



Annual Report

2025/2026

D&S IFCA

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1. A Message from the Chair

In my seven 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&S IFCA's Funding Local Authorities. Defra has conducted a consultation with these Local Authorities as a component of a preview of this funding structure. However, progress remains extremely slow and realistically, a resolution of the matter will inevitably be complimentary to the prospective Local Government reorganisation in England. This will almost certainly impose a delay before a new funding structure is implemented.

The underfunding of D&S IFCA remains a matter of major concern. D&S IFCA has the largest District of all IFCAs with 4.522 km² of sea area and two separate coasts to manage. However, D&S IFCA operated on the lowest mainland IFCA Revenue Budget of £956,100 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. Of particular concern is the impact upon D&S IFCA's environmental research. Due to a lack of financial resource, D&S IFCA had to dispose of its research vessel and cannot even afford to share a research vessel with neighbouring IFCAs. As a consequence, D&S IFCA has limited capacity to undertake all the research necessary to underpin some of its decision-making. These are matters of grave concern.

The Annual Report provides the platform to report on work undertaken as part of the Annual Plan for 2025/2026. Despite severe financial constraints there have been some significant achievements, and these are detailed in this report. However, worthy of particular mention is the involvement of D&S IFCA Officers in relation to the potential impact of Hinkley power station on fish and the marine environment, the proposed management under the MMO's Stage 3 MPA management byelaws and the impact of the octopus bloom on the Devon shellfish industry. Considerable success has also been achieved by the Enforcement Team, most noticeably in the investigation of a ten day incursion by a mobile gear vessel into an MPA. This investigation was only possible because D&S IFCA has imposed more stringent IVMS reporting requirements than the MMO's national conditions. This underlines the essential ability of an IFCA to tailor compliance over and above national standards in order to meet locally acceptable levels of environmental protection.

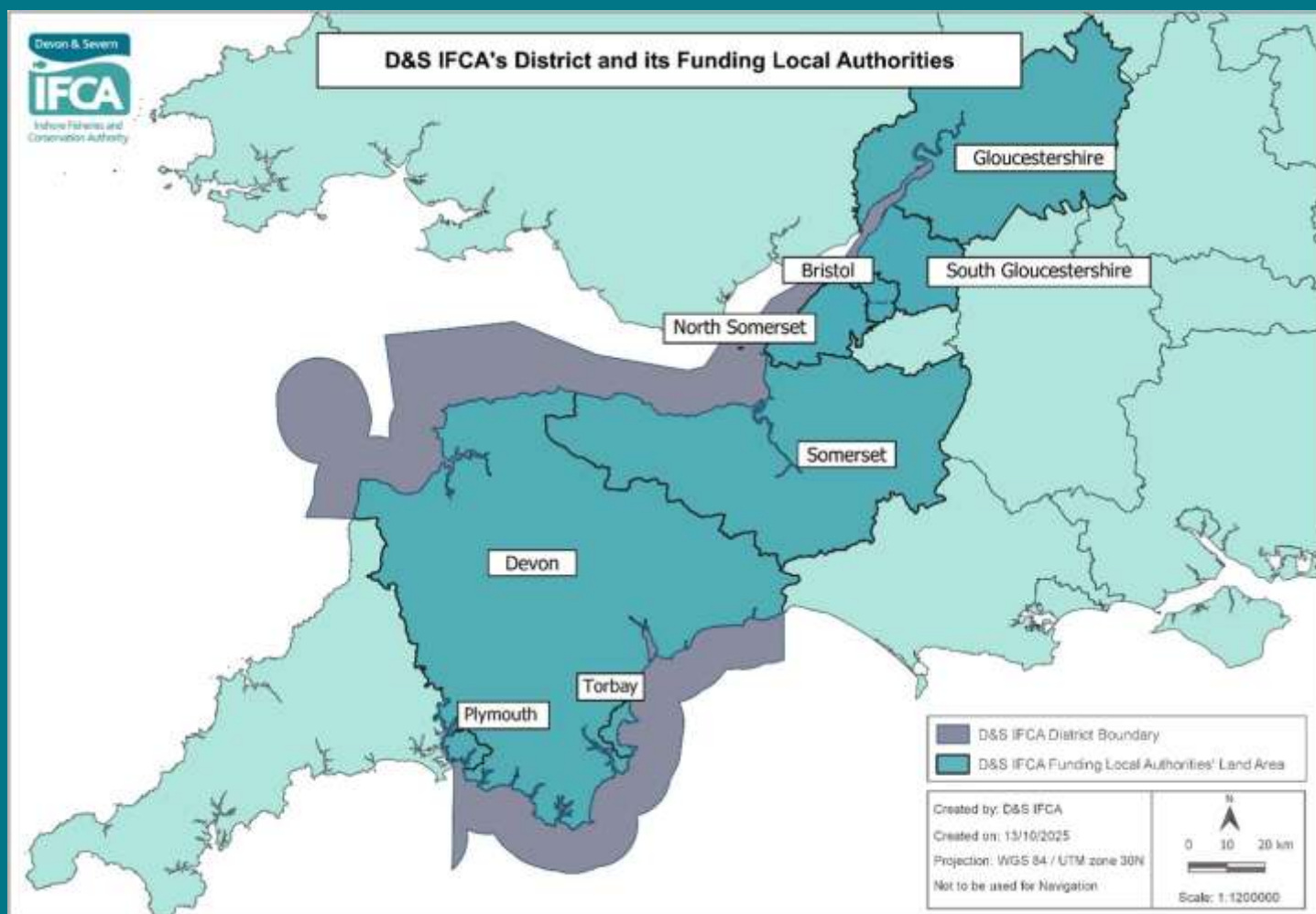
Although the severe funding challenges inevitably feature highly in my message they should not overshadow these very real successes and achievements by D&S IFCA staff and I hope that this Annual Report will help all readers to gain a better understanding of the work that is being delivered by the dedicated staff of D&S IFCA and the value that this organisation has, as it continues to strive to meet its statutory duties, and the expectations of all stakeholders.



Professor Mike Williams, Chair of D&S IFCA

2. Background and Using this Report

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 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

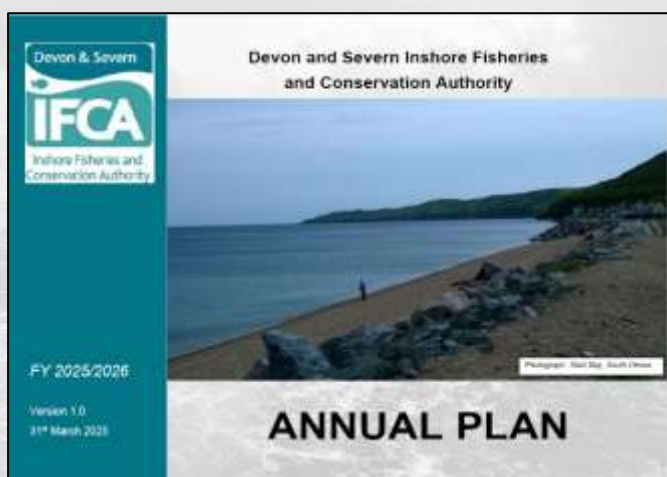
This Annual Report can be read in conjunction with the Annual Plan for 2025/2026. The Annual Plan for 2025/2026 set out key workstreams that were envisaged to be completed within 2025/2026. Regarding the delivery of these key workstreams in this time frame, this is either complete or incomplete as shown 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 continued facing in 2025/2026 are set out in Section 6. Despite its financial constraints this Annual Report sets out the wide range of deliveries that D&S IFCA's Officers and Members have achieved. However, the report also records that some of the planned work set out in the corresponding Annual Plan were not achieved.

Despite having the lowest number of Officers of any mainland IFCA (12.6 FTEs), the team had continued to innovate and develop new ways of working. The Senior Management Team has remained unchanged for the last eight 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 Environment Team have continued to deliver a high standard of work across a wide range of issues. The Officers have continued to engage with the developers of Hinkley Point C Power Station (HPC) and notably raised concerns relating to the flawed data used from HPC in the Fingleton Report. Defra's Ministerial Response Unit accepted D&S IFCA's assessment that the fish data cited in the report was incomplete and incorrect. The Fingleton report was published shortly after the Corry report that set out;

'that Environmental regulation should be about making sure we are protecting and enhancing our natural world. This includes considering and mitigating our impacts on the Barbastelle bats which roost close to HS2, the fish which swim close to Hinckley Point C, and the Kittiwakes which fly near to offshore wind turbines'

The Environment Team responded to 26 Marine development consultations including the MMO's stage 3 MPA byelaws. The proposed management in the MPA that straddles the IFCA boundary raised particular concerns for Officers. The proposal included removing towed gear from all substrates and for the first time a prohibition of potting across reef features. D&S IFCA's response firmly challenged the assessment of the interaction and impact from potting on the reef features. The decision regarding the future approach to the management of these sites was not known by the end of the reporting period.

The Environment Team also spent considerable time undertaking assessments of the fishing interactions with harbour porpoise and their prey species. The area covered by the Bristol Channel Approaches SAC is considerable stretching across the western approaches to the Bristol Channel, from Carmarthen Bay to the north coast of Devon and Cornwall.

Officers have worked with colleagues from CIFCA, the MMO and Natural England on designing management measures that are required following the assessments.

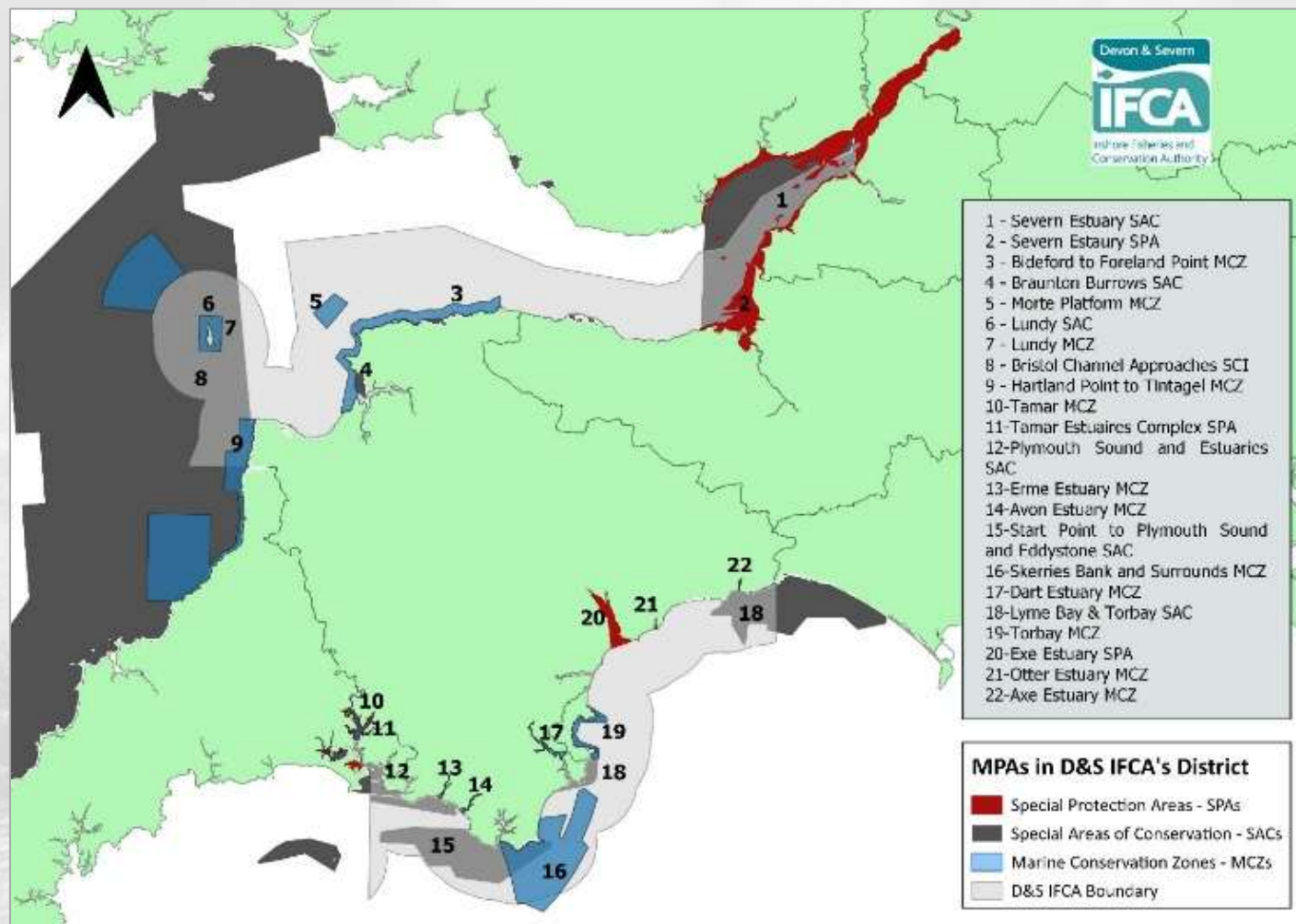
Officers have been heavily involved in the Crab and Lobster FMP, Celtic Sea and Western Channel (CS&WC) Demersal and Pelagic FMPs; Whelk FMP; Bass FMP; Skates and Rays FMP; Wrasse and Black Bream FMP; Channel Non-Quota Specie FMP; Scallop FMP and briefly with the Sprat FMP. The Annual Report details the work undertaken and is reported back to Defra at quarterly intervals. With many of the plans now in place, the MMO and IFCA's are transitioning to the implementation phase on many of the FMPs.

Officers have continued to engage with the fishing industry impacted by the octopus influx in 2025 and has undertaken analysis of landings data provide by the MMO for individual D&S IFCA potting permit holders to investigate the impacts on the inshore fleet. The impact of the octopus predation started to fully materialise, and the industry and managers held grave concerns regarding future of key shellfish stocks of brown crab, lobster and king scallop in the fisheries west of Torbay.

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 however that other recreational and commercial fisheries, including shellfisheries and bass, received monitoring at a level below which many stakeholders felt was unacceptable.

At the end of March, Officers began their investigation into the activities of a towed gear vessels that had operated for over ten days within the Skerries and Surrounds MCZ. The Officers were alerted to the activity following reported significant pot losses by one of the local fisherman. Officers were only able to start the investigation due to the vessel reporting at three minute intervals under D&S IFCA's permit condition requirements. Due to the vessel being over 12 metres in length it only had to report every two hours to meet national reporting rates and the level of available data would not have been sufficient to conduct an investigation. Officers now have significant experience in investigating these types of incidents and have successfully prosecuted or fined the owners and masters of over 25 vessels, including three foreign vessels, in the last 12 years for illegally using towed gears in the MPAs within the District. Officers continue to use spatial data and other available evidence within their investigations. A case from 2016 where VMS data was used remains the only unsuccessful prosecution by D&S IFCA.

5. Our District at a Glance



Overview

- 4,522 km² of sea
- 1,314 km² of coastline
- 22 MPAs
- Shared boundaries with CIFCA, SIFCA & Welsh Government

- 42.39% D&S IFCA District is covered by MPAs
- 27.39% D&S IFCA's District closed to demersal mobile gear
- Currently 89.43 % of the area within MPAs are closed to demersal Mobile gear (excl. Bristol Channel Approaches SAC)

More information about D&S IFCA:

To find out more about the work undertaken by the Authority and why it undertakes this work, please visit our website: **Who we are & our core work website page.** <https://www.devonandsevernifca.gov.uk/about-us-our-work/who-we-are-our-core-work/>

6. Finance and Resources

D&S IFCA's Revenue Budget for 2025/2026 was set at £956,100. This remained the lowest Revenue Budget of the nine mainland IFCAs. The base levy delivered by the funding Local Authorities was increased by 6.75% from £785,066 in 2024/25 to £838,058 in 2025/26. In addition to the increase in levies of £52,992 on the funding Local Authorities, the Revenue Budget is balanced by using taking General Reserves.

	2024/25 Base Budget £	Base Budget Adjustments £	Inflation £	2025/26 Budget £
Employees	746,100	11,600	22,600	780,300
Premises	36,200	3,700	900	40,800
Transport	14,400	(500)	300	14,200
Supplies & Services	76,900	(8,200)	1,100	69,800
Boat Costs	35,600	(1,700)	1,000	34,900
Environmental Research	17,400	(5,200)	300	12,500
Support Services	56,000	(10,000)	700	46,700
Fees, charges, and interest	(45,100)	2,000	0	(43,100)
Revenue Budget	937,500	(8,300)	26,900	956,100
Budgeted use of Reserves	(2,434)	(115,608)	0	(118,042)
Continuation of additional DEFRA Funding (at risk)	(150,000)	150,000	0	0
Funding from Levies	785,066	26,092	26,900	838,058

The financial challenges that D&S IFCA continues to face were set out in its Medium Term Financial Plan 2026 to 2030 (MTFP2026/27). Members agreed that D&S IFCA's budget should be balanced by 2029/2030 through increasing levies and relying on the use of General Reserves. In addition to New Burden Funding (NBF) that some funding Local Authorities receive, further short-term funding to deliver additional national workstreams has been received by each IFCA since 2021 through Defra's Spending Review (SR) settlement.

The additional SR funding, shared equally among the IFCAs had been used by D&S IFCA to offset the amount of money levied on the Local Authorities to balance the budget. Initially all IFCAs received £150,000 of additional funding.

In 2025/2026 the amount received had reduced to £132,256. The uncertainty of the level of funding that would be received and whether it would continue year to year meant that D&S IFCA did not employ additional staff and relied on existing staff to deliver the extra workstreams. This inevitably led to some local priority work not being achieved.

New Burdens Funding:

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 did not receive all the funding. In 2025/2026 this reduced the net NBF to D&S IFCA to £396,161.

The 2025/2026 Statement of Accounts shows that the gap between levy contributions from the Local Authorities that includes £396,161 of NBF and the operational budget for last year was £138,827 or 14.5%. The additional SR funding from Defra is welcome as it provided more time to address the failings of the D&S IFCA funding structure. In 2025/2026, over 55% of the money D&S IFCA received was from Defra. Defra Officials did engage with the Local Authorities and options for funding reform of D&S IFCA had been prepared for submission to the Minister by the end of the financial year.

The MTFP 2026/27 sets out to balance the operational budget requirements by 2029/2030. However, this is calculated on the basis that the 1.5FTE vacancies in staffing remain during this period. The Defra review in the funding structure must address the levy contributions of each Local Authority but must also be the mechanism to significantly uplift the operational budget of the IFCA. D&S IFCA has the largest District, two separate coasts, the widest range of fishing and environmental activities, the largest mobile fishing fleet, yet it has always received the least funding of all the mainland IFCAs.

7. Resolving D&S IFCA's Funding Crisis

The Objective:

A task carried forward from 2024/2025 was for D&S IFCA and the Local Authorities to 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.

The Report:

The Chief Officer and the Chair of the Authority continued to engage with Defra officials. Defra officials were preparing to share funding structure options with Local Authorities ahead of submission to the Minister. Unfortunately, the Local Elections in May 2025 meant that Defra postponed the sharing of options. A decision was made to slow the D&S IFCA review to understand the dependencies with the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government's review of the mechanism for grant funding to Local Authorities. Furthermore, a cabinet reshuffle resulted in a new Minister being appointed and needed to be brought up to speed on a wide portfolio of responsibilities.

In December 2025, Members agreed to an updated MTFP 2026/27. The MTFP 2026/27 sets out that D&S IFCA will use its General Reserves and increases in Local Authorities' levies to balance the budget by 2029/30. The MTFP 2026/27 is based on maintaining the current vessel and staff resources and continues the freeze on 1.5FTEs vacancies. It is hoped that within the relevant period of the MTFP, Defra's funding restructure proposals will address the key issue that D&S IFCA operates on a significantly lower budget than many of the other IFCA's and requires additional resourcing.

