



Annual Plan

April 2023 to March 2024

Introduction

Under Section (177) of the Marine and Coastal Act 2009 North Western IFCA are required to make and publish a plan setting out the Authority's main objectives and priorities for the year.

North Western IFCA has clearly defined duties to manage sustainable fisheries and conserve the wider marine environment within the coastal waters of the Eastern Irish Sea, Liverpool Bay, Cumbrian coast and estuaries and bays.

This Annual Plan sets out the North Western IFCA's priority objectives to deliver in the forthcoming financial year (April 2023- March 2024), thus demonstrating how NWIFCA will implement inshore management contributing towards the Government's Marine Policy Statement which included the objectives of:

- Achieving a sustainable marine economy
- Ensuring a Strong, healthy and just society
- Using sound science responsibly
- Living within environmental limits
- Promoting good governance

In order to deliver the Annual Plan and fulfil the Authorities function as a competent management body, the North Western IFCA recognise the need to align its work to a strategic vision. With many competing objectives, it is important the Authority maintain this strategic overview in their delivery. This proactive way of working, with the recognition of the need to maintain a capacity for reactive and emerging work and oncoming challenges, will provide a template for the Authority moving forward through 2022 and into 2023.

The strategic direction, as presented in this Annual Plan will enable the Authority to be more transparent with our community and stakeholders, as well as delivery partners, through anticipation of shared goals and objectives, and seek to encourage and complement future funding and joint working opportunities.

Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authorities

Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authorities (IFCAs) were created under Section 150 of the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009 (MaCAA)¹ as designated statutory inshore regulators for the marine environment. The National IFCA Vision, High Level Objectives and Success Criteria set out the intentions of the IFCAs to sustainably manage inshore fisheries and conservation in line with these mechanisms and wider UK and EU Legislations.

The IFCA Vision

“Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authorities will 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”

IFCA High Level Objectives and Success Criterion

High Level Objectives (HLOs) and Success Criterion (SC) were developed nationally to support attainment of the IFCA Vision and to reflect the developing programme of work delivered by IFCAs nationally and to demonstrate the IFCAs contribution to the delivery of the UK Marine Policy Statement. Figure captures how the Annual Plan sits within this wider context.

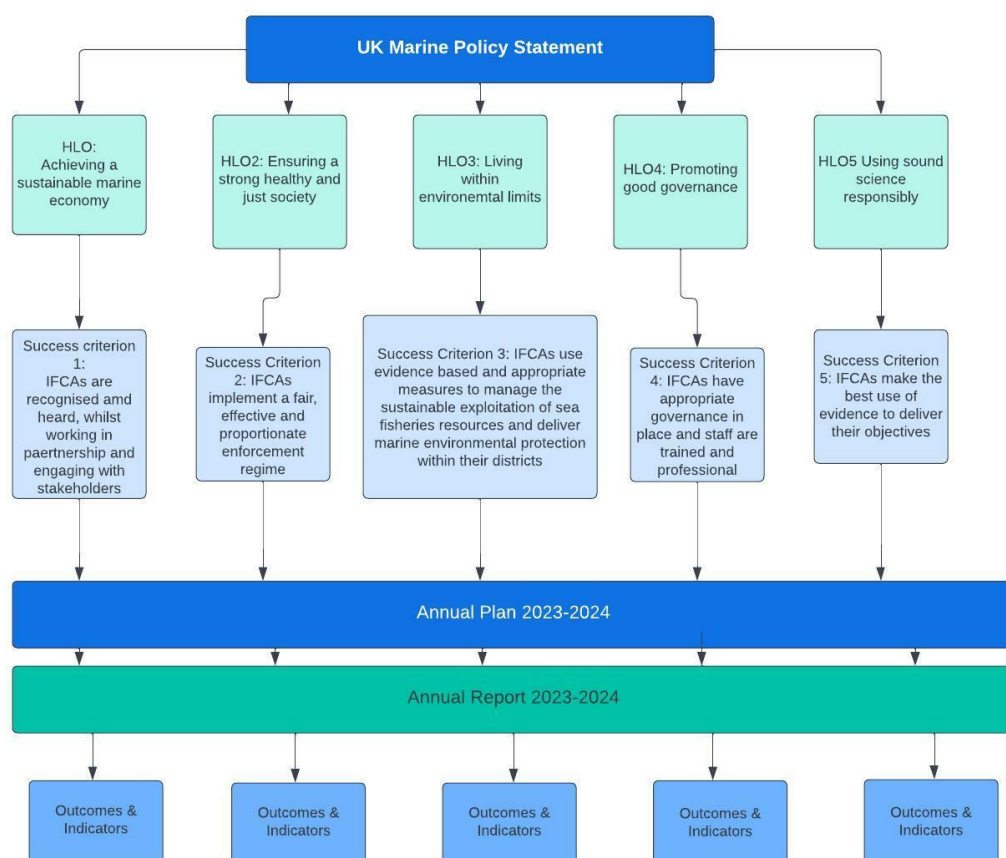


Figure1: IFCA High Level Objectives and Success Criteria

SUCCESS CRITERIA

Success Criterion 1: IFCA's are recognised and heard, balancing the economic needs of the fishery whilst working in partnership and engaging with stakeholders

IFCA's will be visible, respected and trusted regulator within coastal communities and will maintain and deliver a strategy to communicate their vision and duties effectively. IFCA's will engage with policy makers, industry, Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), recreational and commercial users and other regulators. They will work jointly and collaboratively with partner organisations across boundaries; will participate and contribute to the development and implementation of regional and national marine policy, including the marine planning regime; will take long-term strategic decisions and manage risks effectively. IFCA's may maintain a national body to co-ordinate the activities of authorities that are party to arrangements.

