



D&S IFCA Progress on Marine Protected Area Work November 2025 to March 2026

27th March 2026

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MPA Specific Work

Bristol Chanel Approaches SAC (BCA SAC)

- Continued to work on the Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) 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.
- Following a DPA request to MMO for landings data statistical analysis of IVMS data and landings data has been undertaken to feed into the HRA for bycatch, prey availability and supporting undertaken;
- Literature reviewed to feed into assessments – in particular, relating to fish stock status;
- The draft netting and towed gear HRAs in relation to bycatch have now been completed as final drafts and need a final review before they are sent to Natural England for formal advice. These two HRAs focused on the whole of the D&S IFCA's District with an in-combination assessment considering bycatch at the Management Unit scale.
- A meeting with the MMO was attended by D&S IFCA Officers in January 2026 to discuss progress of the HRAs and whether there was any further information or evidence to include in the HRAs.

Torbay MCZ

- Following the work undertaken in the previous quarter further engagement with cuttlefish potters in Torbay to co-develop the Code of Conduct for potting on seagrass in Torbay MCZ which took place on 27th November 2025.
- Further to this meeting four internal meetings were held to discuss the Code of Conduct.
- A final meeting was held with the fishermen who use cuttlefish traps in Torbay on 12th February 2026. This was to agree and finalise the Code of Conduct.
- The Final Code of Conduct was presented to the D&S IFCA's Byelaw and Permitting Sub-Committee on 26th February 2026.
- The finalised Code of Conduct was sent out to all Potting Permit Holders on 16th March 2026. Information sent out to Permit Holders also included charts and positional data of the seagrass beds in the MCZ.
- On 26th March a news item was published on D&S IFCA's website relating to the implementation of the Code of Conduct which can be viewed here: <https://www.devonandsevernifca.gov.uk/code-of-conduct-for-torbay-mcz/>
- Officers have been analysing IVMS data to inform a review of the Monitoring and Control plan that is in place for trawling vessels operating over the mud feature of the Torbay MCZ. The review of the M&CP was completed in March 2026, and no trigger points were met so a review of MCZ assessments is not required. The review of the M&CP has been sent to Natural England.

Severn Estuary EMS

- Officers attended the Association of Severn Estuary Regulatory Authority (ASERA) AGM in November 2025 and a drop-in session in February 2026.
- Officer attended two 'Meet the Regulator' meetings to discuss Hinkley Point C Nuclear Power station (HPC);– in November 2025 and March 2026.
- Officers challenged the Fingleton Nuclear Regulatory Review 2025 with details of D&S IFCA's concerns. Whilst D&S IFCA supports the government's ambition for efficient infrastructure delivery, our review has identified a significant risk: important recommendations in the Fingleton Review are based on fundamentally flawed evidence regarding Hinkley Point C power station in Somerset. D&S IFCA pointed out that this failure to use best available evidence risks undermining environmental safeguards and public trust and is contrary to the recent Corry Review which urges greater transparency in use of data for better decision-making and public trust.
- D&S IFCA produced a news item covering D&S IFCA's challenge to the Fingleton Review. It can be viewed here: <https://www.devonandsevernifca.gov.uk/devon-and-severn-ifca-challenges-fingleton-nuclear-regulatory-review-2025/>
- D&S IFCA e-mailed its concerns to Members of Parliament (including the Prime Minister, Fisheries Minister and local MPS), Defra, MMO, NGOs academics and Natural England and attached D&S IFCA full response in the e-mails.
- D&S IFCA sent out a press release on 19th December 2025 covering the key areas of concern with data used in the Fingleton Review and other issues relating to HPC and attached D&S IFCA full response challenging the Review.
- A response was received from the Ministerial Contact Unit of Defra on 13th January 2026 which stated that 'we agree that the IFCA's Assessment that the fish data cited in the report, is incomplete and incorrect'.

Taw Torridge Estuary SSSI

- Officers have been analysing data from the annual mussel stock assessment survey carried out in 2025. The report is close to being finalised but is awaiting clarification on the new bird food model from Professor Richard Stillman at Bournemouth University before final modelling of data can be undertaken.
- Officers have been analysing data from the cockle stock assessment undertaken in 2025. The report has been finalised and has been published in the resource library of the website.