D&S IFCA's Funding Authorities:

Devon County Council

Torbay Council

Plymouth City Council

Bristol City Council

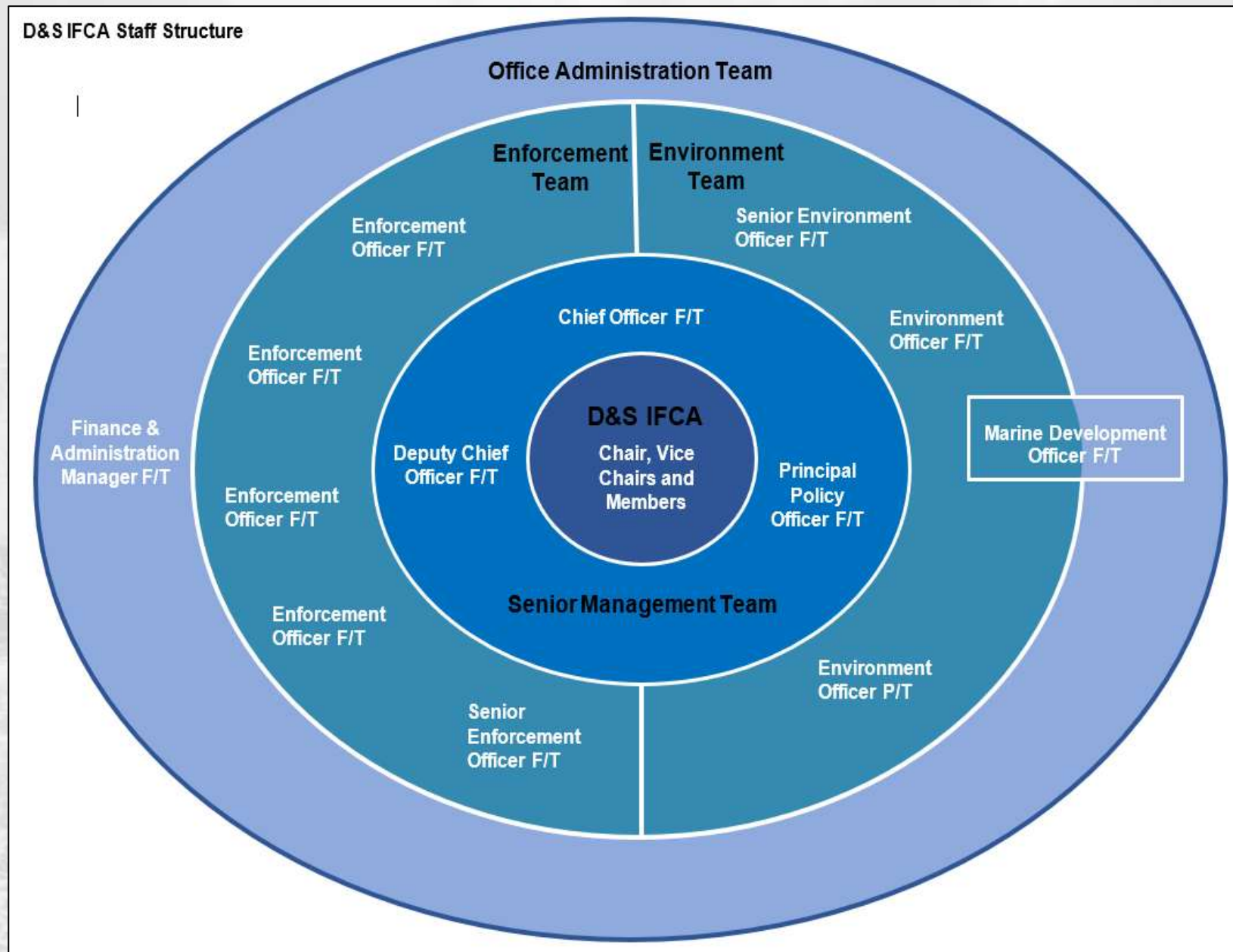
South Gloucestershire Council

Gloucestershire County Council

Somerset Council

North Somerset Council

8. Delivery of Work: Staff Structure in 2025/2026



Staff Training

In March 2025, three Officers from the Enforcement Team undertook training and achieved General Visual Line of Sight Certificate (GVC) qualification enabling the use of commercial drones, primarily to assist with enforcement but to also explore the potential of use of drones within surveys.

Other training included Enforcement Officers attending a week-long Fisheries Course, administered and delivered by the MMO to gain a wider understanding of fisheries legislation and enforcement. Two Officers have undertaken training towards the attainment of Advanced Powerboat Certificate, and all the Enforcement Team have received training relating to the risks of working in enclosed spaces (inspections and boardings).

In February 2026, one Environment Officer undertook the joint IFCA Environment, Science and Conservation Course in Brixham, which is designed to give officers across IFCAs a good, shared understanding of key elements of the work of IFCAs. Two other Environment Officers helped to develop and deliver training modules for this course and sat in on other relevant sessions. Environment Officers have undertaken in-house training on statistics and coding to assist with data analysis, and the use of Themis for querying IVMS data.

All Officers have undertaken on-line training in:

- **Driving for business**
- **Health and Safety Awareness**
- **Lone Working**
- **Display Screen Assessment**
- **Working at Height**

Some members of the Enforcement Team and Environment Team have undertaken STCW training including Sea Survival, First Aid and Fire Fighting.

D&S IFCA Officers: April 2025

- 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: Bradly 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

Contact Us

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9. Fisheries Management Plans

Task:

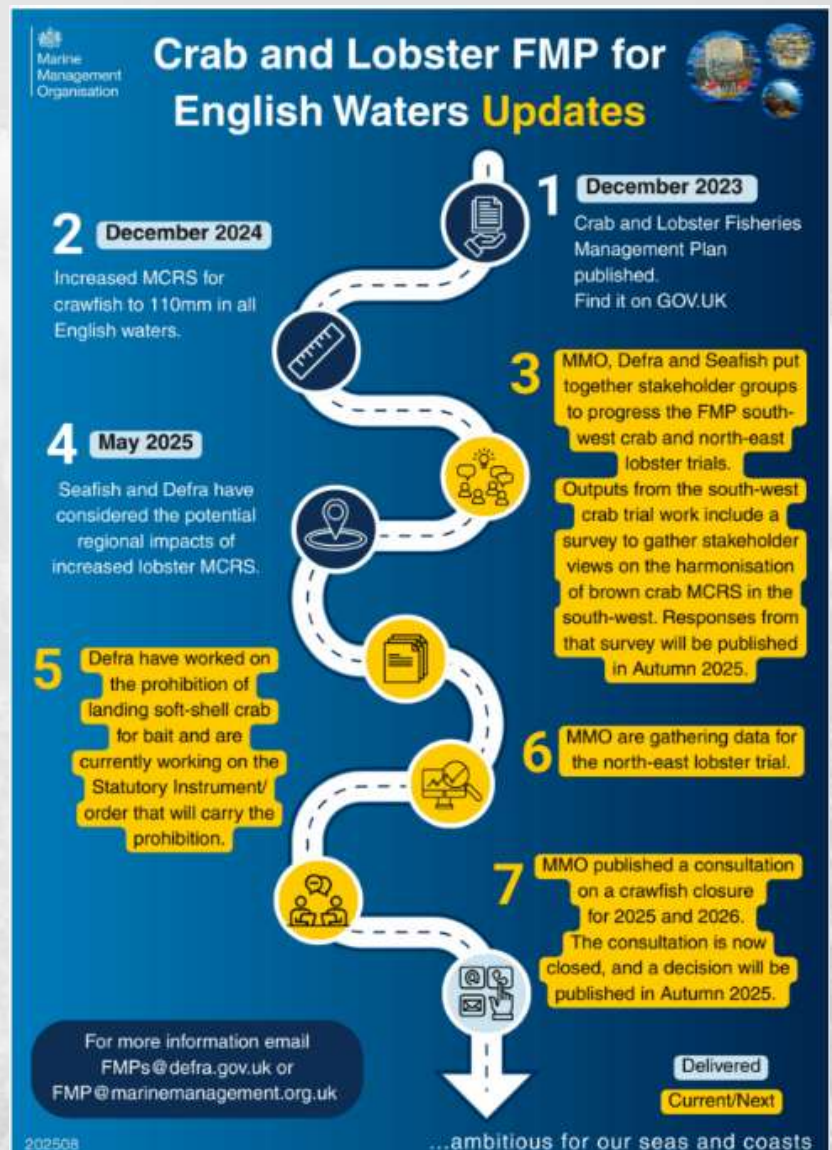
All IFCAs have received additional funding from Defra to undertake work to support the development and implementation of national Tranche 1 and Tranche 2 FMPs.

The 2025/2026 Annual Plan set out how D&S IFCA would continue to be involved in the first three Tranches of FMPs for those FMPS that are applicable to the District and adjacent waters and will be involved in further Tranches of FMPs as they develop.

The Report:

Through the involvement in the FMPs, D&S IFCA Officers have aided the development and implementation of the FMPs, the evidence statements associated with the FMPs and management intervention discussions. Work has included attending meetings of the industry advisory groups, management groups, science sub-groups, implementation groups and other task and finish groups that were appropriate. Officers have reviewed reports and documentation associated with the FMPs and provided evidence and information to aid their implementation.

A great deal of time has been spent on the discussions and development of management measures associated with the FMP interventions. This is particularly the case for the Crab and Lobster FMP, Bass FMP, Celtic Sea and Western Channel Demersal FMP, Whelk and King Scallop FMP.



Officers have been involved in the development of management measures, examples of which are as follows:

The Minimum Conservation Reference Size (MCRS) increases for brown crab and lobster in the South West and Western Approaches including providing charts of the area to be covered by the increase;

- The prohibition on the landing of soft-shelled brown crab in English waters;
- Additional management measures to support the recovery of pollack in particular in relation to the recreational fishery as part of the CS&WC Demersal FMP;
- Potential research needs and management measures relating to Whelk Size of Sexual Maturity and MCRS;
- D&S IFCA provided information on the management of the scallop fishery in its District, responded to other consultations on the scallop closures for 2026, and sits on the steering group of the potting for scallops project.

In addition to sitting on the Crab and Lobster FMP Implementation Group, Officers sit on the Crab and Lobster Effort Management Steering Group and has attended online meetings and an in-person workshop to discuss the most feasible and appropriate effort management options.

D&S IFCA provides quarterly updates on the FMP related work as an audit trail for Defra who has financially supported the IFCA's involvement in the FMPs. Officers have disseminated updates and information to interested groups and stakeholders on the progress of the FMPs including recreational sea anglers interested in the Bass FMP and pollack (Celtic Sea and Western Channel Demersal FMP).

Link to Information:

[D&S IFCA's Response to MMO's Consultation on Proposals for King Scallop Fisheries Closures in ICES Area 7d and 7e in 2026 and 2027](#)



D&S IFCA also sits on the Octopus Management Group which is related to the Crab and Lobster FMP as well as octopus being a species considered under the Channel Demersal Non-Quota FMP. Officers have been engaging with the fishing industry impacted by the octopus influx in 2025 and has undertaken analysis of landings data provide by the MMO for individual potting permit holders to investigate the impacts on the inshore fleet.

Celtic Sea and Western Channel Demersal FMP – D&S IFCA was part of the working group for this FMP that includes pollack. D&S IFCA has participated and provided information to the FISP Pollack Project and development of Angling Trust's 'Pollack Pact'. The Pollack Pact sets out voluntary measures that anglers are encouraged to adopt including a seasonal spawning closure, a daily bag limit of five pollack per angler per day and a MCRS of 50cms.

Bass FMP – D&S IFCA was part of the working group looking to review bass authorisations over 16 meetings and deputised for Sussex IFCA at bass FMP meetings.

Angling:

- D&S IFCA is the lead IFCA for recreational angling. The Chief Officer has attended many national meetings to represent the position of IFCA, and support development of important recreational fisheries included in FMPs.

DEVON & SEVERN IFCA

Emsstrom Wreck: Angling Zone



Inshore Fisheries and
Conservation Authority

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

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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.

- D&S IFCA introduced its third formal restriction on netting to support the development of recreational sea angling.
- D&S IFCA formally prohibited nets from the Berrow, Braunton and Breen Angling Zone in 2014 and all nets from estuaries in 2018 .
- In 2025, D&S IFCA formally prohibited all netting from the Emsstrom Angling Zone.
- It is understood that the removal of nets from a wreck marked the first occasion when nets were prohibited for the purpose of encouraging fishing by lower impact rod and line including by recreational anglers.

10. Marine Protected Areas

Task:

All IFCA 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 IFCA).

The tasks for 2025/2026 included consideration of management options for fishing activities relevant to Bristol Channel Approaches SAC, risk assessing previously completed MPA assessments and considering outputs from a review of assessments, with a particular focus on Torbay Marine Conservation Zone (MCZ). Tasks also included continued implementation of Monitoring and Control Plans for specific activities in MPAs, and preparation of a submission to Defra to include all evidence relating to the application of Measures of Equivalent Environmental Benefit (MEEB) for habitats in the Skerries Banks and Surrounds MCZ and Start Point to Plymouth Sound and Eddystone (SPPSE) SAC.

The Report:

Overview

During 2025–2026, Officers continued to deliver a wide range of work to support the management of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs), with a focus on monitoring fishing activity, improving the evidence base, and working collaboratively with partners and fishers.

Monitoring and Control Plans (M&CPs) were actively implemented across several MPAs, including Torbay MCZ and Lundy SAC. Available vessel tracking and permit data showed that M&CP trigger thresholds were not reached, so management changes were not required. Where issues arose with availability of monitoring data from the MMO, the Authority agreed to implement an alternative tracking solution (REWIRE), to maintain oversight and long-term delivery of the M&CPs.

A key achievement was targeted work in Torbay MCZ, where officers worked closely with the fishing industry to co-develop a voluntary Code of Conduct for potting in seagrass habitats. This represents a practical, locally supported approach to reducing potential impacts on sensitive features (see below).

Progress was also made on site-based assessments, including continued collaboration with national partners on the Bristol Channel Approaches SAC (see below) and detailed work on the Dart Estuary MCZ. Officers completed a review of the Dart Estuary MCZ Condition Assessment, which was shared with Natural England to support further discussion on the management of mariculture activities.

However, not all planned work could be completed, including finalisation of assessments for Bristol Channel Approaches SAC. The development of a submission on Measures of Equal Environmental Benefit (MEEB) was delayed and remains unfinished, requiring further technical input. In addition, a comprehensive review of all existing MPA assessments was not achieved, although initial groundwork and prioritisation were undertaken.

Overall, Officers prioritised practical, site-specific delivery and partnership working alongside key inputs to national MPA consultations (below), while more complex, resource-intensive workstreams remain in progress, as reflected in D&S IFCA's Annual Plan for 2026-2027.

Torbay MCZ Voluntary Code

Throughout 2025, Members considered evidence that has demonstrated the potential impacts of fishing with traps for cuttlefish on protected features of the Torbay Marine Conservation Zone (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. Officers worked closely with fishers through a structured process of meetings, follow-up calls, evidence review, and information sharing to co-develop a Code of Conduct for potting in seagrass areas of the Torbay MCZ.

In March 2026, D&S IFCA published the new Code of Conduct for fishing with pots and traps in Torbay Marine Conservation Zone (MCZ).

The Code of Conduct, which can be viewed using the link below, is a proportionate and flexible management tool that is a practical way for local fishers and D&S IFCA to work together to minimise impacts to seagrass without the need for formal regulation. D&S IFCA has also produced a final report which provides an overview of how a Code of Conduct for fishing with pots and traps within mapped seagrass zones in the Torbay Marine Conservation Zone (MCZ) has been co-developed

Links to Information:

- The Torbay Code of Conduct (in full) can be viewed [here](#).
- The final report can be viewed [here](#).

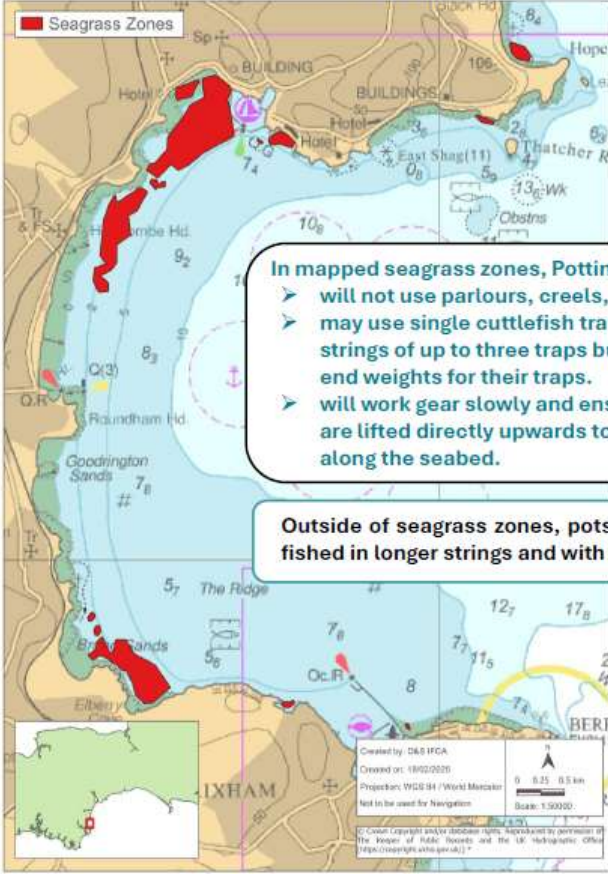
**IFCA**
Devon & Severn
Inshore Fisheries and
Conservation Authority

Code of Conduct

To minimise impacts on seagrass of fishing with pots
and traps in Torbay Marine Conservation Zone

**IFCA**
Devon & Severn
Inshore Fisheries and
Conservation Authority

Any person using pots and traps in Torbay Marine Conservation Zone is asked to adhere to this Code of Conduct. The Code has been co-developed between D&S IFCA Officers and Commercial Potting Permit holders, and it applies in mapped seagrass zones†.



In mapped seagrass zones, Potting Permit holders:

- will not use parlours, creels, or inkwell pots.
- may use single cuttlefish traps, pairs or in strings of up to three traps but will not use end weights for their traps.
- will work gear slowly and ensure that all traps are lifted directly upwards to minimise drag along the seabed.

Outside of seagrass zones, pots and traps may be fished in longer strings and with end weights.



Potting Permit holders will continue to collaborate with D&S IFCA, to improve the evidence base and management approach for interactions between pots, traps and seagrass in Torbay MCZ.

 www.devonandsevernifca.gov.uk  01803 854648  office@devonandsevernifca.gov.uk

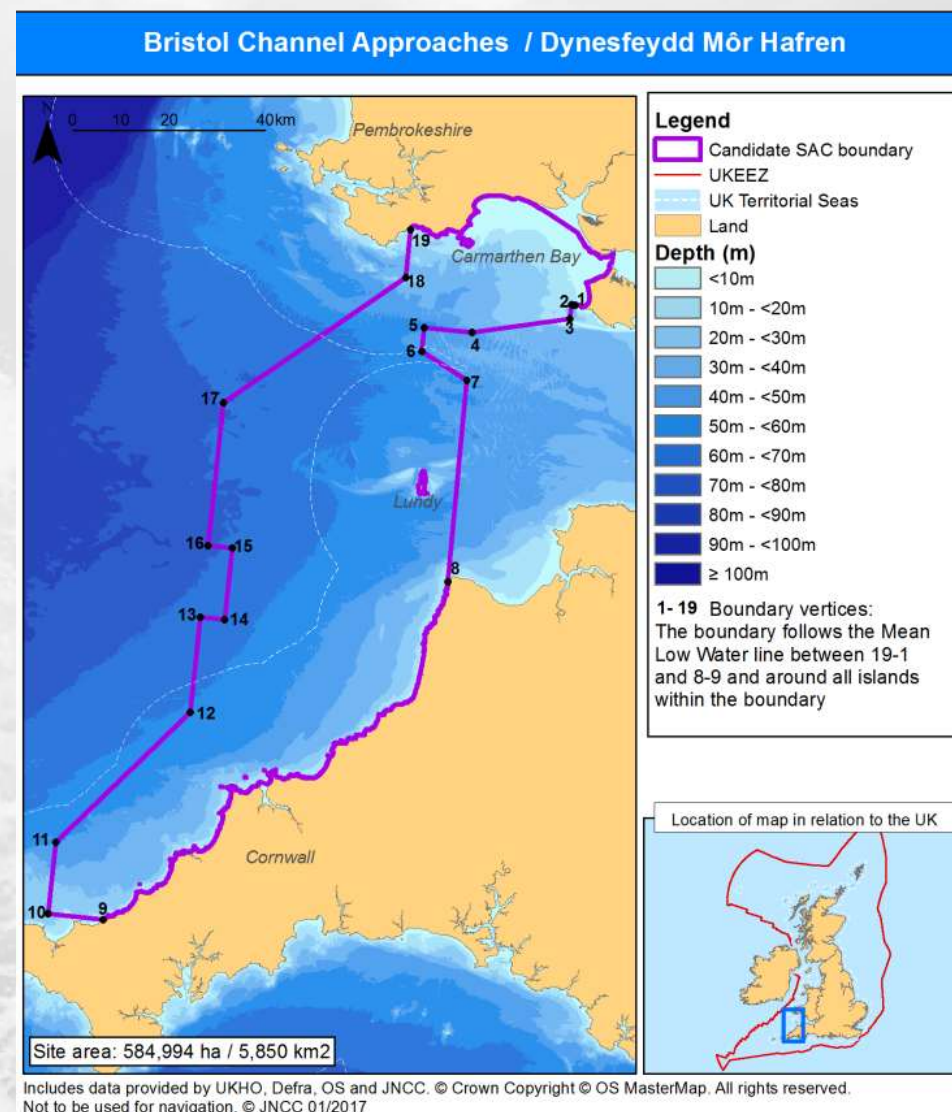
†D&S IFCA has provided fine-scale charts to Permit holders Version control: March 2026

Bristol Channel Approaches SAC

The Bristol Channel Approaches SAC, designated for harbour porpoise, is a complex site which falls within the jurisdiction of the MMO, Cornwall IFCA and D&S IFCA. The size of the MPA and mobile nature of the designated species presents unique challenges for MPA assessments and potential management of fishing activity.

Officers have held regular meetings with the MMO and Cornwall IFCA to progress work on the Bristol Channel Approaches SAC. Preliminary conclusions from the assessments, and discussions with the MMO, have highlighted that management measures are likely to be required for some activities, but that these would be most effectively and proportionately delivered at a national scale, due to the wide-ranging nature of the potential impacts.

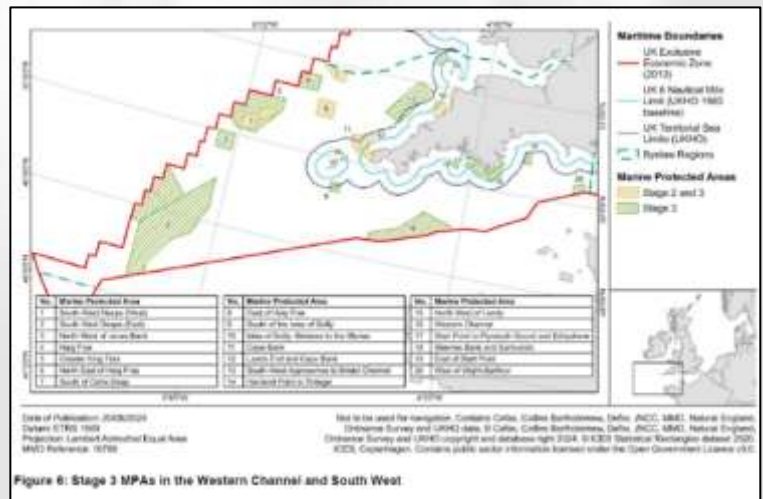
The MMO has been engaging with a range of parties on potential management options, and Officers attended stakeholder meetings for these discussions. The outputs of these meetings will be used to guide the type and scale of future management, and Members will have the opportunity to consider District-specific management options should these be required. Officers aim to draft the assessments for submissions to Natural England by end of May 2026, although the size and complexity of this MPA mean that discussions among all regulators are likely to be ongoing for some time beyond that.



