition on 12th May 2025 requiring all under 12 metre vessels to have a fully functioning IVMS device onboard, D&S IFCA ended the Service Level Agreement (SLA) it had with Succorfish that ensured IVMS data transmitted from the onboard devices was forwarded to the UK VMS Hub. On 12th August 2025, Succorfish stated on their website that the forwarding of IVMS data from their secure servers to the MMO systems had been carried out at their own expense for a prolonged period which was not financially sustainable for them. Succorfish stated that for over a year they had attempted, but failed, to secure a contractual agreement with the MMO to ensure a structured, funded, and accountable data-forwarding process. Succorfish also stated that the resumption of IVMS to the MMO (UK VMS Hub) will be contingent on the MMO implementing a formal service agreement with them.

The MMO also produced an update on the GOV.UK website posted on 12th August 2025. The MMO stated that vessels with Succorfish devices fitted should continue to operate as normal, including having their I-VMS devices switched on and transmitting positional data while at sea.

Succorfish has decided not to reinstate the SLA with D&S IFCA. On 12th August D&S IFCA issued a statement (a news item) setting out its position and that fishers with fully functioning Succorfish devices fitted to their vessels could continue fishing whilst this issue was addressed or until further notice was given.

D&S IFCA has not been able to see the data from approximately 40 demersal towed gear vessels since 12th August 2025. D&S IFCA presumes that the data from Succorfish devices onboard the affected vessels are continuing to be forwarded to Succorfish and in the event that matters are resolved with the MMO, the data will be made available.

D&S IFCA relies on its ability to access IVMS data and to view the information in real time to monitor fishing activity of mobile gear vessels and provide protection to the Marine Protected Area network. Officers took a paper to the Main Authority meeting in September to recommend that Members approve the purchase and installation of REWIRE devices on all the affected vessels that are currently fishing in D&S IFCA's District. Officers also recommended that members approve the funding of the airtime cost for the transmission of the data for at least six months. Members supported these proposals and the installation of REWIRE devices has been on-going since October. It is hoped by the end of November 2025 that all those mobile fishing vessels operating in the District, which have Succorfish devices, will have REWIRE devices fitted and that data are being transmitted to the UK HUB. See D&S IFCA website news blog here: <https://www.devonandsevernifca.gov.uk/installation-of-rewire-vessel-monitoring-devices/>