Exe Estuary SPA

- Engaged with the Exe Estuary Partnership and attended meetings of the Exe Estuary Executive, Management Partnership and SPA condition assessment stakeholder meeting in December 2025, February and March 2026.
- Officers have engaged 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. The recent engagement is to ensure that the proposal is fit for submission once the FaSS funding opens in April 2026.

Lundy MPA

- Officers have attended five North Devon Biosphere meeting, which covers the North Devon MPAs including Lundy since November 2025. One of the Biosphere meeting was to discuss 'Rewilding and Fisheries Management' and included discussion on potential voluntary MPAs.
- Officers have been analysing IVMS data to inform a review of the Monitoring and Control Plan that is in place for trawling vessels operating over the coarse sediment feature of the Lundy SAC. The review of the M&CP was completed in March 2026, and no trigger points were met so a review of HRAs is not required. The review of the M&CP has been sent to Natural England.

Dart MCZ

- Since the beginning of 2026 Officers have continued to engage with the Duchy of Cornwall regarding their stance on wanting to remove pacific oyster production in the Dart MCZ and the Waddeton Regulating Order area, which expires in April 2026. D&S IFCA is awaiting a response from the Duchy's Rural Director.
- D&S IFCA has been considering its next steps once the Regulation Order comes to an end and the necessary clean up of the order area. It is hoped that outputs of the Invasive to Native project on the Exe will help in this workstream.

Devon Avon MCZ

- Since the beginning of 2026 Officers have engage with the Duchy of Cornwall regarding their stance on wanting to remove pacific oyster production in the Devon Avon MCZ and is awaiting a response from the Duchy's Rural Director.

Hartland Point to Tintagel MCZ

- As agreed with Natural England, under the M&CP for Hartland Point to Tintagel MCZ IVMS data is reviewed on a weekly basis to identify if any towed demersal gear vessels enter the site. Data have been reviewed since 2018, and no demersal towed gear activity has been identified.

Consultations, Events and Meetings

MPA Network Reviews – IFCA Management Spreadsheet

As part of the MPA Network Review project, IFCAs were asked to supply information on our current and proposed management of MPAs within our districts. The aim of the spreadsheet was to capture, in relatively simple terms, how IFCAs manage MPAs, with recognition that management of a site may be supported by wider IFCA byelaws and that the absence of a specific MPA byelaw does not mean that a site isn't being managed

D&S IFCA completed an MPA Network Survey spreadsheet relating to MPAs in its District, which was sent to Sam Davis of Cornwall IFCA on 5th March 2026.

Proposed Compensatory MPAs in D&S IFCA's District

D&S IFCA provided further information on activities and business that may be impact by a proposed compensatory MPAs in the D&S IFCA's District.

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

There are still ongoing issues between MMO and Succorfish and Succorfish is no longer transmitting IVMS data from their devices installed on vessels to the UK National Hub. Officers, on agreement with the Authority, have completed the roll out the installation of REWIRE devices on all mobile fishing vessels operating in the D&S IFCA's District that have Succorfish devices. All 39 mobile fishing vessels operating in the D&S IFCA's are transmitting their positional data. This is important because 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 Mobile Fishing Permit Byelaw 2022 was signed off by the Secretary of State on 4th March 2026 and came into force on 18th March 2026. This concludes seven years of work by D&S IFCA Officers. The new Byelaw has two categories, - at Sea and Estuary- and has a schedule covering sand eel trawling. An exemption clause included in the byelaw means that mobile fishing vessels can be operated in the District without a permit but only when a person is acting in accordance with a written authorisation by the Authority for maintenance, scientific, stocking or breeding purposes. The permit fee has now increased from £20 for two years to £40 for two years to cover administrative costs. The Byelaw includes new wording and is set out differently to the old Mobile Fishing Byelaw that was introduced in 2014. There are new interpretations, different provisions, a different structure, and its scope is wider so that Remote Electronic Monitoring (REM) could be introduced as a permit condition in the future.

A news item can be viewed on the D&S IFCA's website :

<https://www.devonandsevernifca.gov.uk/new-mobile-fishing-permit-byelaw-2022/>

D&S IFCA is investigating three MPA incursions by demersal mobile fishing vessels between November 2025 and March 2026. D&S IFCA has one on going court proceeding relating to an MPA incursion in March 2025.