MMO Consultation on MPA Fisheries Management Stage 3

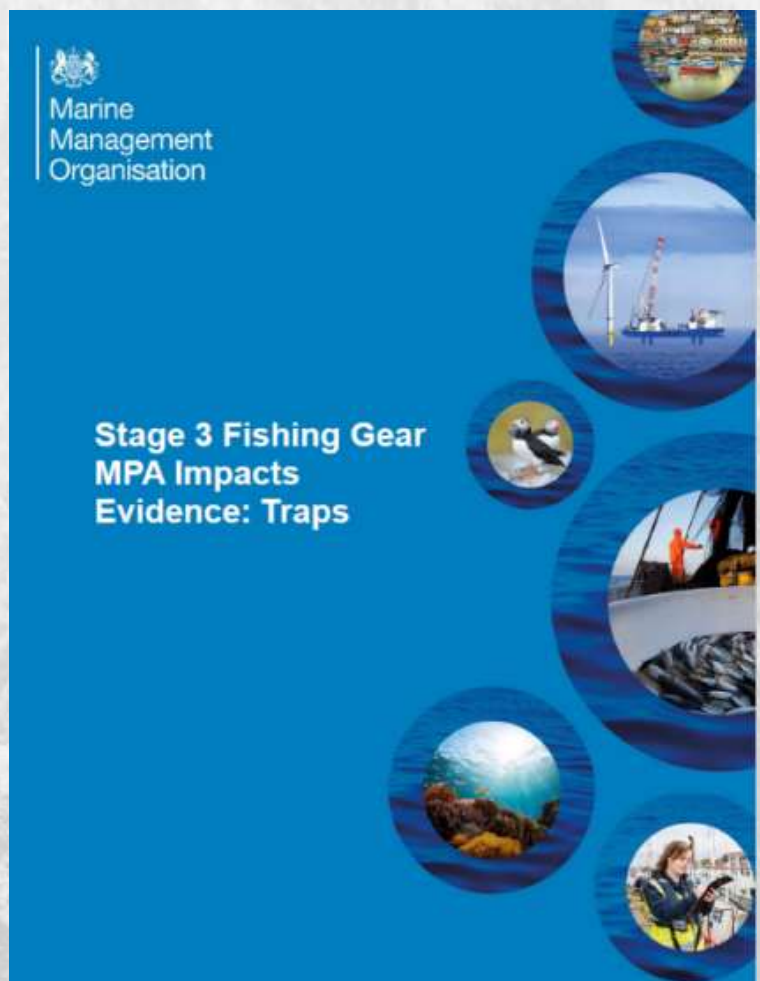
D&S IFCA provided a detailed and evidence-based response to the MMO's Consultation on MPA Fisheries' Management Stage 3 in September 2025. D&S IFCA reviewed the multiple consultation documents including the MPA Site Assessment Methodology, Stage 3 Fishing gear MPA Impacts Evidence Documents, the Stage 3 Fisheries Site Assessments that are relevant to the MPAs that straddle the D&S IFCA's District, namely Hartland Point to Tintagel MCZ, Start Point to Plymouth Sound and Eddystone SAC and the Skerries Bank and Surrounds MCZ, and the Stage 3 MMO De-Minimus Assessment.

In the response D&S IFCA stated that it was opposed to the proposed prohibition of potting on habitats in the MMO's section of the Hartland Point to Tintagel MCZ and the Start Point to Plymouth Sound and Eddystone SAC. In addition, D&S IFCA did not agree with the prohibition of demersal towed gear in the MMO's section of the Skerries Bank and Surrounds MCZ and the Hartland Point to Tintagel MCZ. However, D&S IFCA responded with support for the prohibition on the removal of spiny lobster from the MMO's section of the Skerries Bank and Surrounds MCZ, as this measure has already been introduced in the D&S IFCA's part of the MPA since 2018.



Links to Information:

- D&S IFCA's Response to MMO's Consultation can be viewed [here](#)



D&S IFCA believes the approach being taken by the MMO, for many of the MPAs under consideration that sit outside the 6nm limit, appears to be a move by the MMO, under the Stage 3 MPA Byelaws, towards a whole site approach. Such an approach has not been instigated or implemented by Defra. D&S IFCA stated that it continues to be guided by the advice and evidence and believes that the removal all bottom towed gear on all habitats is not necessary to achieve the conservation objectives of the sites. D&S IFCA assessments of the impacts of static gears and the Formal Advice from Natural England means that it believes that the level of static gear in the sites extending outside its District is not inhibiting the achievement of the conservation objectives of the sites. D&S IFCA suggested in its response that management approach proposed by the MMO is not proportionate nor appropriate.

Offshore Wind Environmental Compensatory Reform Consultation

D&S IFCA [responded to Defra's Consultation on Offshore Wind Environmental Compensatory Measures Reforms](#). Primarily D&S IFCA responded stating that offshore wind developments should not be granted within Marine Protected Areas. MPA designations are justified by the Government's Statutory Nature Conservation Bodies due to the presence of important habitats and species, but the proposed reforms allow damage to the designated habitats and then supports further compensatory MPAs to mitigate for the damage. D&S IFCA suggested that as well as damage to be caused to the existing MPAs by such developments this would increase spatial squeeze on existing users of the marine space such as further fishing and may cause greater displacement of fishing activity. D&S IFCA commented that if offshore wind developments are granted within MPAs then such compensatory measures should be within the same site or in other sites where fishing restrictions are already in place so as not to continue to limit or displace fishing activity.

D&S IFCA also commented on what reasonable proportionate means where the UK Government have proposed 'that wider compensatory measures should deliver positive benefits reasonably proportionate to the level of damage to the UK MPA network' D&S IFCA also responded in relation the concept of hierarchy and felt that it is important that compensatory measures within the impact site should be considered first, and that secondly the measures should look to find the same feature in another MPA close to the impact site and not in a different region or sea area. D&S IFCA does not consider that further MPAs should be designated to increase the MPA network due to the damage caused by the OFW to the existing network. D&S IFCA responded that wider compensatory measures should only be used as a last resort and that the best available evidence must be used.

Potential Compensatory MPAs

D&S IFCA provided information on potential compensatory MPAs in D&S IFCA's District in June 2025. This work involved analysing data on current fishing activity taking place in the potential sites, producing charts of the fishing activity and information relating to the markets and fishing business/vessels that are reliant on the sites and would be impacted by such a designation. Further evidence was provided on the local dependency of ports and towns where fishing vessels, that fish within the areas, are located, together with information on the level of displacement of fishing activity and the potential need for the impacted fishing fleet to diversify.

11. Marine Sustainable Development

Task:

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

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 is 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.

The Report:

Marine sustainable development includes consideration of marine developments as part of the Marine Spatial Prioritisation Programme. In total, 27 MMO Marine Licence Application (MLA) consultations were reviewed for their relevance to D&S IFCA's Duties and its District, in addition to other development consultations and the Fingleton Review outlined in the next section. As outlined in the summary of work under Task 08, Officers also continued to engage with processes regarding Hinkley Point C Nuclear Power Station and its potential impact on protected fish in the Severn Estuary SAC.

Two responses were made to the MMO regarding the MLA proposal to locate a mussel spat collection farm in Labrador Bay South Devon.

- [D&S IFCA Response – MLA/2025/00025 \(25th April 2025\)](#)
- [D&S IFCA Response to OSL Points Raised \(MLA/2025/00025\) – \(22nd May 2025\)](#)

Officers engaged with those Mobile Fishing Permit holders who would be impacted by the location of the site and provided evidence to the MMO of the likely impacts. D&S IFCA Officers were not supportive of the proposed location and suggested it was moved slightly to litigate impacts to the mobile gear fleet. The MMO decided to grant the licence in the original proposed location.

Fingleton Nuclear Regulatory Review

In December 2025, Officers reviewed and challenged the Fingleton 'Nuclear Regulatory Review 2025', on the basis that it used flawed evidence in high-stakes recommendations for reform that could have wide-reaching consequences for environmental protection and public confidence in decision-making.

The Fingleton Review was commissioned by the UK Government to inform a radical reform of nuclear regulation “to achieve faster delivery and value for money in nuclear infrastructure”.



The Fingleton Review proposes sweeping reforms to nuclear and environmental regulation, citing alleged systemic failures and disproportionate environmental protections. However, the conclusions of the Fingleton Review rely heavily on flawed evidence of Hinkley Point C nuclear power station in Somerset (HPC), which is being built by the energy company EDF.

Most critically, the Fingleton Review overlooked the marine impact of HPC: the equivalent of over 4.6 million adult fish were estimated to be killed annually, including a yearly total of 450 tonnes of cod, whiting, and herring. These figures are not hypothetical; they are based on evidence already accepted by regulators and the Secretary of State.

Officers also highlighted concerns that the Review misattributes HPC delays to regulators, rather than to EDF. This is despite widespread recognition that EDF's own decisions caused a seven-year delay in developing the Acoustic Fish Deterrent (AFD), the keystone fish protection measure that has been at the centre of public debate about the role of environmental protection in Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects.

The Fingleton Review stated that it drew upon The Corry Review of Defra's regulatory landscape, which urged greater transparency in use of data for better decision-making and public trust. Officers therefore highlighted that it is deeply concerning that the best available data have not been used transparently in the Fingleton Review's use of the Hinkley Point C case study. However, Officers also noted that the Corry Review itself makes use of an incomplete case study of HPC which fails to accurately represent the ecological impacts of HPC's fish kill.

The Fingleton Review recommended several proposals which, if taken forward based on this flawed evidence, could risk weakening important environmental protections and enabling future harm. Officers therefore recommended that the Government revisit the evidence before implementing reforms.

In December 2025 D&S IFCA Officers, supported by feedback from the Chair and Vice Chair, developed a communication package consisting of the full report reviewing the Fingleton Review, a news item and a press release. The news item, along with the full report was sent to several MPs, including Daniel Zeichner and the Prime Minister, Government officials, regulators and other organisations. The press release and full report were sent directly to several journalists including those at the BBC, The Times, The Daily Telegraph and The Guardian.

Links to Information:

- **D&S IFCA's full report – Assessment of Fingleton Nuclear Review 2025 - can be viewed [here](#).**
- **The D&S IFCA News Item – Devon and Severn IFCA Challenges Fingleton Nuclear Regulatory Review - can be viewed [here](#).**

12. 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 – Totals:

- **Investigations: 29**
- **Sea Patrols: 45**
- **Shore Patrols: 71**
- **Premises Inspected: 14**
- **Joint Operations: 8**



Investigations

Between 1st April 2025 and 31st March 2026, the Enforcement Team created 29 investigation case files and of those 22 are completed and closed leaving 7 ongoing.

Investigation Types:

- Remote Monitoring: 9
- Market Inspection: 7
- Patrol (Sea Shore): 13

Disposal	Number
No Further Action	6
Advisory Letters	3
Official Written Warning	11
Financial Administrative Penalty	2
Simple Caution	0
Prosecution	0
Ongoing Investigations	7

Investigation Outcomes:

Following a Freedom of Information Request, Officers reviewed how information relating to investigations is displayed on D&S IFCA's website. A new page was developed in 2025 called "Investigation Outcomes". The new website page hosts the investigation tables with new fields added to provide extra detail and also links to investigation reports.

The new website page can be viewed here:

<https://www.devonandsevernifca.gov.uk/investigationoutcomes/>

Spatial Monitoring of Towed Gear Vessels

Enforcement Officers have continued to prioritise this work. Officers routinely monitor IVMS transmissions, in this period 9 investigations were instigated as a result of IVMS monitoring, three of which remain ongoing. There was one pending prosecutions from IVMS in this period. Three Official Written Warnings (OWWs) were issued for vessels operating without a permit or for not having a fully functioning IVMS device. A FAP for £750 was issued and accepted for illegally accessing a closed area in Lyme Bay.

Monitoring of Illegal Netting in Estuaries

Monitoring of illegal netting in estuaries has been a focus for enforcement resources with increased intelligence gathering and patrols. Monitoring of this activity poses significant challenges due to the nature of the activity, very often undertaken during darkness by small mobile unlight vessels.

To manage resources, emphasis was placed on gathering intelligence to improve targeting, along with identifying areas and conditions where netting is most likely to take place. In October, the Enforcement Team reacted to live intelligence and undertook enforcement activity in the Teign Estuary, which resulted in an active prosecution for illegally operating nets within the estuary. The evidence was supported by the use of thermal imaging equipment.

Working Together

The Enforcement Team has also developed a closer working relationship with Kings Harbour Master (KHM) in Plymouth, which has led to several joint patrols utilising the KHM launch, increasing presence and engagement with water users in the Plymouth estuaries. Three sea patrols were conducted in and around the Plymouth Rivers and Sound. The patrols took place on 1st August 18th August and 5th September. The patrols involved joint working with the Kings Harbour Master, and the purpose was to monitor gear marking requirements, interactions with recreational angling, compliance with bass legislation and to follow up on intelligence received.

Four patrols were conducted with Cornwall IFCA, again focussing on estuaries in both Districts. These patrols were conducted on 3rd July 15th October 7th November, and 29th January 2026.

An additional patrol was conducted in and around the Plymouth rivers and Plymouth Sound on 19th February 2026. This patrol was undertaken with the Environment Agency (EA) aboard the EA vessel ERRIN MOR. The purpose of this patrol was to monitor gear marking requirements, interactions with recreational angling, compliance with bass legislation and to follow up on intelligence received.



Seeking Compliance – Guidance and Notices for Fishermen

In 2025/2026 there were thirteen direct notifications for fishers relating to changes in legislation or guidance to help fishers remain compliant with legislation.

This included information relating to the fitting of escape gaps for pots targeting scallops (image left), and also information relating to the use of escape gaps when fishers are targeting octopus rather than crab and lobster.

On 16th and 17th May 2025 D&S IFCA used a combination of a news item and direct notification to provide clarity on the applicability of Potting Permit Conditions with a view to addressing issues relating to predation by octopus and concerns raised by the fishing industry about the use of escape gaps in pots. Direct notification surrounding the issue associated with octopus and escape gaps went beyond fishers and included fishermen's organisations, Local Authorities, local MP's, and journalists.

- **D&S IFCA's News Item – Octopus & Escape Gaps – can be viewed in full [here](#).**

Gathering Intelligence

D&S IFCA continues to adopt a targeted and intelligence led approach to its enforcement work. Following the introduction of the National Fisheries Intelligence Database (CLUE) in 2024 all Tasking and Co-ordination Groups (TCG), both internal and external, are administered through CLUE. This offers a far more streamlined approach with a much closer link to intelligence highlighting current issues, vessels of interest or areas of higher risk.

With TCGs effectively being remote, it simplifies the regularity of TCGs as they do not require all Officers to be present as tasks can be allocated in their absence or even picked up by other Officers. Enforcement Officers achieved a minimum of one internal TCG per month, during busier periods the frequency was increased to two per month. Taskings were reviewed along with any received intelligence and consideration of fishing activity risk matrices before tasks were allocated to individual Officers. Enforcement Officers also joined external TCGs held by the MMO or neighbouring IFCAs. During these TCGs Enforcement Officers shared relevant intelligence, shared knowledge and deconflict any planned patrols.

Reporting Illegal Fishing

Please visit our website page that includes an Intelligence Gathering Form

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

13. Octopus Influx in the D&S IFCA District



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Shellfishermen

An octopus influx occurred in 2025 in the South of the D&S IFCA’s District, west of Brixham, and along the south Cornish Coast and into the Western Channel. Fishers noticed the impact of the octopus which were predating on the crab and lobster and asked for support from D&S IFCA.

In May 2025 D&S IFCA clarified its Potting Permit Conditions detailing that fishers were able to close escape gaps to retain octopus but if they were targeting crab and lobster the escape gaps would need to remain open.

- A news item was produced and published on D&S IFCA’s website that can be viewed [here](#) (pdf format).

D&S IFCA Officers have been analysing landings data provided through a Data Protection Request from the MMO. These data were from 18 vessels operating in the south of the D&S IFCA’s District under a D&S IFCA Commercial Potting Permit. Many of these vessels operate within the Inshore Potting Agreement area and work set areas of ground through a Gentlemen’s Agreement between the fishers. The data analysed in FY 2025/2026 for 16 out of the 18 vessels indicated a significant decline in crab landings of between 16.32% and 95.59% in 2025 compared to those landings in 2023. Ten out of the 16 vessels have seen declines greater than 70% with three vessels having a percentage loss in crab landings over 90%. The mean percentage decrease in crab landings for the eleven vessels **71%**.

For lobster landings, 15 out of the 18 vessels had landings significantly lower in 2025 than in 2023. Declines ranged from 34% to 79.26%. Twelve vessels had a decline of over 50% of the landings in 2025 compared with 2023, and six of these vessels had a decrease in landings of lobster over 70%.

Vessel	%age Change in Crab landings from 2023 to 2025	%age Change in lobster landings from 2023 to 2025
Vessel 1	-84.22	-68.39
Vessel 2	-92.66	-73.42
Vessel 3	-94.33	-50.93
Vessel 4	-65.73	-61.65
Vessel 5	+3.44	+29.55
Vessel 6	-37.90	-64.73
Vessel 7	-74.02	-7.95
Vessel 8	-77.91	-49.84
Vessel 9	-54.74	-79.11
Vessel 10	-95.59	-79.26
Vessel 11	-81.40	-75.46
Vessel 12	-16.32	+57.65
Vessel 13	+0.45	+226.79
Vessel 14	-75.48	-34.00
Vessel 15	-72.31	-72.66
Vessel 16	N/A	-65.00
Vessel 17	-74.30	-52.22
Vessel 18	N/A	-77.18

Many of the fishers caught octopus in their crustacea pots and some landed quantities that mitigated for the loss in crab and lobster catches. However, this was not the case for all fishers. The octopus were not found evenly distributed across the fishing grounds which led to fishers working close to each having very different landings of octopus. This led to some fishers having significant financial losses where the value of landings of octopus, crab and lobster in 2025 were significantly less than the landings of crab and lobster alone in 2023.

The influx and loss of crab and lobster in 2025 had an impact not only on landings and incomes but was unprecedented and unexpected making planning by fisher difficult.

The octopus disappeared from catches after July 2025 and thereafter many fishers had very little else to catch for the rest of the year due to the level of predation on the shellfish stocks.

This has led to great concern for the South Devon potting fleet and also to other sectors, such as the scallop dredging fleet, where octopus have also preyed on scallops.



©South Devon & Channel
Shellfishermen

The impacts of the influx have led to some fishers tying up their boats, loss of skippers and crew, inability to afford boat refits and worry and stress to the fishing industry. Concern has also been raised as to what will be available for the potters to catch if or when the octopus disappear, as they have done after previous influxes such as those in 1899/1900 and 1950/1951.

These data and information have been presented to the D&S IFCA's B&PSC in June and October 2025 and a further update given in February 2026. The analysis and reports were also presented to the Full Authority in its meeting in March 2026. The data analysed have also been shared with Members of Parliament including Caroline Voaden MP, Alastair Carmichael MP and the Fisheries Minister Dame Angela Eagle MP. The findings of data were discussed at the Fisheries Debate held in the House of Parliament on 22nd January 2026. Presentations have been given to various groups including the Shellfish Association of Great Britain. D&S IFCA sits on the Octopus Management Group which first met on 16th December 2025 to discuss research being undertaken, analysis of data, engagement with the fishing industry and future objectives. D&S IFCA has engaged regularly through the year with fishers, fishing associations, scientists, Defra, the MMO and Cefas in relation to the impacts of the octopus influx and future work needed.

Links to Information:

- [Agenda Item 11 \(June 2025 B&PSC Meeting\): Influx of Octopus into Devon and South West](#)
- [Agenda Item 11 \(October 2025 B&PSC Meeting\): Octopus Update](#)
- [Agenda Item 11 \(February 2026 B&PSC Meeting\): Octopus Update](#)

14. Lobster Research Work

Egg-bearing (berried) lobsters cannot be landed under current National Legislation. However, some fishers have been known to illegally remove eggs from lobsters before landing, which breaches fisheries legislation and affects stock sustainability. To improve understanding of the lobster lifecycle and provide information for enforcement options, Officers set out to establish when egg-bearing and natural shedding of eggs occurs, and what factors might affect this.

From 2023 to 2025, D&S IFCA Officers undertook surveys on board commercial fishing vessels, with the aim to confirm the months of the year in which lobsters carry eggs, the stages of development of these eggs, the egg shedding period, and the months where there is no egg bearing by lobsters. All surveys took place between the months of February and October each year.



Links to Information:

- **The full report (Berried Lobster Seasonality Surveys May 2023 – May 2025 - can be viewed [here](#).**

In total across 35 surveys, 3,918 lobsters were caught, sexed, and measured. Statistical analyses using these data identified peak egg-bearing and shedding periods. This study has shown that egg-shedding primarily occurs between May and August, peaking in mid-June. The probability of natural shedding reduces to approximately zero over winter months. Seasonal context is therefore essential in determining whether a lobster has been illegally scrubbed.



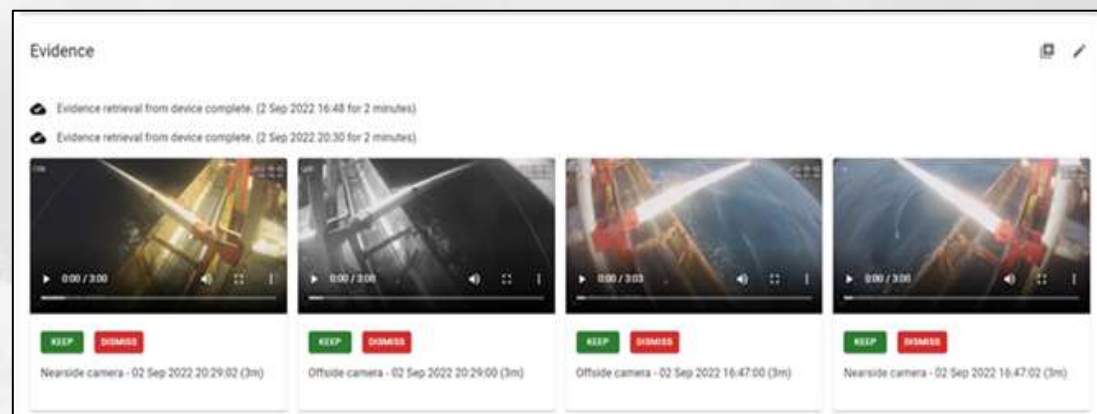
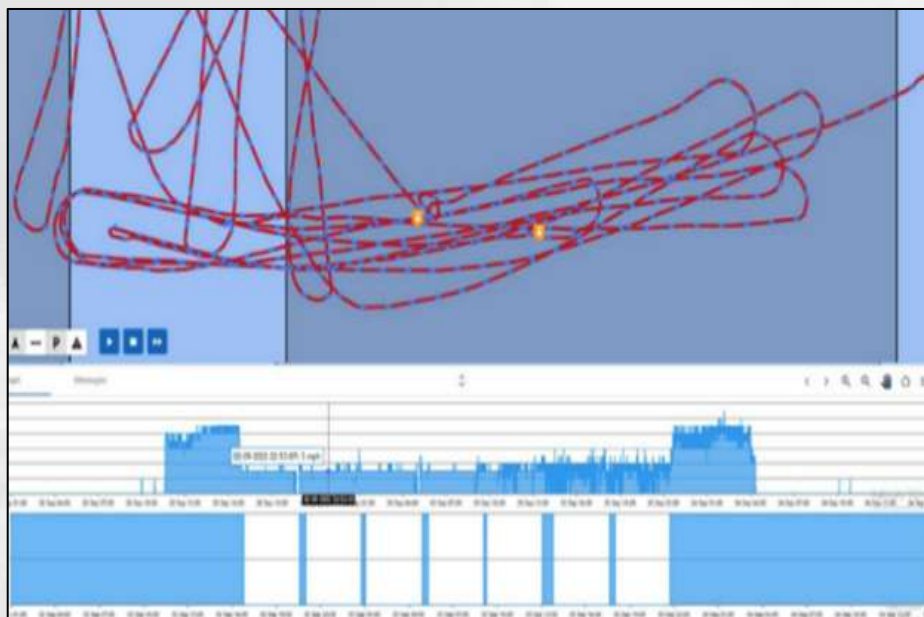
In winter, a female lobster observed without eggs but showing mucous-like substance on the pleopods or traces of egg attachment is almost certainly not a naturally shed individual. It is likely to have had its eggs removed artificially, or to have experienced significant physiological stress causing egg shedding. Based on all survey observations, normal fishing operations are not expected to cause sufficient stress to result in egg shedding.

These surveys have produced an evidence base to help inform the use of enforcement tools that may be used to identify if a berried lobster has been scrubbed of its eggs.

D&S IFCA is grateful to the commercial fishers who hosted Officers onboard and assisted with these surveys. D&S IFCA does not have its own research vessel and relies on fishing vessels, partnership working and remote monitoring to gather data to inform its management considerations.

15. Innovation and Technology

D&S IFCA's own vision sets out that the Authority will innovate, and champion the use of technology,



Images:

- Gear sensor information (left)
- Video stills from alert notification (above)

REWIRE Security Ltd (REWIRE) Devices

On 12th August 2025, Succorfish, one of the two suppliers of MMO type approved IVMS devices, announced that it would no longer forward IVMS data to the UK VMS Hub. Succorfish took the decision to stop forwarding data whilst it looked to resolve issues with the MMO. The decision to stop forwarding data affected up to 50 vessels operating in D&S IFCA's District that were required, under the respective permit conditions to forward data to the UK VMS Hub. D&S IFCA relies on the availability of IVMS data to monitor the mobile gear fleet within its District, and the lack of available data increased the risk to the MPA network.

On 19th September D&S IFCA agreed to install an alternative IVMS device, supplied by REWIRE Security Ltd, to the affected mobile gear vessels operating in its District. The purchase and installation costs and air time costs were covered by D&S IFCA. The decision to fund the alternative solution was in recognition that the affected fishers were not responsible and that the cost incurred were low compared to the value of having the ability to remotely monitor all the mobile gear vessels in the District.

The period that was set for the installation of the devices (by Techmarine – UK) was longer than normal to minimise any disruption to the vessel owners' fishing activity. By December 2025, 34 affected vessels had REWIRE devices fitted at a cost of £9,823.

D&S IFCA has been trialling Remote Electronic Monitoring (REM) technology on up to nine mobile gear vessels since 2022. The trials have shown that there is an alternative, low cost, more efficient and effective way to monitor fishing activity at sea. 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 sea patrols and delivers much greater protection to the MPA network. The annual costs for a REM system are approximately £700 per vessel.

Half of the IFCAs are now trialling different applications of REM across many commercial fisheries. D&S IFCA worked with other IFCAs to develop a national REM and Artificial Intelligence Strategy. The Strategy is to support consistent use of the technology and interoperability of systems across the IFCAs.

Drones used for Crab Tiles

Crab tiling is a method of collecting shore crabs (*Carcinus maenas*) for use as fishing bait by anglers. Collectors use artificial structures such as roof tiles and small sections of guttering to attract and collect shore crabs. This method of bait collection has been used throughout Devon for generations. Officers regularly undertake surveys to determine the number and location of crab tiles on the intertidal zone of estuaries in the District. These surveys enable D&S IFCA to assess any potential impacts of crab tiling on sensitive estuary environments, and to inform the development of appropriate management if required.

The surveys were traditionally undertaken on foot or from a vessel, but advances in drone technology have enabled more effective counting from aerial surveys. In July 2025, D&S IFCA Uncrewed Aerial Vehicle (UAV) was used to survey crab tiles on the Teign Estuary. A total of 16,839 crab tiles were counted from the images collected by the UAV. This was a small increase of 2.6% from the 2020 survey, but a lower number than the highest count of over 22,000 made by on-foot surveys in 2003/2004. This stability in crab tile numbers from surveys between 2020 and 2025 compared to the fluctuations in counts from surveys 2000 to 2020 could be due to switching to surveying with the UAV. Counting tiles from UAV imagery is simpler than estimating numbers from a distance across the shore whilst on foot, especially in areas of deep mud where Officers could not get close to the tiles in order to count more accurately.

Though it was not possible to produce the report on this survey before the end of the financial year, it is expected to be published by May 2026.



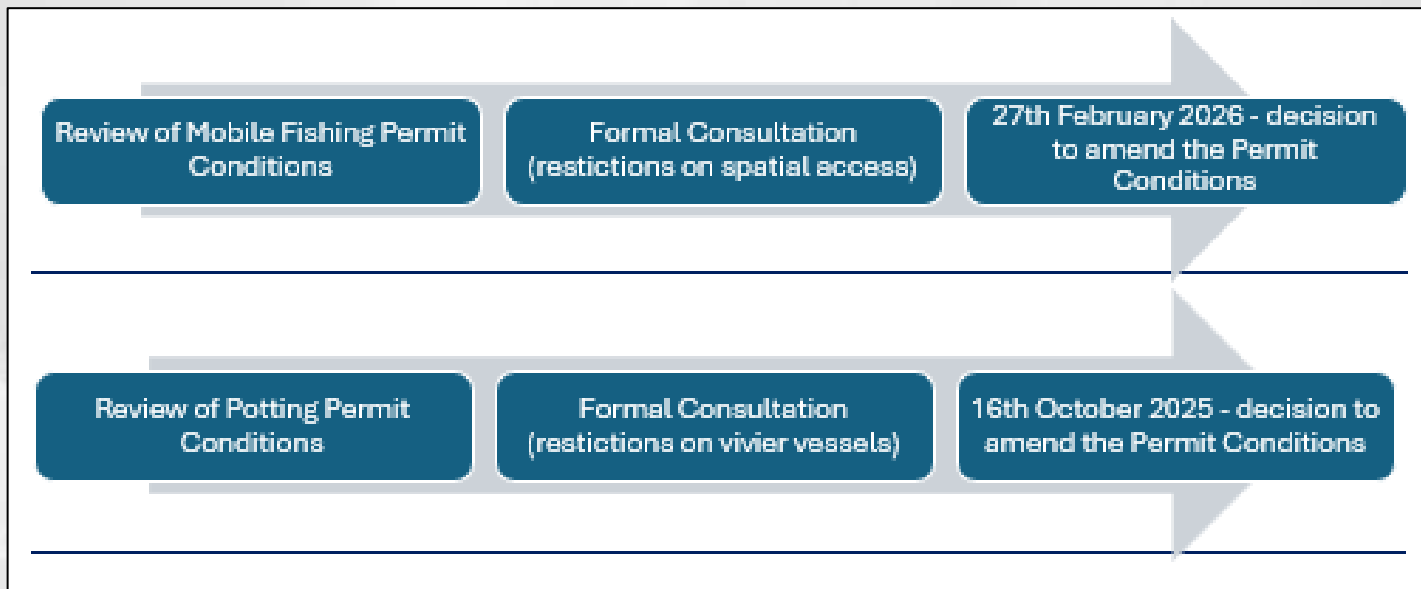
Image

- Drone footage of Crab Tiles in River Teign

16. Byelaw Work

Permit Condition Review

D&S IFCA's Byelaw and Permitting Sub-Committee (B&PSC) undertakes regular reviews of permit conditions. In 2025/2026 the meetings of the B&PSC including consideration and decision making relating to changes to the Potting Permit Conditions and the Mobile Fishing Permit Conditions.



Each time it is proposed to amend any of the permit conditions D&S IFCA formally consults on the changes and a report summarising the responses is prepared and discussed by the B&PSC. All Officer's papers, including consultation reports are published on D&S IFCA's website in advance of the B&PSC meetings.

New Mobile Fishing Permit Byelaw 2022

The new Mobile Fishing Permit Byelaw came into force on 18th March 2026 and concluded over seven years of work by Officers and Members of D&S IFCA's Byelaw and Permitting Sub-Committee (B&PSC). The Byelaw was "made" by B&PSC Members on 20th October 2022.



After formal advertising between November 2022 and January 2023, and then over two years of quality assurance by the MMO, the Byelaw was submitted by the MMO to Defra on 4th September 2025 with a recommendation that it was confirmed. The Byelaw was confirmed by Defra on 4th March 2026.

The new Byelaw remains the legal framework for D&S IFCA to manage mobile fishing in the District. The Byelaw enables D&S IFCA to issue Category One (at sea) and Category Two (estuaries) Mobile Fishing Permit Conditions to manage mobile fishing activity. 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.**

17. Communication and Consultation

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.



Database of Contact and Communication Options

Electronic engagement, rather than one-to-one communications, is effective and importantly less expensive and less time consuming. D&S IFCA maintains a database of contacts that underpins its electronic engagement.

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.

In 2024/2025 Officers sent (71) 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 multiple notifications about different topics related to D&S IFCA's work, including funding updates.

The Website & Facebook

The website in 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”.

- <https://www.devonandsevernifca.gov.uk/engagement-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).

- <https://www.devonandsevernifca.gov.uk/resource-library/>

News Items

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

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 (27) News Items in 2025/2026**

Archived News:

Pdf versions of news items are archived and held in D&S IFCA’s Resource Library (Section G/News Items).

- <https://www.devonandsevernifca.gov.uk/resource-library/g-authority-communications-and-publications/>



IFCA INSIGHTS: MARCH 2026 AIFCA NEWSLETTER
March 10, 2026
The Association of IFCAs has released their March edition of IFCA Insights.

[READ BLOG POST](#)



MANAGING BYCATCH OF SHARKS, SKATES, AND RAYS
January 6, 2026
Clean Catch is seeking fishermen in England to be involved in developing best practice guidance on shark, skate, and ray bycatch that is carefully tailored for demersal beam and otter trawl fisheries.

[READ BLOG POST](#)



DEVON AND SEVERN IFCA CHALLENGES FINGLETON NUCLEAR REGULATORY REVIEW 2025
December 19, 2025
D&S IFCA challenges flawed evidence base and recommendations set out in sweeping Fingleton Review of Nuclear Regulation

[READ BLOG POST](#)



MAPPING WHAT MATTERS – PILOT PROJECT
December 17, 2025
This winter, active and retired fishermen in Devon are invited to take part in Mapping what Matters, a Defra-led project to capture the cultural and social importance of English fishing grounds

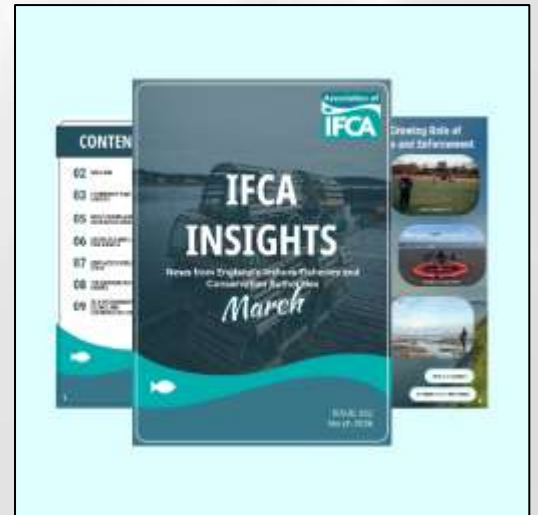
[READ BLOG POST](#)

Supporting Partner Organisations with News Items

In FY 2025/2026 news has been produced to support communications originally produced by Defra, MMO, Cefas, and AIFCA.

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.

In 2025/2026 D&S IFCA began providing news items for the new AIFCA newsletter IFCA Insights. News items are produced in different formats with Blog versions on the main website display.



Communications: Byelaw Review/Permit Condition Review

D&S IFCA's Byelaw and Permitting Sub-Committee (B&PSC) undertakes regular reviews of permit conditions, and this leads to a range of communications work.

This includes targeted communications directed to specific groups of contacts and wide ranging communications giving all stakeholders the opportunity to engage.



The findings of informal engagement (pre-consultation) can lead to decision making by the B&PSC and potentially formal consultation on specific proposals for changes to management measures. All reviews of permit conditions are fully documented.

- **D&S IFCA's contact database now has over 2300 contacts**
- **The data base enables some targeted communications to smaller groups (for example permit holders conducting different fishing activities)**

18. Permits and Exemptions

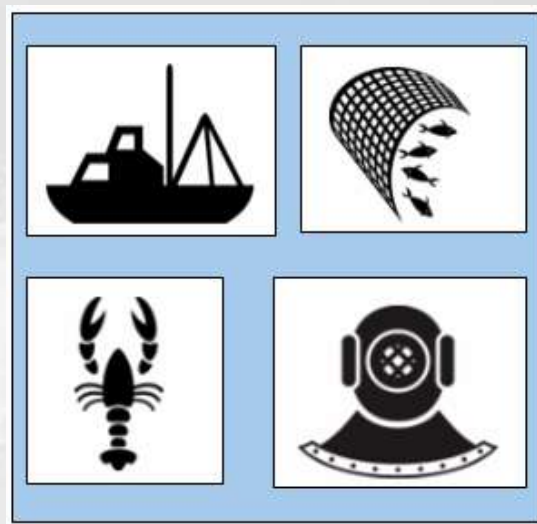
Permits

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 2026):

- **Mobile Fishing (at sea): 97**
- **Mobile Fishing (estuary): 10**
- **Netting (commercial): 122**
- **Netting (recreational): 59**
- **Potting (commercial): 166**
- **Potting (recreational): 413**
- **Diving (commercial): 17**
- **Diving (recreational): 408**



In FY 2025/2026 D&S IFCA issued 701 permits which can remain valid for two years. On 31st March 2026 there were 1,292 permits in use.

Exemptions

During FY 2025/2026, Officers processed 24 exemption requests from stakeholders such as the Environment Agency, Cefas, University of Plymouth, Bournemouth 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.

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 have formalised the application process for such exemption requests and developed an application form.

Additional Information:

For more information about Exemptions/Authorisations, please visit the website:

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

19. Governance

Data Protection Audit

The Authority holds data including sensitive personal data, and shares information with other bodies. It is important that it does so in line with relevant legislation. D&S IFCA has six policy documents relating to data, and personal data, collectively referred to internally as D&S IFCA's Primary Policy Documents. These are the following:



- **D&S IFCA Data Protection Policy (a framework for other policy & guidance)**
- **D&S IFCA Data Protection Principles - Privacy Policy**
- **Freedom of Information Policy**
- **Technology Policy**
- **Publication Scheme Policy**
- **Information Management Policy**

All Officers must, and have, confirmed in writing that they have read and understood the Primary Policy Documents. On 18th April 2025 the Chief Officer and the Principle Policy Officer conducted an unannounced audit involving checks on content and retention of information held (or not held) on personal computers and within selected files on the shared computer server.

There was a high level of adherence to the Data Protection Policies, in particular the lack of personal data on each of each Officer's PCs. The Chief Officer liaised with all staff members relating to their level of compliance. The content of the shared files was broadly in keeping with the detail set out on the data protection register which has been updated in 2025 and is published on D&S IFCA's website.

As part of the audit, it was determined that enforcement related work (case files and other sensitive information already securely stored) should be relocated to its own independent terra-station to free up space on the main server. The transfer was completed by September 2025.

D&S IFCA is moving towards going paperless. During 2025/2026 an audit of paper records held in D&S IFCA's main office was completed and a significant volume of old hard copy information has been securely disposed of.

The findings of the audit were reported to Members at the June 2025 Authority meeting. There have been no data breaches reported to the Information Commissioners Office in 2025/2026.

Review of FPAR and Standing Orders

During 2025/2026 the Financial Probity Administration Regulations (FPAR) were reviewed. There were no required changes to the FPAR. The Standing Orders were reviewed in June 2025 where there were no changes identified. The Standing Orders required review once again on 11th December 2025. Changes were recommended to provide more flexibility regarding the process to appoint additional Members to the B&PSC. The Authority agreed the changes.

Review of Other Policy and Health and Safety

The review of D&S IFCA's Managing Absence Policy was completed on 19th June 2025 when Members agreed to a series of amendments. The review included the request by Members for the Chief Officer to seek advice from Devon County Council's HR advice regarding points previously raised by Members. The amended Policy enables additional flexibility by allowing the Chief Officer to use their discretion where the stated limits to leave in the policy are not appropriate to the employee's circumstances.

The review of the Authority's Local Government Pension Scheme Discretionary Policy was completed on 19th June 2025 when Members agreed to amendments.

On 19th June 2025 the Authority agreed to disband the Governance Working Group (GWG). It was agreed that the supportive role of the GWG would be transferred to the Chair, Vice Chair, and the Chair of the B&PSC. Officers amended the Scheme of Delegation as requested by Members.



On 19th June 2025 Officers presented the annual Health and Safety Report.

The report covered some work undertaken after 1st April 2025 including details of Officer training courses undertaken in April and May 2025.

Freedom of Information Requests

On 6th February 2026, D&S IFCA received a Freedom of Information request from ClientEarth relating to the Authority's enforcement activity and outcomes. All IFCA's received the request along with devolved Administrations and the MMO. In the covering letter, ClientEarth set out that the motivation for the request was to understand levels of inspections of commercial vessels and the outcomes of any subsequent investigations but also to determine the level of transparency and availability of the information.

D&S IFCA provided a comprehensive response with the data it records and holds.

In its response it reminded ClientEarth that as part of its Publication Scheme it regularly updates its investigation table that is available on the Authority's website and was in the process of providing case summaries to explain the different disposals.

Freedom of Information:

D&S IFCA is committed to publishing of information associated with the range of work it undertakes.

All Freedom of Information requests are addressed by Officers within 20 working days after receiving the request.

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 total membership of thirty 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.

- **12 Representatives from the funding Local Authorities (Elected Members)**
- **16 MMO Appointees (General Members)**
- **1 Representative from Natural England (Statutory Member)**
- **1 Representative from the Environment Agency (Statutory Member)**

From this Membership, appointments are made to the Byelaw and Permitting Sub-Committee (B&PSC). There are typically three to four B&PSC meetings each financial year. To see who our Members are, please visit the Our Members website page:

- <https://www.devonandsevernifca.gov.uk/about-us-our-work/our-members/>

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/>

Attendance at Meetings

At the end of 2025/2026 there were 22 Members appointed on the B&PSC

Attendance Record: Authority Meetings

Authority Meeting	19/06/2025	18/09/2025	11/12/2025	19/03/2026
Elected Members Attending	5	4	3	2
General Members Attending	10	9	9	13
Statutory Members Attending	0	2	1	1
Total	15	15	13	16

Attendance Record: Byelaw and Permitting Sub-Committee

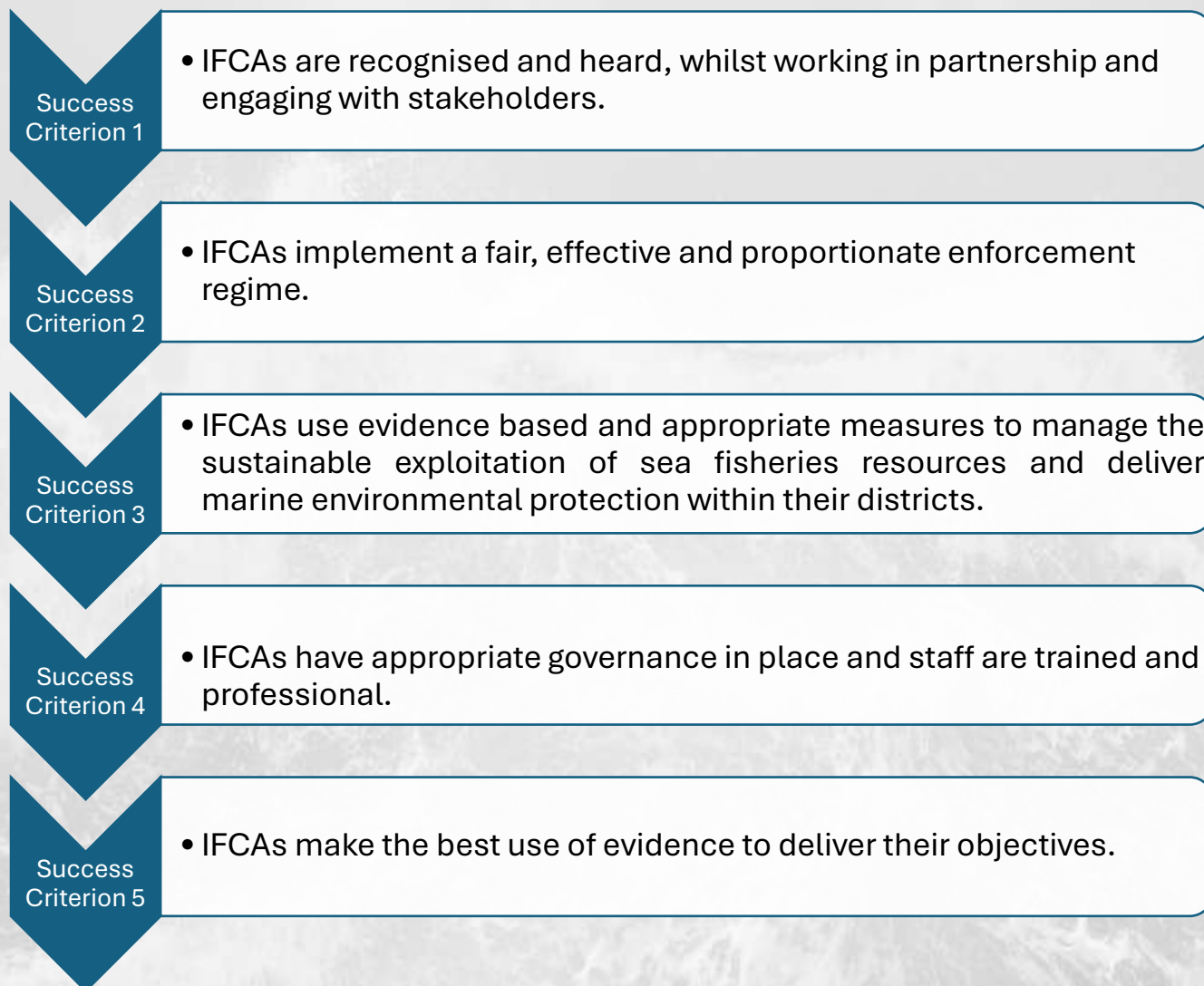
B&PSC Meeting	26/06/2025	16/10/2025	26/02/2026
Members Attending	13	15	15

Training for Members

- During 2025/2026 Members received an updated induction booklet produced by D&S IFCA Officers.
- Members also received training on the Standing Orders (meeting protocol)

20. National IFCA Success Criteria

To support the positive delivery of the national vision, IFCAs 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 IFCAs 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.



Key for Success Criterion Reporting Tables

RT

Repeating Task for 2025/2026



Task Completed



Task Incomplete

Success Criterion 1:

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

RT

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

Following familiarisation with current documentation and establishing a drafting team, both completed to date. The GWG will continue this workstream and complete a draft of the Communications Strategy. Officers will assist the GWG, where required, including arranging meetings requested by the Chair of the GWG. The finalised draft of the Communication Strategy will be presented to the Authority in 2025/2026 for potential approval.

Report for Task 01

D&S IFCA's Governance Working Group (GWG) was disbanded by the Authority on 19th June 2025 and transferred the supportive role of the GWG to the Chair, Vice Chair, and Chair of the Byelaw and Permitting Sub Committee. Officers became aware that the AIFCA were expecting to implement a new National IFCA Communications Strategy in 2025-2026 and therefore work on D&S IFCA's own Communication Strategy was put on hold until the AIFCA work was completed. The National IFCA Communications Strategy has not yet been developed.

RT

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 for Task 02

Officers maintain a selection of databases containing contact details which are used regularly. The collection and retention of contact details have enabled targeted communications for permit holders (segregated into groups per method or fishing sectors), or direct communications to sub-groups such as MPs, journalists, or Members of the Authority. The master contact data base enables all stakeholders (as a large single group of over 2300 contacts) to receive information via Mailchimp.

There were 72 direct notifications in 2024/2025. Direct communication, using contact details, in 2025/2026 has included:

- Pre-consultation to inform byelaw review (heritage herring fishery)
- Guidance for fishers on the use of escape gaps
- Gear marking compliance notice
- Updates regarding Succorfish IVMS and D&S IFCA's roll out of REWIRE IVMS on mobile fishing gear vessels
- Expressions of interest for fishers to assist with boat-based survey work (within the Torbay MCZ)

- Invitations for fishers to attend meetings to co-develop a Code of Conduct within the Torbay MCZ
- Press release to MP's, journalists and other interested parties regarding D&S IFCA's challenge to the Fingleton Nuclear Review 2025.
- Formal Consultation – Proposed changes to Netting Permit Conditions, Potting Permit Conditions, and Mobile Fishing Permit Conditions
- Notices of changes to legislation (implemented permit condition changes)

Of the 72 direct notifications, 26 direct notifications, relating to different subjects, were issued to Authority Members. Authority Members have received information and updates including a new Members Handbook, letters sent from the Chair to Defra (IVMS and funding), and invitations from the AIFCA to attend on-line briefings. As well as the master contact data base, 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.

RT

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 for Task 03

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 meeting papers, minutes from meetings, and consultation related publications. When D&S IFCA's legislation changes, this is reflected by changes to website library content and updated display pages.

Between 1st April 2025 and 31st March 2026, a total of 27 news items were produced in blog and pdf formats, which included supporting Defra and Cefas communications (Mapping what matters). News items supported communication by the Marine Management Organisation (MMO) consisting of webinar invitations relating to England's Offshore MPAs. The majority of D&S IFCA's news items are now being directly circulated to the AIFCA for potential further use. D&S IFCA supported the AIFCA with the development of the new AIFCA newsletter "IFCA Insights" and helped to provide content and promote its launch. News items in 2025/2026, relating to D&S IFCA's work, included updates on the roll out of REWIRE Vessel Monitoring Devices, and D&S IFCA's challenge to the Fingleton Nuclear Regulatory Review 2025.

Following audits of content and the use of analytics, some display pages that were not able to be maintained by Officers on a regular basis were removed from the website. Plans were put into place in August 2025 to develop three new National Workstreams webpages focussed on reporting D&S IFCA's work towards Marine Protected Areas, Fisheries Management Plans, and Marine Spatial Prioritisation.

Work preparing the content for these pages is not complete. A new page for Investigation Outcomes (including links to Case Summaries) was launched in November 2025. This new page hosting the Investigations Table was last updated on 26th March 2026.

Officers have discussed the design of the current website with the AIFCA Communication and Engagement Manager. It is thought that there is value in D&S IFCA potentially investing in a design change, to create better consistency (structure, fonts, tabs) with the AIFCA website and other IFCA websites and to improve how information is displayed and accessed on a mixture of devices (smart phones and tablets). Discussion on this is expected to continue in 2026/2027 as AIFCA look to update their own website in the first instance.

Task 04: Communication Element: To Re-Make the Potting Permit Byelaw

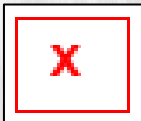
The Byelaw will need to be advertised in a selection of newspapers. In addition, D&S IFCA will use a range of communications to inform stakeholders and provide the opportunity to respond with objections or supportive responses. Communications will include direct circulation of information (Mail Chimp), 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 Byelaw and Permitting Sub-Committee (B&PSC).

Report for Task 04

A new Potting Permit Byelaw was not developed (“made” by the B&PSC); therefore, the communications tasks were not completed. Agenda time for the B&PSC in 2025/2026 was taken up with other work, including prolonged discussions on the use of vivier tanks that led to amendments to the current Potting Permit Conditions (restriction on the use of vivier tanks whilst fishing in the District) being introduced on 7th November 2025. The roll out of amended Permit Conditions led to supporting communication work. Other agenda time relating to potting has focused on the influx of Octopus, and the development of a Voluntary Code of Conduct for pots and cuttle traps in mapped seagrass areas within the Torbay Marine Conservation Zone (MCZ). Details about the additional communication work associated with co-development of the Code of Conduct is detailed in the Annual Report.

Task 05: Communication Element: To Re-Make the Netting Permit Byelaw

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 Byelaw and Permitting Sub-Committee (B&PSC).

A red 'X' mark inside a red-bordered box, indicating a missing or failed element.

Report for Task 05

A new Netting Permit Byelaw was not developed (“made”) by the B&PSC; therefore, the formal communications tasks were not completed. However, the B&PSC has discussed the approach to take with shaping the new Netting Permit Byelaw, including a review of Byelaw Making/Byelaw Review Principles, and other key content for drafting work to continue. The initial work has included some specific pre-consultation involving fishers engaged in heritage netting fisheries. On 26th February 2026, the B&PSC recognised that, in the short term, work on the new Netting Permit Byelaw should be suspended, with a series of management measures potentially being introduced under current Netting Permit Conditions. The proposals from the B&PSC for formal consultation relate to specific restrictions for non-powered vessels and a relaxation of a gear marking provision relevant to all Netting Permit holders.

Task 06: 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 for Task 06

NIMEG: These meetings have taken place quarterly and are a combination of two online meetings and two face to face meetings. The meetings were held on:

- 19th June 2025, 3rd October 2025, 10th December 2025, 5th March 2026

The meeting held in December was in York, and Officers did not attend due to a lack of resources and the cost of attendance.

This year, Simon Cadman from CIFCA was appointed as Chair of NIMEG. One of the first actions was to increase the core members of the group by reinviting the devolved administrations, the number of standing core members is now 22.

The matter of IFCO training featured on each agenda; the situation remains largely unresolved and discussions with the Chief Officers’ Group (COG) and the MMO remain ongoing.

NPVs were discussed in February 2025, raising the matter to the Strategic Officers’ Group to consider. Discussions progressed throughout 2025/2026 with Defra providing the NIMEG group with five proposals to improve the situation. These were considered and responded to by NIMEG. However, the matter remains ongoing.

IVMS was an agenda item throughout the year, initially as the roll out was reaching its final phases and the licence condition was brought in. However, in August 2025, the MMO entered into a dispute with Succorfish and as a consequence the laying of the Statutory Instrument was delayed. Discussions between the MMO and Succorfish are continuing, the matter remains ongoing.

In June the Environment Agency raised its proposal to introduce a national training package for those Officers that are cross warranted.

Another matter discussed was the IFCA’s Compliance and Enforcement Strategy. A draft strategy was presented to the COG for consideration in January 2026.



Regional Fisheries Group (RFG):

D&S IFCA attended the SW RFG meetings throughout the year. The SW RFG is well attended by regulators and fishers. The MMO's regional fisheries manager also provides regular email updates and signposts for other services including IVMS helpdesk, fishing vessel licences, marine and fisheries funds. The RFG meetings provide an opportunity for both fishers and regulators to share information on many subjects. The meeting is well chaired and respect for all opinions is evident. Topics discussed this year include, impact of octopus, pollack fishery, crab and lobster management and regulation changes affecting vessel safety and EU exports.



Technical Advisory Group (TAG):

Three members of the Environment team attended a TAG conference hosted by Kent and Essex IFCA in July 2025. The Senior Environment Officer presented on (i) the crustacean FISP project which investigated an enforceable method to determine a soft-shelled crab, and (ii) methods and outcomes for using shellfish reproductive timing to inform fisheries management (scallops and lobsters). The TAG conference and presentations were highlighted in the AIFCA's 'IFCA Insights' newsletter (Dec. 2025).

As well as the TAG conference, an Environment Officer attended two online TAG meetings in the last year, and an in-person meeting was attended in March 2026 in London. These meetings provide the forum for all IFCAs and other agencies, such as Natural England, Environment Agency, Cefas, Welsh Government and the MMO, to provide 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.

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

RT

Task 07: Support Sustainable Development

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 for Task 07

Twenty-seven marine development consultations from the MMO 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.

Officers also contributed to a variety of other consultations and engagement work in support of sustainable development. This included consultations from Natural Resources Wales which were checked for potential cross-border implications, assistance with development of the Devon Local Nature Recovery Strategy and input to a scoping exercise for tidal energy in the Severn estuary. Officers also engaged with developers, IVMS data and industry regarding the positioning of the ACTOR Scientific Platform led by University of Plymouth, and challenged the flawed evidence base and recommendations set out in the Government's Nuclear Regulatory Review (the 'Fingleton Review').

The consultations requiring most substantial engagement related to an aquaculture site in South Devon, Defra's consultation on Offshore Wind Environmental Compensatory Measures Reforms and the MMO's consultation on Stage 3 MPA management measures.

Two responses were made to the MMO regarding the MLA proposal to locate a mussel spat collection farm in Labrador Bay South Devon.

- **D&S IFCA Response – MLA/2025/00025 (25th April 2025)**
- **D&S IFCA Response to OSL Points Raised (MLA/2025/00025) – (22nd May 2025)**

Officers engaged with those Mobile Fishing Permit holders who would be impacted by the location of the site and provided evidence to the MMO of the likely impacts. D&S IFCA Officers were not supportive of the proposed location and suggested it was moved slightly to litigate impacts to the mobile gear fleet. The MMO decided to grant the licence in the original proposed location.

D&S IFCA provided information on potential compensatory MPAs in D&S IFCA's District in June 2025. Officers engaged with fishermen's organisations and provided an in-depth evidenced response to the MMO's consultation on MPA Fisheries Management Stage 3 in September 2025.

Not all consultation responses are in a format suitable for publication; however, the following consultation responses suitable for publication were added to D&S IFCA's website (Section H – Marine Environment Matters of the Resource Library in 2025/2026 and can be read using the links below:

- **D&S IFCA Assessment of Fingleton Nuclear Regulatory Review 2025**
- **D&S IFCA's Response to Defra's Consultation on Offshore Wind Environmental Compensatory Measures Reforms (August 2025)**
- **D&S IFCA's Response to Public Consultation on Devon Local Nature Recovery Strategy (November 2025)**
- **D&S IFCA's Response to MMO's Consultation on MPA Fisheries Management Stage 3 (September 2025)**

Task 08: Hinkley Point C Nuclear Power Station – Development Permissions - HPC Marine Technical Forum

This workstream is expected to continue into 2025/2026, using a range of evidence to ensure that impacts from HPC on fish and fisheries are avoided, minimised and mitigated where possible.

- a) Officers will continue to engage with the developer on development proposals.
- b) Officers will seek to ensure that any compensation measures introduced to offset harm (under the Habitats Regulations) are meaningful and evidence based. This work is likely to focus on the developer's proposed material changes to the Development Consent Order for HPC.

Report for Task 08

a)

In 2025, Officers attended meetings with EDF, Natural England, Marine Management Organisation, Natural Resources Wales and the Environment Agency. These focused on EDF's plans to discharge a key element of their Development Consent Order, relating to the cooling water system, and how design changes would affect fish mortality. Other direct engagement has continued through the regulator/developer 'Marine Technical Forum', which provide opportunities to review other HPC-related environmental impacts, and direct e-mails with EDF staff to receive updates on progress which help with workstream planning.

Officers have also attended Environment Agency 'Meet the Regulator' forum events to remain up to date with the work of other regulators and concerns of the public regarding HPC. Officers have also engaged with the local MP regarding concerns over the levels of fish kill.

Officers have also highlighted how incorrect data relating to HPC has been used in the Corry Review of Defra's Regulatory Environment and the Fingleton Nuclear Regulatory Review: <https://www.devonandsevernifca.gov.uk/devon-and-severn-ifca-challenges-fingleton-nuclear-regulatory-review-2025/>

b)

shortly prior to the inclusion of this task in the Annual Plan, Officers responded to an EDF consultation which included EDF's proposals on compensatory measures and also engaged with a company that produces underwater deterrent technologies, to assist the company's understanding of the EDF situation and opportunities for engagement. Since then, the company has engaged with EDF on development of an alternative acoustic fish deterrent technology (AFD) that is being trialled in the Severn Estuary.

It is understood that this has caused a shift in focus for EDF from provision of compensatory habitat measures towards active mitigation using AFD. Further research into effectiveness of this AFD is still required following successful initial trials, but if successes continue then there may be reduced need for EDF to implement compensatory measures.

Officers will continue to work with others to ensure that the AFD deployment is sufficient to mitigate harm to fish in the Severn Estuary and, if it is insufficient, then any measures introduced to offset harm (under the Habitats Regulations) are meaningful and evidence based.

Task 09: Considerations of Tidal and Wind Energy Developments

- a) Officers will continue to review and respond to Marine Licence Applications in relation to Tidal and Wind Energy. This work will relate to proposals within ports to aid and support these renewable energy developments and also licences submitted by developers wishing to trial technologies for floating wind farms.
- b) D&S IFCA Officers will keep abreast of any applications and developments that are proposed in relation to tidal energy and respond accordingly in relation to D&S IFCA's duties.
- c) This workstream will require direct engagement with developers, facilitating engagement channels between developers and the fishing industry

Report for Task 09

(tasks a and b)

D&S IFCA responded to Defra's Consultation on Offshore Wind Environmental Compensatory Measures Reforms. D&S IFCA raised concerns about the environmental compensatory measure reform for offshore wind developments. Primarily D&S IFCA responded stating that Offshore Wind developments should not be granted within Marine Protected Areas. MPA designations are justified by the Government's Statutory Nature Conservation Bodies due to the presence of important habitats and species, but the proposed reforms allow damage to the designated habitats and then supports further compensatory MPAs to mitigate for the damage. Such reforms will not only allow damage to be caused to the existing MPAs by the Offshore wind developments but will remove further fishing opportunities and cause greater displacement of fishing activity. If Offshore wind developments are granted within MPAs then such compensatory measures should be within the same site or in other sites where fishing restrictions are already in place so as not to continue to limit or displace fishing activity. For example, if a site is designated for Annex1 reefs but there is coarse sediment present in the area where demersal towed gear has been removed then this potentially would allow the designation of the coarse sediment as a compensatory habitat for the damage done to the coarse sediment feature of an MPA by the OFW development.

D&S IFCA also commented on what reasonable proportionate means where the UK Government have proposed 'that wider compensatory measures should deliver positive benefits reasonably proportionate to the level of damage to the UK MPA network'. D&S IFCA stated that 'reasonably proportionate' should relate to the size, extent, distribution and communities of the designated feature being damaged by OFW developments. D&S IFCA explained that with the current MPA network that there are numerous undesignated features (and species) already present in designated MPAs that could potentially meet the principle of reasonably proportionate.

Within its response, D&S IFCA appreciated the concept of a hierarchy of compensatory measures but felt that it is important that compensatory measures within the impact site should be considered first, and that secondly the measures should look to find the same feature in another MPA close to the impact site and not in a different region or sea area. D&S IFCA did not consider that further MPAs should be designated to increase the MPA network due to the damage caused by the OFW to the existing network. D&S IFCA responded that wider compensatory measures should only be used as a last resort and that the best available evidence must be used. D&S IFCA suggested that compensatory habitats close to the development should be considered – not compensatory for a development many miles (or regions/ sea areas) away from the development. D&S IFCA reiterated that the best scientific evidence should include the information on the extent and condition of qualifying habitats, and if different habitats are to act as compensatory habitats, there has to be demonstrable evidence that the measures put in place will work, and that they will bring ecological benefits.

The Environmental Compensatory Measures Reforms Statutory Instrument (SI) was laid in Parliament on 26th February 2026: [The Conservation of Habitats and Species \(Offshore Wind\) \(Amendment etc.\) Regulations 2026](#) and a policy note has been published by Government [Environmental Compensatory Measures Reforms for Offshore Wind: policy background and proposed compensation hierarchy - GOV.UK](#) and will support the SI once it comes into force.

A tidal range project known as the 'West Somerset Lagoon' was one of the projects used as an example in the recent [Severn Estuary Commission's](#) review of options for tidal energy in the Severn. The Commission released their recommendations in March 2025, which included to "Develop a Commercial Demonstration Project to demonstrate potential and evaluate environmental effects".

Since then, the West of England Mayoral Combined Authority (WECA) and Cardiff Capital Region (CCR) have been working together to take forward the Commission's recommendations. They have held a consultation on their methods for screening a potential site for a tidal lagoon in the Severn Estuary - as the first stage in identifying potential sites for a Commercial Demonstration Project as recommended by the Commission. Officers provided feedback on this in relation to D&S IFCA's duties.

In 2026, WECA and CCR provided an overview of the outputs from the screening exercise and an opportunity to discuss the proposed next steps for the work. This highlighted that the West Somerset Lagoon is not being considered for the 'Commercial Demonstration Project' as the West Somerset Lagoon would be larger than the intended size of the demonstration project. The proposers of the West Somerset Lagoon are continuing to raise funds for initial pre-construction development stages of the project.

Officers remain in contact with the project team to ensure that D&S IFCA's input can be provided at the right time and have also discussed the project with local fishers to remain in touch with local feeling on the project.

(task c)

Officers have met regularly with the Bristol Port Company's project team that is responsible for its development of the Bristol Wind Terminal, which will support the development of offshore wind in the Celtic Sea. This project will support major developments but may also impact upon nature in the Severn Estuary, so the developers are proactively seeking to provide compensatory habitats near to Steart Marshes. Officers have discussed the design of these measures directly with the developer and has considered documents released for consultation through the Marine Management Organisation.

D&S IFCA is also represented on the Steering Group for the 'Future Proofing the Severn Estuary' project, which aims to advance the knowledge, collaboration, and informed decision-making essential for managing the Severn Estuary's resources sustainably.

Task 10: Fisheries Management Plans

- a) D&S IFCA Officers will continue to be involved in the first three Tranches of FMPs for those FMPs that are applicable to the District and adjacent waters and will be involved in further Tranches of FMPs as they develop.
- b) Officers will contribute to the development and implementation of FMPs
- c) Officers will be involved in the discussions on management measures that secure the timeframe for interventions set out in the FMPs including the development of management measures that will be tested in the Western Channel Crab Fishery Unit Trial.

Report for Task 10

- a) Throughout FY 2025/2026 Officers have been involved in the Crab and Lobster FMP, Celtic Sea and Western Channel (CS&WC) Demersal and Pelagic FMPs; Whelk FMP; Bass FMP; Skates and Rays FMP; Wrasse and Black Bream FMP; Channel Non-Quota Species FMP; Scallop FMP and Sprat FMP.
- b) Through the involvement in the FMPs, D&S IFCA Officers have aided the development and implementation of the FMP, the evidence statements associated with the FMPs and management intervention discussions. Work has included attending meetings of the industry advisory groups, management groups, science sub-groups, implementation groups and other task and finish groups were appropriate. Officers have reviewed reports and documentation associated with the FMPs and provided evidence and information to aid their implementation. D&S IFCA provides quarterly updates on the FMP related work as an audit trail for Defra who has financially supported the IFCA's involvement in the FMPs. Officers have disseminated updates and information to interested groups and stakeholders on the progress of the FMPs including recreational sea anglers interested in the Bass FMP and pollack (Celtic Sea and Western Channel Demersal FMP).
- c) A great deal of time has been spent on the discussions and development of management measures associated with the FMP interventions.



This is particularly the case for the Crab and Lobster FMP, Bass FMP, Celtic Sea and Western Channel Demersal and Pelagic FMPs, Whelk and King Scallop FMP. Officers have been involved in the development of management measures, examples of which are as follows:

- The Minimum Conservation Reference Size (MCRS) increases for brown crab and lobster in the South West and Western Approaches, including providing charts of the area to be covered by the increase;
- The prohibition on the landing of soft-shelled brown crab in English waters;
- Additional management measures to support the recovery of pollack in particular in relation to the recreational fishery as part of the CS&WC Demersal FMP;
- Potential research needs and management measures relating to Whelk Size of Sexual Maturity and MCRS;
- D&S IFCA provided information on the management of the scallop fishery in its District, responded to other consultations on the scallop closures for 2026, and sits on the steering group of the potting for scallops project.

D&S IFCA also sat on the Crab and Lobster FMP Implementation Group which discussed the potential of different management measures for these species and how they can be implemented. In addition to this group Officers sat on the Crab and Lobster Effort Management Steering Group and has attended online meetings and an in-person workshop to discuss the most feasible and appropriate effort management options. D&S IFCA also sat on the Octopus Management Group which is related to the Crab and Lobster FMP as well as the Channel Non-Quota FMP. Officers have been engaging with the fishing industry impacted by the octopus influx in 2025 and has undertaken analysis of landings data provide by the MMO for individual potting permit holders to investigate the impacts on the inshore fleet.

Additional Work Relating to Success Criterion 1:

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

Reports:

Officers have undertaken additional communication and engagement work not identified in the Annual Plan 2025/2026.

Torbay MCZ – Co-Development of a Code of Conduct (to protect Seagrass):

As reported to the B&PSC in published Officers' papers, in the summer of 2025 Officers undertook additional stakeholder engagement to inform any potential management of the cuttlefish potting activity within Torbay MCZ, specifically to avoid damage to areas of seagrass by pots and traps.

Work included preparation of information, telephone interviews with fishers, and two in person meetings held in Paignton in November 2025 and February 2026, both of which being advertised in advance with the use of direct notification. The work included additional Officers' papers being prepared for the B&PSC. The co-developed Code of Conduct was presented to the B&PSC on 26th February 2026 and circulated to Permit holders in March 2026.

Potting Permit Conditions – Vivier Tanks:

For context, the B&PSC did not support Officers' recommendations presented in February 2025 to introduce pot capping. This led to additional communication and engagement work relating to the use of vivier tanks on potting vessels, as an alternative approach to management. Formal consultation on the B&PSC's proposal to prohibit the use of any vessel with integral vivier tanks (exceeding a volume of two cubic metres) was undertaken between 25th April and 23rd May 2025. The findings were reported to the B&PSC on 26th June 2025. The B&PSC then requested that Officers undertake additional work to improve the efficacy of the restriction on the storage capacity of the vivier vessels. Officers therefore undertook additional engagement work relating to what level of catch may be appropriate for storage on a vessel not using an integral vivier tank, with the findings reported to the B&PSC on 16th October 2025. Officers analysed the collated information, including support and objections to the B&PSC's proposals. Officers set out their recommendation that the restriction should apply only when a vessel is fishing within the District, rather than a prohibition based only on the design of a vessel. In October 2025, the B&PSC agreed to changes to the Potting Permit Conditions, which became valid from 7th November 2025. A news item to inform a wide audience about the changes was produced on 3rd November 2025 and posted on the D&S IFCA website and Facebook. The news item was also sent to AIFCA.

Fingleton Nuclear Regulatory Review 2025:

In December 2025 D&S IFCA Officers, supported by feedback from the Chair and Vice Chair, developed a communication package:

“Devon and Severn IFCA Challenges Fingleton Nuclear Regulatory Review 2025”

The full report, the news blog, and also a press release highlighted that the conclusions of the Fingleton Review relied heavily on flawed evidence of Hinkley Point C Nuclear Power Station in Somerset (HPC). This failure to use best available evidence risks undermining environmental safeguards and public trust.

The news blog was posted on 19th December 2025 and at time of writing can still be viewed on the D&S IFCA website [here](#).

The news item, along with the full report was sent to several MPs, including Daniel Zeichner MP and the Prime Minister. The press release, along with the report was sent directly to several journalists including those at the BBC, The Times, The Daily Telegraph and The Guardian.

The news item and report was sent directly to 43 others, including contacts at Defra, the Environment Agency, Natural England, Blue Marine Foundation, and wildlife trusts. The News item was supported on Facebook, and the news item was sent to AIFCA.

Success Criterion 2:

IFCAs implement a fair, effective, and proportionate enforcement regime.

RT

Task 11: Review the Compliance and Enforcement Strategy

The GWG will continue with the review the current Compliance and Enforcement Strategy and further consider introducing new ways of operating. The task includes:

- a) drafting a new Compliance and Enforcement Strategy;
- b) circulated to all other IFCAs in FY 2025/2026 as a basis for developing a national IFCA Enforcement and Compliance Strategy.

Officers will assist the GWG, where required, including arranging meetings requested by the Chair of the GWG.

Report for Task 11

- d) The current Compliance and Enforcement Strategy has been reviewed, and a draft replacement was created by Officers. The Chair, Vice Chair and Chair of the B&PSC have commented on the draft.
- e) The D&S IFCA draft Enforcement and Compliance Strategy, as a basis for developing a national IFCA Strategy, has not been circulated to all other IFCAs.

A draft national Regulation and Compliance Strategy, and separate Compliance and Enforcement Policy (both based on EIFCA documentation) has been developed by the Chief Officers Group for further discussion between IFCAs.

Task 12: Spatial Monitoring of Towed Gear Vessels

To monitor IVMS, VMS and AIS data for mobile fishing gear vessels and to undertake patrols to target mobile gear vessels that may be operating without fully functioning IVMS and VMS devices. This remains a priority workstream for D&S IFCA. This workstream is imperative to ensure monitoring of compliance of spatial restrictions under the Mobile Fishing Permit Conditions and to seek to ensure the protection of designated features of Marine Protected Areas. Continued monitoring will identify gear conflict between the mobile fishing fleet and other fishing sectors.

Report for Task 12

Officers routinely monitor IVMS transmissions, in this period 9 investigations were instigated as a result of IVMS monitoring, three of which remain ongoing. There were no prosecutions from IVMS in this period, but three Official Written Warnings (OWWs) were issued for vessels operating without a permit or for not having a fully functioning IVMS device. A £750 FAP was offered and accepted for fishing in a designated mussel farm in Lyme Bay.

Task 13: Monitoring of Illegal Netting in Estuaries

Illegal coastal and estuarine netting continues to pose a high risk to the environment and species of fish that are known to use these areas of D&S IFCA's District. It poses particular challenges to the Enforcement Team, as the netting is normally undertaken by small, less than six metre vessels that operate at night, with no lights, and manoeuvre at high speeds. It is hoped that the expected completion of the national roll out of IVMS to all licensed commercial fishing vessels will provide improved intelligence on this activity and improve detection rates. The use of a drone will also assist with the detection of this activity as it is expected that the licensed vessels netting illegally will not have functioning IVMS devices.

Report for Task 13

Monitoring of illegal netting in estuaries has been a focus for enforcement resources with increased intelligence gathering and patrols. Monitoring of this activity poses significant challenges due to the nature of the activity, very often undertaken during darkness by small mobile unlight vessels. It was hoped that the introduction of IVMS on all fishing vessels would improve the ability for remote monitoring, however due to contractual issues between the MMO and an IVMS supplier, the Statutory Instrument has not yet been laid, and the situation remains largely unchanged.

To manage resources, emphasis was placed on gathering intelligence to improve targeting, along with identifying areas and conditions where netting is most likely to take place. In October the Enforcement Team reacted to live intelligence and undertook enforcement activity in the Teign Estuary, which resulted in an active prosecution for operating nets within the estuary. The evidence was supported by the use of thermal imaging equipment. The Enforcement Team has also developed a closer working relationship with Kings Harbour Master (KHM) in Plymouth, which has led to several joint patrols utilising the KHM launch, increasing presence and engagement with water users in the Plymouth estuaries.

The table below sets out the number of patrols targeted on estuary netting:

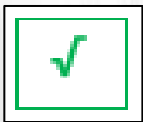
Estuarine Netting:	
Total patrols	25
Use of drones	3
Night patrols	12
Joint agency patrol	8

Task 14: 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 for Task 14

Following the introduction of the National Fisheries Intelligence Database (CLUE) in 2024 all TCGs, both internal and external, are administered through CLUE. This offers a far more streamlined approach with a much closer link to intelligence highlighting current issues, vessels of interest or areas of higher risk. This also provides much better task allocation to Officers which can be updated with developed intelligence and improved tracking of tasks for example a tasking for a seasonal issue can be logged for reference at a suitable time in the future, these all feed in to determinations on the allocation of resources or where more may be required.

With TCGs effectively being remote, it simplifies the regularity of TCGs as they do not require all Officers to be present as tasks can be allocated in their absence or even picked up by other Officers.

Enforcement Officers achieved a minimum of one internal TCG per month, during busier periods the frequency was increased to two per month. Taskings were reviewed along with any received intelligence and consideration of fishing activity risk matrices before tasks were allocated to individual Officers.

Enforcement Officers also joined external TCGs held by the MMO or neighbouring IFCA's. During these TCGs Enforcement Officers shared relevant intelligence, shared knowledge and deconflict any planned patrols.

The table below sets out D&S IFCA's attendance at TCGs in this last period.

TCG Owner	Number of TCGs held	Number of TCGs attended
D&S IFCA	16	16
Southern IFCA	9	6
MMO (South Team)	11	0
MMO (South West Team)	11	9
Environment Agency	1 x joint briefing/TCG	1
Cornwall IFCA	1 x joint briefing/TCG	1

Task 15: 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 for Task 15

In this period the Enforcement Team has created 29 investigation case files and of those 22 were completed and closed leaving seven ongoing. These are broken down in the table below.



Type	Number
Remote monitoring	9
Market inspections	7
Patrol (sea/ashore)	13

The below table sets out the methods of disposal for 22 cases.

Disposal	Number
No Further Action	6
Advisory Letters	3
Official Written Warning	11
Financial Administrative Penalty	2
Simple Caution	0
Prosecution	0
Ongoing investigations	7

A prosecution from an offence in 2024 remains ongoing through crown court, dates for a two-week trial have been set in June 2026.

RT

Task 16: 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 for Task 16

The IFCA Code of Conduct for Inspections, last updated by NIMEG in 2012, is displayed on D&S IFCA's website in Section E of the website Resource Library.

RT

Task 17: 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. The task includes the website investigation tables being updated at least once each quarter.

Report for Task 17

The display of Investigation Tables detailing the outcomes of investigations promotes transparency with information and can potentially help to reduce FOI requests. A new website page “**Investigation Outcomes**” was created in November 2025 to include the Investigation tables with links to 2025 case summaries (adapted to be suitable for publication)

Officers have not been able to meet the requirement to update the investigation table at least once per quarter during 2025/2026. The investigation tables were updated on the website on 9th July 2025, 20th November 2025, and 26th March 2026.

Task 18: Accreditation and Training

Warranted Officers attain accreditation. All undertake Continuing Professional Development. Further training of Enforcement Officers will be identified through the Personal Development Plans. Internal training will continue, in particular with scenario training, to ensure all warranted officers are effective in their enforcement roles.

Report for Task 18

This year the Senior Enforcement Officer has started working towards attaining the relevant Quality Assessor (QA) qualification, and an informal agreement with Southern IFCA to provide independent QA support will enable D&S IFCA to enrol two Enforcement Officers on the training. In return D&S IFCA will provide some QA support with their leaners. It is hoped this will be a short-term solution to the ongoing issue of Officers not being able to attain accreditation caused by lack of QA resource among IFCAs.

The Senior Enforcement Officer has almost completed undertaking the Advanced Certificate of Professional Investigative Practice, which requires the successful completion of four assessment-based modules, around all legal elements of investigating and prosecuting for criminal offences.

Two of the more experienced Enforcement Officers have also attended a week-long Fisheries Course, administered and delivered by the MMO to gain a wider understanding of fisheries legislation and enforcement. Two Officers have undertaken training towards the attainment of Advanced Powerboat Certificate.

The Enforcement Team has also received training in enclosed spaces, in response to becoming more aware of the risk these places present following the reports of numerous activations of atmospheric testing equipment utilised by the MMO. The training improves the Enforcement Officer’s awareness of the risk that Officers may face.

In February 2026, one Environment Officer undertook the joint IFCA Environment, Science and Conservation Course in Brixham, which is designed to give officers across IFCAs a good, shared understanding of key elements of the work of IFCAs. Two other Environment Officers helped to develop and deliver training modules for this course and sat in on other relevant sessions. Environment Officers have undertaken in-house training on statistics and coding to assist with data analysis, and the use of Themis for querying IVMS data.

All Officers have undertaken on-line training in:

- Driving for business
- Health and Safety Awareness
- Lone Working
- Display Screen Assessment
- Working at Height.

Some members of the Enforcement Team and Environment Team have undertaken STCW training including Sea Survival, First Aid and Fire Fighting.

Task 19: 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 for Task 19

Remote Electronic Monitoring (REM): D&S IFCA with support of five other IFCAs developed a national REM and Artificial Intelligence Strategy. The Strategy was agreed by all IFCAs at the Association of IFCA's meeting in December. The Strategy was forwarded to Defra's REM team and was discussed at the national Defra REM quarterly meetings. D&S IFCA has discussed REM implementation with the other IFCAs that have been involved in their own REM trials and have been working with the REM suppliers to develop software.

Inshore Vessel Monitoring System (IVMS): On August 12th, Succorfish announced it would no longer be forwarding data from its IVMS devices to the UK VMS Hub whilst it remained in dispute with the MMO. In September Members agreed to purchase, install IVMS devices supplied by REWIRE Security Ltd and cover up to the first six months of airtime for all affected vessels. By the end of the year, 34 vessels had REWIRE devices installed at a cost of £9,823 and the mobile fishing vessels operating in the D&S IFCA District were full monitored once more.

Joint Operations: Three sea patrols were conducted in and around the Plymouth Rivers and Sound. The patrols took place on 1st August 18th August and 5th September. The patrols involved joint working with the Kings Harbour Master, and the purpose was to monitor gear marking requirements, interactions with recreational angling, compliance with bass legislation and to follow up on intelligence received.

Four patrols were conducted with Cornwall IFCA, again focussing on estuaries in both Districts. These patrols were conducted on 3rd July 15th October 7th November, and 29th January 2026.

An additional patrol was conducted in and around the Plymouth rivers and Plymouth Sound on 19th February 2026. This patrol was undertaken with the Environment Agency (EA) aboard the EA vessel ERRIN MOR. The purpose of this patrol was to monitor gear marking requirements, interactions with recreational angling, compliance with bass legislation and to follow up on intelligence received.

RT



Task 20: Developing the Use of Drones

D&S IFCA has purchased a drone primarily to support delivery of its monitoring and enforcement work but may have environmental mapping applications such as crab tile fishery in estuaries. Officers have completed their theory training on the use of the drone. Tasks for FY 2025/2026 include:

- a) Develop Standard Operating Procedures for the use of the drone;
- b) To fly the drone to support of the Enforcement Officers' coastal and estuarine shore patrols.

Report for Task 20

- a) With D&S IFCA's purchase of two drones, Officers have been trained in their use and follow the SOP issued by the drone's manufacturer. A PDRA01 Operational Manual has been produced and reviewed on 5th September 2025 and includes organisation detail, safety information and operational procedures required to satisfy the Civil Aviation Authority's PDRA01 operational authorisation in compliance with UK Reg (EU) No. 2019/947 and CAP 722H. This operations manual may only be used by competent personnel in accordance with the Accountable Manager's (Senior Enforcement Officer) permission. Operational manuals for the drones and the Drone and Model Aircraft Code are followed.
- b) In March 2025, three Officers 3 from the Enforcement Team undertook training and achieved General Visual Line of Sight Certificate (GVC) qualification enabling the use of commercial drones, primarily to assist with enforcement but to also explore the potential of use of drones within surveys.

An operations manual was produced following procurement of the drone, which was approved by the Civil Aviation Authority as part of obtaining the Operational Authorisation. All flights are undertaken in accordance with the Operations Manual.

D&S IFCA has procured a large drone (DJI M350) with long range thermal imaging cameras. Working with Natural England, National Trust, Torbay Council and Torbay Coast and Countryside, enabled identification of suitable areas to launch and operate the drone throughout the District. This work continues as further sites are identified.

One challenge that was experienced was maintaining the minimum required flying hours for each of the qualified pilots. This challenge was reduced by the later procurement of a small DJI Mini drone. The mini drone is not subject to the same stringent requirements as a larger drone, meaning it can be flown in far more areas with much less preparation. The use of this drone is predominantly for accumulating logged flying hours; however, it has also proved useful gaining additional footage during shore patrols.

In total, flights were achieved on 17 days. These have predominantly been enforcement patrols undertaken during daylight hours, gaining valuable experience for the pilots. With increased experience and familiarisation, some night flights have been achieved over estuaries to assess the effectiveness and functionality of the drone during darkness.

The drone has also been used to collect imagery to support the crab tile survey in the River Teign. Whilst the Authority has benefited from this type of data collection previously, the collection has been through an external provider. By bringing this work in-house it reduces and delays and allows Officers to gain valuable experience in collecting and processing this type of data. Essentially the drone undertakes a largely autonomous flight, capturing a large number of geolocated images of the defined area. The Environment Team have stitched these images together and overlayed them onto a GIS program.

Additional Work Relating to Success Criterion 2:

IIFCAs implement a fair, effective, and proportionate enforcement regime.

Reports:

IVMS:

On 12th August 2025, Succorfish, one of the two suppliers of MMO type approved IVMS devices, announced that it would no longer forward IVMS data to the UK VMS Hub. Succorfish took the decision to stop forwarding data whilst it looked to resolve issues with the MMO. The decision to stop forwarding data affected up to 50 vessels operating in D&S IFCA's District that were required, under the respective permit conditions to forward data to the UK VMS Hub. D&S IFCA relies on the availability of IVMS data to monitor the mobile gear fleet within its District, and the lack of available data increased the risk to the MPA network.

On 19th September D&S IFCA agreed to install an alternative IVMS device, supplied by REWIRE Security Ltd, to the affected mobile gear vessels operating in its District. The purchase and installation costs and air time costs were covered by D&S IFCA. The decision to fund the alternative solution was in recognition that the affected fishers were not responsible and that the cost incurred were low compared to the value of having the ability to remotely monitor all the mobile gear vessels in the District. The period that was set for the installation of the devices was longer than normal to minimise any disruption to the vessel owners' fishing activity. By December 2025, 34 affected vessels had REWIRE devices fitted at a cost of £9,823.

Freedom of Information Request:

On 6th February 2026, D&S IFCA received a Freedom of Information request from ClientEarth relating to the Authority's enforcement activity and outcomes. All IFCAs received the request along with devolved Administrations and the MMO. In the covering letter, ClientEarth set out that the motivation for the request was to understand levels of inspections of commercial vessels and the outcomes of any subsequent investigations but also to determine the level of transparency and availability of the information. D&S IFCA provided a comprehensive response with the data it records and holds. In its response it reminded ClientEarth that as part of its Publication Scheme it regularly updates its investigation table that is available on the Authority's website and was in the process of providing case summaries to explain the different disposals.

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 its district.

Task 21: Mobile Fishing Permit Byelaw 2022

The Mobile Fishing Permit Byelaw 2022 (and a revised package of required information) is expected to be returned to the Marine Management Organisation, to reach a point where the Byelaw will be submitted for confirmation by Defra. D&S IFCA Byelaw Technical Working Group will prepare legal advice as part of the letter requesting the process continues. If the Byelaw is confirmed in due course by Defra, other work for D&S IFCA in 2025/2026 will include:

- a) Final drafting of the associated Permit Conditions;
- b) Finalising the associated Annexes that accompany the Permit Conditions;
- c) Conducting relevant communication and administration work.

Report for Task 21

- a) Final drafting work of the Byelaw and the associated permit conditions is now complete. During 2025 the quality assurance entered phase three, and there was regular correspondence with the MMO as minor changes were made to the Byelaw and the Permit Conditions to recognise legal advice from both D&S IFCA's prosecuting solicitor and the MMO's drafting lawyers. On 4th September 2025 the Mobile Fishing Permit Byelaw was sent to Defra by the MMO with a recommendation from the MMO that the Byelaw is confirmed.
- b) Officers have completed the Annexes to accompany the new Mobile Fishing Permit Conditions. The Annexes include explanations to help readers understand each of the spatial closures.
- c) The Byelaw was confirmed by Defra in March 2026 and came into force on 18th March 2026. The Byelaw, Permit Conditions, and Annexes were circulated to fishers on 13th March 2026. The implementation of the new Byelaw and Permit Conditions) was supported by a news item posted on D&S IFCA's website and Facebook on 18th March 2026.

Task 22: Re-make the Potting Permit Byelaw

The continuing task for 2025/2026 is for the B&PSC to "make" the Potting Permit Byelaw as a replacement for the existing Byelaw; with potential implementation in 2026. The task for 2025/2026 involves:

- a) Providing the B&PSC with any required Officer's paper/s to inform development;
- b) Drafting work by Officers with assistance of the Byelaw Technical Working Group (BTWG);

- c) Development of an Impact Assessment (for consultation);
- d) When “made” by the B&PSC, formal consultation will be undertaken on the Byelaw (communication task 4);
- e) The B&PSC to discuss the findings of the formal consultation, potentially amending the Byelaw;
- f) 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 2025/2026. The Byelaw cannot be implemented without approval by the Secretary of State, and this is not expected in FY 2025/2026.

Report for Task 22

X

No work (tasks a-f) was undertaken developing a new Potting Permit Byelaw. A significant amount of time for Officers and B&PSC Members was taken up on work required to amend the current Potting Permit Conditions (relating to the use of vivier tanks). Regarding potting, other agenda items and Officers’ papers included reporting the influx of octopus, and background information used to support considerations relating to the use of pots and traps on mapped seagrass beds within the Torbay Marine Conservation Zone.

Task 23: Re-make the Potting Permit Byelaw

The continuing task for 2025/2026 is for the B&PSC to “make” the Netting Permit Byelaw as a replacement for the existing Byelaw; with potential implementation in 2026. The task for 2025/2026 involves:

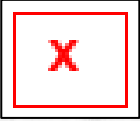
- c) Providing the B&PSC with any required Officer’s paper/s to inform development;
- d) Drafting work by Officers with assistance of the Byelaw Technical Working Group (BTWG);
- e) Development of an Impact Assessment (for consultation);
- f) When “made” by the B&PSC, formal consultation will be undertaken on the Byelaw (communication task 5);
- g) The B&PSC to discuss the findings of the formal consultation, potentially amending the Byelaw;
- h) 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 2025/2026.

The Byelaw cannot be implemented without approval by the Secretary of State, and this is not expected in FY 2025/2026.

Report for Task 23

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- a) A planning report was presented to the B&PSC in October 2025. The initial discussions have involved looking at the wider objectives for the Byelaw, and considerations surrounding what to include in the Byelaw, including criteria to gain a permit. Officers undertook some focussed pre-consultation to inform potential development of a Category Three Netting Permit that can recognise heritage fisheries. On 26th February 2026 the B&PSC received an Officers' paper setting out an alternative approach to making the Byelaw. It was the Officer's view that time would be better spent addressing more immediate issues associated with non-powered vessels by considering changes to current Netting Permit Conditions. On 26th February 2026 the B&PSC agreed to formally consult on changes to the current Netting Permit Conditions with a view to introducing additional restrictions for non-powered vessels and a relaxation of a specific gear marking requirement applicable to all Netting Permit Holders.

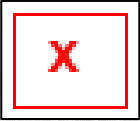


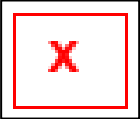
Tasks (b) to (f) have not begun as the work developing a new Netting Permit Byelaw did not reach the stage where the B&PSC could consider "making" the Netting Permit Byelaw.

Task 24: Measures of Equal Environment Benefit (MEEB)

- i) D&S IFCA will prepare a submission to Defra to include all evidence relating to the application of Measures of Equal Environmental Benefit (MEEB) for habitats in the Skerries Banks and Surrounds MCZ and Start Point to Plymouth Sound and Eddystone (SPPSE) SAC. This work follows on from initial discussions with Defra and Natural England in 2024 on the application of MEEB.
- j) Officers will use the results of analysis of the ground truthing of habitats in the two MPAs within the submission to Defra to support the retention of the seasonal access areas to demersal mobile fishing gear in the Skerries Banks and Surrounds MCZ and maintain the closed areas (to demersal mobile fishing vessels) within the SPPSE SAC that contain a similar habitat (coarse habitat).
- k) Officers will liaise with Natural England on what the equivalence looks like in terms of the habitats that are being considered.
- l) Officers will submit the findings of this workstream to the Byelaw and Permitting Sub-Committee for Members to decide the appropriate management once Defra has provided its conclusion on D&S IFCA's use of MEEB.
- m) Officers will discuss the output from this work stream with the Members of Inshore Potting Agreement Committee.

Report for Task 24

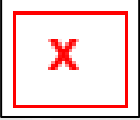
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- a) Officers have been developing a draft submission on evidence and information relating to the possible use of MEEB within MPAs in D&S IFCA's District. This requires further input, in particular in relation to how the information can be submitted to meet the MEEB / derogation process, before it is submitted to Defra and therefore this workstream has not been completed. Officers have been in contact with Defra explaining the delay in this work and that the submission is not yet complete.



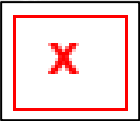
- b) The results of the ground truthing research have been reviewed and will feed into the submission when it is completed.



- c) Officers have discussed the slow progress of the MEEB submission with Natural England at regular meetings and that it is yet to be completed. D&S IFCA will continue to liaise with Natural England on the habitat equivalence considerations.



- d) This sub-task to present findings to the B&PSC has not been undertaken in 2025/2026 due to the workstream being incomplete.



- e) Officers have discussed the potential for MEEB with the Inshore Potting Agreement Committee meeting although these discussions have been on the concept of MEEB rather than the final output as this has not been completed in 2025/2026.

Task 25: Seasonality of the Egg Bearing of the European Lobster, Homarus Gammarus

Officers collected data throughout 2024/2025 on the seasonality of egg bearing of the European lobster through survey work, on-board fishing vessels operating in the D&S IFCA's District.

- n) Officers will analyse the 2024/ 2025 data together with data gathered in 2023/2024 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.
- o) Once the data are analysed a report will be produced which will help provide an evidence base to inform the use of the enforcement tools that may be used to identify if a berried lobster has been scrubbed of its eggs.

Report for Task 25



- b) Officers have analysed all data collected to ascertain the months of the year lobsters carry eggs, how the stages of development of eggs changes through the year, the shedding period and the months where there is no egg bearing by lobsters. This has identified peak months for spawning activity and identified a long overwinter period when berried lobsters are not naturally shedding their eggs. This provides greater certainty in determination of illegal scrubbing activities in a compliance context.



- c) A report (Seasonality of Lobster Egg Bearing 2023 to 2025) was published on 26th March 2026.

Task 26: Monitoring of Commercial Scallop Fisheries

- a) 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 to 2025 inclusive.

- b) The 'potting for scallops' fishery (using new light technology) will be monitored to evaluate the uptake of new opportunities. Evidence gathering regarding the emerging fishery for trap-caught scallops will seek to inform the potential additional pressure on scallop and crustacea stocks, understand how existing fishers may switch or diversify from existing activities, and inform consideration of future management requirements.

Report for Task 26

- d) In February 2026, Officers received data on scallop landings and sales (2022 – 2025) from the MMO and have been downloading relevant IVMS data for the same period. These data will be assessed starting in March 2026, although ongoing issues with access to data from Succorfish IVMS devices in summer 2025 will affect some aspects of the analysis.
- e) Officers sit on the Potting for Scallop Project Steering Group and have attended meetings in May, June and September 2025 and is preparing for a workshop on 12th March 2026. The meetings discuss the progress of potting for scallops project and the uptake by commercial fishermen to pot for scallops. In D&S IFCA's District potting for scallops has been taking up by a few fishermen in the south of the District in particular in the Lyme Bay area. Some of the commercial divers for scallops have now successfully moved to potting for scallops, perhaps as a result of their knowledge of the areas where scallops are found in greater abundance. Some fishermen from Salcombe have trialled the pots but have been less successful. The Commercial Potting Permit application forms allow applicants to indicate their target species and currently 18 permit holders use scallop pots although only three have more than 50 pots.

Task 27: Monitoring of the Whelk Fishery

Between 2018 and 2020, D&S IFCA adopted a phased approach to increasing the Minimum Conservation Reference Size (MCRS) of whelk from 45mm to 65 mm.

- b) Officers will investigate the impact that the increase in MCRS may have had on industry and whelk stocks.
- c) Officers will engage with industry and scope the available data sources. This workstream will include gathering data on effort, catches, and the populations of whelk around the District. D&S IFCA is aware that there is some shift towards the whelk fishery from other shellfisheries and this workstream will help to monitor changes in the fishery.

Report for Task 27

Landings data for the period 2019-2023 for specified vessels, from D&S ICFA's potting permit database, were requested from the MMO. These data were then filtered to focus on vessels landing whelk in D&S IFCA's District. Vessels with the largest landings of whelk and individual vessel dependency on whelk landings were used to determine priority order of Permit holders to conduct the interviews with. For the north of the District, a total of 11 vessels were identified, and 26 vessels were identified for the south of the District.

In Autumn 2025 Officers undertook stakeholder engagement through telephone interviews to assess the impacts of the increase in MCRS on both the industry and whelk stocks within the District. The interviews followed a structured questionnaire which focused on the following themes: perceived impact of MCRS management measures; bait use; economic viability and market access; fishing effort; gear types; spatial distribution; future management and the national Whelk FMP.

From the north of the District seven out of a possible 11 Permit Holders were spoken to and for the south of the District 12 out of a possible 26 Permit Holders were spoken to. In addition to the telephone interviews, discussions have also been had with a major processor that collects data on whelk. Data sources and requirements for further research on the whelk fishery have been identified.

The final report on this work was drafted by 31st March 2026 and is awaiting final QA prior to publication in April 2026. This report summarises the outcomes of the responses, next steps and conclusions.

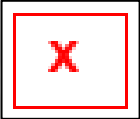
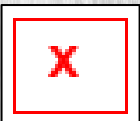
Task 28: Risk Assessment and Timeline on the Review of the Previously Completed MPAs Assessments

D&S IFCA has undertaken assessments of the interactions of fishing activities on designated habitats and species in the 22 MPAs in its District, which have been used to inform management measures, where appropriate.

- a) Officers will undertake a review process of previously completed MPA assessment which will be determined by the date of the previous completed assessment, whether fishing patterns have changed and where new evidence is available regarding feature sensitivity and exposure, or compliance.
- b) To aid this process, Officers will establish a risk-prioritised timeline and register for review of previously completed assessments and begin the review process for higher-risk assessments.

Report for Task 28

- a) This workstream has not been completed. Officers have produced a spreadsheet detailing all previous protected area assessments. Although a broad-scale review has not been undertaken, some candidate priorities have been highlighted through ongoing MPA work.
- b) This workstream has not been completed. In the case of the Dart Estuary MCZ, Officers have produced a thorough review of Natural England's Dart Estuary MCZ Condition Assessment and its implications for fishing (mariculture) activities. This review has been submitted to Natural England for consideration and further discussion (September 2025).

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Task 29: Consideration of Outputs from a Review of MPA Assessments

- a) Officers will undertake a review of the higher-risk assessments building on the risk-based prioritisation of MPA review requirements.
- b) Outputs from these assessments will be considered in terms of their relevance to management and raised for consideration by Authority Members as required.
- c) Officers will present the outputs of a revised MCZ assessment, undertaken in 2024, for cuttlefish potting on the seagrass beds in the Torbay MCZ and consideration of a review of management will be presented to the B&PSC in FY2025/2026 ahead of the 2026 fishery.
- d) Officers have already highlighted other priority reviews of assessments for Plymouth Sound and Estuaries SAC (ring netting) and Skerries Bank and Surrounds MCZ (mobile gear). Other assessment reviews may be necessary depending on the level of risk.

Report for Task 29

- a) Whilst the risk-based prioritisation review of assessments was not completed, Officers have focused on outcomes of the MCZ assessments and Monitoring and Control Plan for potting in Torbay.
- b) This workstream has not been completed.
- c) Revised MCZ Assessments for cuttlefish potting on seagrass were presented to the B&PSC in 2025. Officers have worked closely with fishers through a structured process of meetings, follow up calls, evidence review, and information sharing to co-develop a Code of Conduct for potting in seagrass areas of the Torbay MCZ, to limit potential damage to the seagrass and seahorse features due to fishing with pots and cuttlefish traps.
- d) This task was not completed as Officers felt it was more appropriate to operate on a case-by-case basis. Officers continued to meet regularly with the Natural England area team to understand changes in the condition of relevant protected sites. Overall, Officers prioritised practical, site-specific delivery and partnership working alongside key inputs to national MPA consultations, while more complex, resource-intensive workstreams remain in progress.

Task 30: Determine Management Measures for the Bristol Channel & Approaches SAC

The Bristol Channel Approaches SAC, designated for harbour porpoise, is a complex site which falls within the jurisdiction of the MMO, Cornwall IFCA and D&S IFCA. The size of the site and mobile nature of the designated species presents unique challenges for MPA assessments and potential management of fishing activity.

- Officers will work with other organisations to establish management options (if required and appropriate) for consideration by Members.



Report for Task 30

Officers have held regular meetings with the MMO and Cornwall IFCA to progress work on the Bristol Channel Approaches SAC and aim to complete the assessments ready for review by Natural England by the end of March 2026.

Preliminary conclusions from the assessments, and discussions with the MMO, have highlighted that management measures are likely to be required for some activities, but that these would be most effectively and proportionately delivered at a national scale, due to the wide-ranging nature of the impacts. The MMO has been engaging with a range of parties on potential management options, and Officers attended stakeholder meetings for these discussions. The outputs of these meetings will be used to guide the type and scale of future management, and Members will have the opportunity to consider District-specific management options should these be required.

Task 31: No task allocated in 2025/2026

Task 32: MPA Monitoring and Control Plans

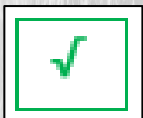
- a) Officers will collect data and evidence regarding fishing activity within five MPAs in the D&S IFCA's District to inform the review of the Monitoring and Control Plans for these MPAs.
- b) Officers will use Monitoring and Control Plan (M&CP) findings to review MPA assessments as appropriate. M&CPs are reviewed annually to inform whether additional management is required.
- c) The review of M&CPs includes looking at permits issued by D&S IFCA, IVMS data and any further evidence gathered on impacts to assess whether activity levels have increase and trigger point exceeded.
- d) Reports will be produced for M&CPs for towed demersal gear in Torbay MCZ.
- e) Reports will be produced for M&CPs for towed demersal gear in Lundy SAC.
- f) For the other four M&CPs in place i.e. for netting vs shad in Severn Estuary SAC; netting vs shad in the Plymouth Sound and Estuaries SAC; potting vs seagrass in the Plymouth Sound and Estuaries SAC; and demersal mobile fishing gear in the Hartland Point to Tintagel MCZ, an annual audit will be undertaken to determine if trigger points, in relation to the number of permits issued, have been met and whether the Habitat Regulation Assessments (HRA) need to be reviewed. Annual reporting is not required unless trigger points are exceeded.
- g) New M&CPs may be developed for the Bristol Channel and Approaches SAC depending on the conclusions of the HRAs to be undertaken.

Report for Task 32

(Task a and c)

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 are Lundy SAC; Torbay MCZ; Plymouth Sound and Estuaries SAC, Hartland Point to Tintagel MCZ and Severn Estuary SAC.

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Required data (IVMS and/or Permit Holder data) has been reviewed and/or collected for all of these sites. For Torbay MCZ the IVMS data indicated there was one vessel which carried out five tows within the site. This level of activity is below the trigger point and therefore a review of the MCZ assessment is not appropriate at this time. The permit numbers and vessel activity will be reviewed again in 2026.

For Lundy SAC and Hartland Point to Tintagel MCZ, IVMS data were reviewed for 1st January until 31st July with no activity reported during this period. Further review could not be carried out due to issues with Succorfish data not being sent to the UK IVMS hub after 1st August. To mitigate the issue of Succorfish data not being sent to the UK IVMS hub, D&S IFCA was able to roll out REWIRE devices to affected vessels. The Environment Team now has access to data from these vessels so will be able to continue with the M&CPs.

(Task b)

The levels of activity determined by the M&CPs did not require any review of the MPA assessments. The review of the M&CP for potting in Torbay MCZ and decision making by the B&PSC led to co-development (with fishers) of a Code of Conduct for potting on seagrass in Torbay MCZ, which will be implemented in 2026.

(Task d)

A M&CP review report was completed for towed demersal gear in the Torbay MCZ and was published on 26th March 2026.

(Task e)

A M&CP review report was completed for towed demersal gear in the Lundy SAC and was published on 26th March 2026.

(Task f)

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 was maintained for these trigger point assessments which were completed in March 2026, in line with the existing annual audit timeline.

(Task g)

Task G was not required this year.

Task 33: Exemption Authorisations

To review all Exemption Authorisation applications under D&S IFCA Byelaws and determine them within 60 days of receipt.

Report for Task 33

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 Natural England for formal advice before the exemption is authorised.



Officers have worked to streamline this process while maintaining protection for protected area features. A total of 24 authorisations has been issued since the beginning of April 2025 to 31st March 2026. 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>

Task 34: Mariculture Waddeton Regulating Order

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. Officers will engage with the Duchy of Cornwall, Natural England and Waddeton plot holders (shellfishermen) to agree and undertake appropriate works required to return the site to a clean and proper state in time for the end of the lease. This work will include:

- a) the potential removal of artificial infrastructure and farmed stock.
- b) investigating techniques that could be used to aid the site restoration and how such techniques could be used without significantly impacting the features and conservation objectives of the Dart Estuary MCZ, which with the Waddeton Order area co-locates.

Report for Task 34

- a) This has been a complex task due to ongoing uncertainty in the Duchy of Cornwall's long-term outlook on Pacific oyster mariculture on the Dart Estuary. However, discussions are ongoing between Officers, Natural England and Waddeton plot holders (shellfishermen) to agree on the required works and timescales for the works to be undertaken in 2026 following expiry of the Regulating Order.
- b) Officers supported a research proposal for application in the Exe Estuary which intended to investigate the habitat impacts of different methods for removing wild Pacific oysters. A funding bid was submitted to the Fisheries and Seafood Scheme but was not successful. It will be re-submitted in 2026/2027. If successful, the intention is to transfer appropriate techniques to the Dart in agreement with Natural England.

Task 35: Crab Tiles on the Teign Estuary

D&S IFCA Officers undertake crab tiles surveys in its estuaries approximately every four years. D&S IFCA published a report in 2020 following mapping of crab tiles in nine estuaries within the D&S IFCA's District, the survey was mostly undertaken through use of a drone.

- a) Due to resource limitations of D&S IFCA, Officers will undertake a crab tile survey on the Teign Estuary only in 2025/2026 as this estuary showed the highest increase in crab tiles from the 2020 report.
- b) Officers will trial the use of the recently purchased D&S IFCA drone to undertake the survey in-house



Report for Task 35

Environment and Enforcement Officers surveyed the Teign crab tiles over two days in July 2025, using D&S IFCA's drone. The images from this survey were successfully digitally 'stitched' together to overlay into QGIS software to allow the environment team to count the crab tiles. The counts are currently being undertaken, and it is likely that this and report production will be completed by the end of the Annual Plan year. This was the first time of using the drone to carry out this type of environmental survey, and it demonstrated the in-house capability to carry out this work which was previously conducted by contractors.

Task 36: Taw Torridge Estuary Bivalve Mollusc Stock Assessments

The Taw Torridge Estuary is an SSSI, and its intertidal mussel and cockle beds are important for the overwintering birds that frequent the estuary. Stock assessments of these shellfish are used alongside an updated 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.

- a) Officers will use the new model alongside site-specific surveys during 2025/2026 to inform ongoing management of a commercial mussel fishery.

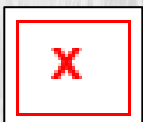
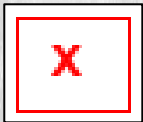
Tidal constraints have limited Officers' ability to survey mid-channel mussel beds in the estuary; following several trials, it has not been possible to circumvent these survey constraints using drone technology, so Officers will:

- b) explore other access options for these important shellfish beds, in line with health and safety requirements.

Report for Task 36

- a) The Taw Torridge mussel and cockle surveys were both carried out on the beds which can be accessed by foot. Officers are awaiting confirmation of bird count numbers to be able to carry out the modelling to finish the reporting for the Taw Torridge Mussel Stock Assessment. The report for the Taw Torridge Cockle Stock Assessment was published on 26th March 2026.

- b) The mid-channel beds have not been assessed due to access concerns. Officers are in contact with NWIFCA who are currently trialling a different approach to conduct mussel bed surveys using a multi-spectral camera on an aerial drone. If NWIFCA are successful with this, D&S IFCA will be able to consider this as a future option. Access issues also affect the main mussel bed at Bull Hill bank on the Exe Estuary.



Task 37: 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 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 Conditions and MMO Licence Variation.

Report for Task 37

D&S IFCA continues to chair the Inshore Potting Agreement (IPA) Committee meetings. Work has been undertaken in drafting and producing minutes of the Annual Committee meeting, reviewing and updating the Terms of Reference for the Group, producing annual IPA charts, engaging with the towed gear and potting sectors to encourage membership to the committee so that these meetings are not only quorate but have an equal representation from both sectors.

Officers arranged the annual meeting and disseminated relevant information for discussion. In the meeting on 10th November 2025 the Members of the IPA Committee made a unanimous decision to close the Corridor of the IPA area. This is a zone within the IPA area that was open in 2025 for one month to demersal mobile gear, but due to reported infringements and loss of potting gear the Members felt the only action was for the Corridor to be closed in 2026. This has now been closed through a Licence Condition issued by the MMO to Commercial Fishing Licence holders and the South Devon Trawling and Crabbing Chart Inshore Potting Agreement for 2026 has already been issued.

D&S IFCA's Category One Mobile Fishing Permit Conditions work in combination with national legislation and align with the IPA Commercial Fishing Licence Condition. The "Corridor" is identified as Area C of Annex 5a within the permit conditions. Having anticipated the outcome of the IPA Committee meeting regarding the closure, B&PSC Members were informed that D&S IFCA would need to act. D&S IFCA's management measures cannot be less restrictive than national legislation, therefore the Permit Conditions would need amendment. Due to the new Mobile Fishing Permit Byelaw not being confirmed in early 2026, Officers were required to follow the current review of permit conditions and to formally consult on the changes to the permit conditions. A consultation took place between 30th January and 13th February 2026. Five responses were received the majority of which supported the closure. A paper was presented to the B&PSC on 26th February 2026 detailing the management changes required that must apply from 1st March 2026 to align with the Licence Condition.

Additional Work Relating to 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 its district).

Reports:

Razor Fishery in the South of D&S IFCA's District:

D&S IFCA received a proposal to reopen a razor clam fishery in Lyme Bay in the south of D&S IFCA's District.

D&S IFCA Officers have undertaken research with the shellfishermen both in South Devon and Cornwall IFCA's District to assess catch rates, bycatch levels and habitat impacts. Officers presented a paper to the B&PSC in February 2026, and Members supported the following recommendations to:

- Support the introduction of REM on the harvesting vessel to ensure the fishing activity takes place on suitable sandy habitats, and the fishery can be fully monitored.
- Consider undertaking a formal consultation on changes to the Category One Mobile Fishing Permit Byelaw Permit Conditions to include a definition of the razor clam dredge to support this new fishery.

Link:

[B&PSC Meeting 26th February 2026 \(Agenda Item 8\): Razor Clam Fishery South Devon](#)

Octopus Influx in the South of D&S IFCA's District:

D&S IFCA Officers have produced several papers this year on the impact of the influx of octopus that has occurred in the South of the District between Berry Head near Brixham and Plymouth, and further west into Cornwall IFCA's District and the Western Approaches.

The most recent paper presented to the B&PSC in February included in depth analysis of the landings and value of landings of crab, lobster and octopus in 2025. This work involved the analysis of landings and sales data from 18 Potting Permit holders operating out the ports of Dartmouth, Salcombe and Plymouth who work potting gear in the Inshore Potting Agreement area that has been most affected by the influx of octopus.

Links:

- **[B&PSC Meeting 26th February 2026 \(Agenda Item 11\): Octopus Update](#)**
- **[B&PSC Meeting 26th February 2026 \(Annex 1 Agenda Item 11\) Analysis of Landings Data for South Devon Vessels 2023 & 2025](#)**
- **[B&PSC Meeting 16th October 2025 \(Agenda Item 11\): Octopus Update](#)**

Restrictions on Vivier Vessels (Potting):

Following pre-consultation Officers recommended pot capping to limit effort, with different levels set in different parts of the District. Members of the B&PSC wanted to follow a different pathway with a view to prohibiting the use of any vessel fitted with an integral vivier tank exceeding a volume of two cubic metres, which became the proposal in formal consultation undertaken between 24th April 2025 and 24th May 2025.

Members consider the results of the consultation however; Officers were tasked with addition work to potentially improve the efficacy of the restriction on the storage capacity of the vivier vessels. B&PSC Members agreed to the new Potting Permit Condition which was implemented on 7th November 2025.

- **[B&PSC Meeting 26th June 2025 \(Agenda Item 8\): Potting Permit Conditions Formal Consultation Report and \(Agenda Item 9\): Amendments to Potting Permit Conditions](#)**
- **[B&PSC Meeting 16th October 2025 \(Agenda Item 6\): Amendments to Potting Permit Conditions](#)**

Success Criterion 4:

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

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Task 38: 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 for Task 38

The key tasks for inclusion in the Annual Plan FY 2026/2027 were agreed by Authority Members on 19th March 2026. The Annual Plan for 2026/2027 was finalised on 26th March 2026 and on the same day it was published on D&S IFCA's website. A news item was posted on D&S IFCA's website and Facebook to highlight the Annual Plan for 2026/2027 to a wide audience. The Annual Plan was sent to the Secretary of State on 26th March 2026.

Task 39: 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 for Task 39

The Annual Report for 2024/2025 was completed in October 2025 and sent to Defra. The Annual Report 2024/2025 included detailed information relating to the activities undertaken in 2024/2025, as well as highlighting which planned tasks were completed, unfinished, or carried forward to the Annual Plan for 2025/2026. The Annual Report included information on finance and resources, as well as feature pages on D&S IFCA's work towards national workstreams funded by Defra. A news item was created to publicise the Annual Report for 2024/2025 which was posted on D&S IFCA's website and Facebook. This news item was sent to AIFCA.

An Eleventh Month Progress Report presented to Members in March 2026 helped to inform the finalised Annual Report for 2025/2026. The finalised Annual Report for FY 2025/2026 is similar in style to that produced for FY 2024/2025. The Annual Report for FY 2025/2026 was sent to the Secretary of State before 30th November 2026 and published on the D&S IFCA's website, with a news item produced to promote it.

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

Task 40: Workstream Reporting

To 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.

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Report for Task 40

Officers are required to submit weekly timesheets to the Finance and Administration Manager. The timesheets record the main workstreams that the Officers have dealt with each day they are working. The information that Officers submit allows the Line Managers to understand how much time is spent on various workstreams and provides an indication of what staff resources are available for additional work. In 2025, IFCAs were audited for the work delivered against the delivery of the national Fisheries Management Plan workstream. The timesheets would allow D&S IFCA to report in a similar way for the national MPA and Marine Licencing workstreams.

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Task 41: Long Term Funding and Organisational Stability

The Medium-Term Financial Plan presented to Members at the December 2024 Authority meeting set out that without significant change to the funding structure it is forecasted that D&S IFCA will have reduced its Reserves to 34% of its Revenue Budget based on achieving uplifts of 7% in the Revenue Budget for each of the next three years.

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 for Task 41

The Chief Officer and the Chair of the Authority continued to engage with Defra officials. Defra officials were preparing to share funding structure options with Local Authorities ahead of submission to the Minister. Unfortunately, the Local Elections in May 2025 meant that Defra postponed the sharing of options. A decision was made to slow the D&S IFCA review to understand the dependencies with the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government's review of the mechanism for grant funding to Local Authorities. Furthermore, a cabinet reshuffle resulted in a new Minister being appointed and needed to be brought up to speed on a wide portfolio of responsibilities.

In December 2025, Members agreed to an updated MTFP 2026/27. The MTFP 2026/27 sets out that D&S IFCA will use its General Reserves and increases in Local Authorities' levies to balance the budget by 2029/30. The MTFP 2026/27 is based on maintaining the current vessel and staff resources and continues the freeze on 1.5FTEs vacancies. It is hoped that within the relevant period of the MTFP, Defra's funding restructure proposals will address the key issue that D&S IFCA operates on a significantly lower budget than many of the other IFCAs and requires additional resourcing.

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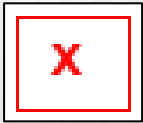
Task 42: Staff Performance Planning

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 for Task 42

Annual appraisals for the Enforcement and Environment teams were completed by 31st May.



The Senior Management Team appraisals were not completed until July 2025. All Officers moved over to the updated annual appraisal format that is based on the Job Profiles produced by the 2023 Job Evaluation process.



Task 43: Authority Secretariat

To provide an efficient secretariat of D&S IFCA staff to support Authority meetings which are held quarterly and are quorate. Meeting documentation will meet Standing Orders. To hold Committee meetings in public unless material is either confidential or exempt within the meaning of the Local Government Act 1972.



Report for Task 43

In 2025/2026, Authority Meetings were held on 19th June 2025, 18th September 2025, 11th December 2025, and 19th March 2026.

In 2025/2026, B&PSC meetings were held on 26th June 2025, 16th October 2025, and 26th February 2026.

All agendas, Officers' papers and the minutes (firstly in draft and then finalised versions) of both Authority and B&PSC meetings are published on the D&S IFCA website.



Task 44: 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 for Task 44

There were 22 direct notifications in 2025/2026 issued to Members relating to different subjects. These included; circulation of the Annual Plan 2025/2026; the new Members' Handbook; circulation of the finalised Annual Report; invitations for AIFCA briefings; invitations to webinars; updates on IVMS; the Fingleton Nuclear Review news; and letters from the Chair including funding updates. Officers attended monthly staff meetings, and weekly team meetings, some in person, but most are on-line. Papers were prepared for a Finance Working Group meeting held on 4th November 2025, ahead of budget setting at the December 2025 Authority meeting.

Additional Work Relating to Success Criterion 4:

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

Reports:

Data Audit:

The Authority holds data including sensitive personal data, and shares information with other bodies. It is important that it does so in line with relevant legislation. D&S IFCA has six policy documents relating to data, and personal data, collectively referred to internally as D&S IFCA's Primary Policy Documents. These are the following:

- D&S IFCA Data Protection Policy (a framework for other policy & guidance)
- D&S IFCA Data Protection Principles - Privacy Policy
- Freedom of Information Policy
- Technology Policy
- Publication Scheme Policy
- Information Management Policy

All Officers must, and have, confirmed in writing that they have read and understood the Primary Policy Documents. On 18th April 2025 the Chief Officer and the Principle Policy Officer conducted an unannounced audit involving checks on content and retention of information held (or not held) on personal computers and within selected files on the shared computer server. There was a high level of adherence to the Data Protection Policies, in particular the lack of personal data on each of each Officer's PCs. The Chief Officer liaised with all staff members relating to their level of compliance. The content of the shared files was broadly in keeping with the detail set out on the data protection register which has been updated in 2025 and is published on D&S IFCA's website. As part of the audit, it was determined that enforcement related work (case files and other sensitive information already securely stored) should be relocated to its own independent tera-station to free up space on the main server. The transfer was completed by September 2025.

D&S IFCA is moving towards going paperless. During 2025/2026 an audit of paper records held in D&S IFCA's main office was completed and a significant volume of old hard copy information has been securely disposed of. The findings of the audit were reported to Members at the June 2025 Authority meeting. There have been no data breaches reported to the Information Commissioners Office in 2025/2026.

Review of Other Policies:

During 2025/2026 the Financial Probity Administration Regulations (FPAR) were reviewed. There were no required changes to the FPAR. The Standing Orders were reviewed in June 2025 where there were no changes identified. The Standing Orders required review once again on 11th December 2025. Changes were recommended to provide more flexibility regarding the process to appoint additional Members to the B&PSC. The Authority agreed the changes.

The review of D&S IFCA's Managing Absence Policy was completed on 19th June 2025 when Members agreed to a series of amendments. The review included the request by Members for the Chief Officer to seek advice from Devon County Council's HR advice regarding points previously raised by Members.

The amended Policy enables additional flexibility by allowing the Chief Officer to use their discretion where the stated limits to leave in the policy are not appropriate to the employee's circumstances.

The review of the Authority's Local Government Pension Scheme Discretionary Policy was completed on 19th June 2025 when Members agreed to amendments.

On 19th June 2025 the Authority agreed to disband the Governance Working Group (GWG). It was agreed that the supportive role of the GWG would be transferred to the Chair, Vice Chair, and the Chair of the B&PSC. Officers amended the Scheme of Delegation as requested by Members.

On 19th June 2025 Officers presented the annual Health and Safety Report. The report covered some work undertaken after 1st April 2025 including details of Officer training courses undertaken in April and May 2025.

Link:

- **[Authority Meeting \(19th June 2025\): Agenda Item 17 - Health and Safety Report](#)**

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Success Criterion 5:

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

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Task 45: 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 for Task 45

The Annual Plan for FY 2025/2026 set out areas of research to be undertaken, with individual plans developed relating to those workstreams.

A range of research planning and delivery work was completed, including intertidal molluscan surveys; on-board crustacean surveys; fishing activity surveys to inform pot fisheries management; co-development of a Code of Conduct for the cuttlefish fishery in the Torbay MCZ; Monitoring and Control Plans; MPA assessments and D&S IFCA's contribution to marine spatial prioritisation work such as that required for Hinkley Point C and offshore renewable energies.

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

Task 46: Research Reporting

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

Report for Task 46

During FY 2025/2026 the following reports have been added to D&S IFCA's website:

- [D&S IFCA Review of Condition Assessment – Dart Estuary MCZ – V0.2 – September 2025](#)
- [Torbay MCZ Assessment TOR-MCZ-005- Static Pots & Traps Vs Seagrass 2025 V4](#)
- [D&S IFCA Response to Fingleton Regulatory Review 2025 – V1.0](#)
- [Taw Torridge Cockle Stock Assessment 2025](#)
- [Seasonality of Lobster Egg Bearing 2023 to 2025](#)

Substantial research reporting was included in Officers' papers to Members, including:

- [B&PSC Meeting Paper: Agenda Item 11 – Influx of Octopus into Devon and the South West 26th June 2025.](#)
- [B&PSC Meeting Paper: Agenda Item 10 – Potting for Cuttlefish on Seagrass within Torbay MCZ 26th June 2025](#)
- [B&PSC Meeting Paper: Agenda Item 11 – Octopus Update 16th October 2025](#)
- [B&PSC Meeting Paper: Agenda Item 7 – Developing and Introducing a Voluntary Code for Potting on Seagrass in Torbay Marine Conservation Zone \(MCZ\) 16th October 2025](#)
- [B&PSC Meeting Paper: Agenda Item 11 – Octopus Update 26th February 2026 with Annex 1 Agenda Item 11 - Analysis of Landings Data for South Devon Vessels 2023 & 2025](#)

Officers have contributed to multiple peer-reviewed journal articles published in 2025-2026:

- Stewart, J. E., Stamp, T., Davies, P., Hall, A., Robbins, T., Stewart, L. and Sheehan, E. 2026. Post-Release Mortality of European Bass (*Dicentrarchus labrax*) Discarded From Small-Scale Estuarine Fishing. *Fisheries Management and Ecology* 1–13. <https://doi.org/10.1111/fme.70051>.
- Lefebvre du Prey, M., Griffin, R., Stewart, J.E., Sheehan, E., Sturrock, A. and Ciotti, B.J. 2026. Distribution of benthic communities in a hypertidal estuary: Mapping potential prey resources for juvenile common sole *Solea solea*, *Estuarine, Coastal and Shelf Science*, 329:109660. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ecss.2025.109660>.
- Hall, A.E., Stamp, T., Davies, P., et al. 2025. A collaborative approach to marine species tracking: Insights from the Fish Intel Acoustic Telemetry Network. *Ecological Solutions and Evidence*, 6(4), p.e70148. <https://doi.org/10.1002/2688-8319.70148>.
- Reeves, L.A., Hartley, M., Stewart, J.E., Clark, S., Parkhouse, L. and Vaughan, D. 2025. Predicting the environmental and socio-economic impacts of displaced fishing effort from a hypothetical highly protected marine area, located in English inshore waters. *Frontiers in Marine Science*. 12:1601392. doi: 10.3389/fmars.2025.1601392.
- Stamp, T., West, E., Stewart, J.E., Plenty, S., Robbins, T. and Sheehan, E. 2025. Effective protection of essential fish habitat requires understanding fish spatial ecology - lessons learnt from protected European bass nursery areas, *ICES Journal of Marine Science* 82(4): fsaf035, <https://doi.org/10.1093/icesjms/fsaf035>.

Task 47: 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 for Task 47

Three members of the Environment team attended a TAG conference hosted by Kent and Essex IFCA in July 2025. The Senior Environment Officer presented on (i) the crustacean FISP project which investigated an enforceable method to determine a soft-shelled crab, and (ii) methods and outcomes for using shellfish reproductive timing to inform fisheries management (scallop and lobsters). The TAG conference and presentations were highlighted in the AIFCA's 'IFCA Insights' newsletter (Dec. 2025).

As well as the TAG conference, two online TAG meetings were attended, and an in-person meeting was attended in March 2026. These meetings provided the forum for all IFCAs and other agencies, such as Natural England, Environment Agency, Cefas, Welsh Government and the MMO, to provide updates and share their expertise and research needs, developments in methodologies for research and discuss training needs. Presentations were also given by academic institutes who have worked closely with IFCAs to help gather evidence and inform the IFCAs' research role. TAG members shared research and developments undertaken through a national mapping tool which provides the opportunity to learn from each other.



Task 48: Standard Operating Procedures

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

Report for Task 48

Environment Team

No new SOPs have been created this year. Guidance documents have been created for analysis and statistics work relating to Excel, QGIS and R statistics.

Enforcement Team

The SOP for Body Worn Video cameras (BWVC) was reviewed and updated in September 2025 to reflect changes in the Audio Visual Recording Devices (AVRD) Policy and Information Document.

With D&S IFCA's purchase of two drones, Officers were trained in their use and followed the SOP issued by the drone's manufacturer. A PDRA01 Operational Manual was produced and reviewed on 5th September 2025 and included organisation detail, safety information and operational procedures required to satisfy the Civil Aviation Authority's PDRA01 operational authorisation in compliance with UK Reg (EU) No. 2019/947 and CAP 722H. This operation's manual may only be used by competent personnel in accordance with the Accountable Manager's (Senior Enforcement Officer Gavin Mayhew) permission. Operational manuals for the drones and the Drone and Model Aircraft Code were followed.

Three members of the Enforcement Team were trained and have successfully attained their GVC Unmanned Aircraft Systems Remote Pilot Certificate of Competence. Three site surveys were undertaken in FY2025/2026 at Beesands, River Teign and Staddon Heights. Flight logs and maintenance logs were maintained and updated as appropriate.

Risk Assessments

The Civil Aviation Authority undertook a risk assessment on D&S IFCA ODRA01 Operational Authorisations on 4th September 2025.

The following D&S IFCA's Risk Assessments were reviewed and updated in FY2025/2026:

- RA6 - Towing Trailers and launching and Recovery of D&S IFCA's Vessels.
- RA10 - Driving at Work.
- RA18 - Lone Working General Risk Assessment.

Task 49: MEDIN

To collect research/ survey meta data and upload it to the Marine Environmental Data and Information Network (MEDIN) using nationally agreed formats.

Report for Task 49

Officers became aware that a new MEDIN Metadata Editor was launched in 2025. As a result, some of D&S IFCA's habitat and molluscan surveys had not automatically transferred over. Officers have now transferred the missing data across to the new Editor. Data for Surveys undertaken during 2024 and 2025 have been uploaded and these include;



- Taw-Torridge Mussel Stock Assessment 2024
- Taw-Torridge Cockle Survey 2025
- Taw-Torridge Cockle Survey 2024
- Exe Estuary Cockle Survey 2024
- Exe Estuary Mussel Survey 2024
- Teign Cockle Assessment 2024
- Teign Mussel Stock Assessment 2024

Officers have integrated MEDIN metadata uploads into the usual reporting workflow to improve reporting efficiency.

Task 50: 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 for Task 50

D&S IFCA Officers worked with 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 and information in relation to emerging issues such as the octopus bloom during 2025, information on fishing activities and fish ecology in relation to proposed marine developments during pre-consultation engagement and participated in evidence collation for the Devon Local Nature Recovery Strategy. Officers provided information to local stakeholders via e-mail and phone in response to a wide variety of queries regarding fisheries, fish and the marine environment, including directing individuals to other organisations as required.

Task 51: 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 for Task 51

D&S IFCA Officers resourced multiple peer reviewed papers and gathered and used a wide range of literature inform D&S IFCA research work and potential management measures. Officers used the portal called Zotero to hold and main a directory of papers used, which can be accessed to inform new and ongoing projects. Literature reviewed was used to inform the molluscan research undertaken in 2025/2026 as well as the seasonality of egg bearing lobster work undertaken and MPA assessments completed this year.

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Engagement work with the fishing industry and responses from these consultations provided important information to inform the whelk research and Code of Conduct co-development for cuttlefish potting in the Torbay MCZ. Appropriate secured databases were created to hold this information.

Additional Work Relating to Success Criterion 5:

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

Reports:

Officers engaged in a range of webinars, ICES advice events, workshops, working groups, estuary forum events and stakeholder discussions, as well as reading scientific literature, in order to build the evidence base available to aid D&S IFCA's decision-making. 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, industry and an aquaculture consultant to develop an external funding bid to support research into Pacific oyster removal from MPAs. Officers engaged in external collaborative research projects and significant additional evidence gathering to ensure Officers and Members are well informed regarding emerging issues such as the octopus bloom and its impacts on the inshore fleet. Officers gathered evidence in relation to the potential impacts and benefits of an emerging razor clam fishery.

End of Report