Success Criterion 2: IFCA's implement a fair, effective and proportionate enforcement regime

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 IFC Districts and management by other organisations including the MMO and Environment Agency. Consistency and fairness is important. Regulatory compliance is promoted. Enforcement action is carried out by trained, professional officers working to clear standards of conduct.

Success Criterion 3: IFCA's use evidence based and appropriate measures to manage the sustainable exploitation of sea fisheries resources and deliver marine environmental protection within their districts.

The IFCA's were created as statutory inshore regulators by the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009. They are relevant authorities for implementing international environmental commitments including the Birds, Habitats, Water and Marine Strategy Framework Directives and make an important contribution to securing a network of well managed marine protected areas, including European Marine Sites and Marine Conservation Zones. Fisheries Management Plans identify local management measures which should be based on evidence; be timely; subject to appropriate consultation and in step with national initiatives and priorities. An IFCA should balance the social and economic benefits of exploiting sea fisheries resources with the need to protect the environment. It should make a contribution to sustainable development.

Success Criterion 4: IFCA's have appropriate governance in place and staff are trained and professional.

IFCA's are statutory authorities and sit within the local government family. Authority members may be either general members or local councillors. They comply with Codes of Conduct and the Standing Orders that apply to meetings of local government committees. General members are appointed on merit, through open competition and for a term. They are subject to an annual performance appraisal. 6 An IFCA is funded by levy, charged to its member councils. Funding originates in local taxation. An IFCA is accountable for its use of public resources and should ensure that a proper auditing regime provides confidence in its commitment and spend of public money. It should make effective use of its resources, including staff and assets. An IFCA has a statutory obligation to prepare and publish Annual Plans and Annual Reports.

Success Criterion 5: IFCA's make the best use of evidence to deliver their objectives.

IFCA's are statutory regulators for their Inshore Fisheries and Conservation District. Decision-making should be based on evidence. All IFCA's are supported by officers who pool their expertise and share best practice as a Technical Advisory Group (TAG). A programme of research activity and monitoring is planned, developed and updated in consultation with partners. The programme informs management decisions and supports justification for additional research and evidence gathering

Policy and Legislative Context

Fisheries Act 2020

The Fisheries Act ('The Act') was introduced to make provisions in relation to fisheries, fishing, aquaculture and marine conservation following the departure of the UK from Europe. The Act enshrines in law the UK's commitment to sustainable fishing, supporting future generations of fishers, while allowing the marine environment to thrive. It provides a legally binding structure to protect and recover stocks, support a sustainable fishing industry and safeguard the environment.

Fisheries objectives

The Act lists eight fisheries objectives which set the UK's strategic direction for delivering sustainable fisheries management:

- Sustainability objective
- Precautionary objective
- Ecosystem objective
- Scientific evidence objective
- Bycatch objective
- Equal access objective
- Natural Benefit objective
- Climate Change objective

Joint Fisheries Statement

The Act created a legal requirement for the UK's four national fisheries policy authorities to produce a Joint Fisheries Statement (JFS) that will lay out how the eight fisheries objectives will be met. The shared ambition of the JFS is to deliver world class, sustainable management of UK fisheries and aquaculture, focusing on three main themes:

- Protecting and, where necessary, recovering fish stocks
- Reducing the effects of fishing on the marine and coastal environment
- Supporting a modern, resilient and environmentally responsible fishing industry

A consultation on the draft JFS began on the 18th January 2022 which encompasses several aspects of policy including Fisheries Management Plans (FMPs); a document designed to restore one or more stocks of sea fish, or to maintain them at sustainable levels. The consultation ended on the 12th April 2022.

The Marine Strategy Regulations 2010³ require fisheries bodies in the UK to take action to achieve or maintain Good Environmental Status (GES) in UK waters. The UK Marine Strategy is a key pillar of making policy in the UK and the JFS is a cross cutting measure which will help to deliver GES for commercial fisheries.

IFCAs have been fully engaged with the process of implementing fisheries management plans for King Scallops, Crab & Lobster, Whelks and have taken the lead on the process of the Cockle FMP.

Marine and Coastal Access Act

The North Western IFCA has clearly defined duties and responsibilities to ensure that the marine environment within the District is conserved and maintained in a viable state. The main duties for the North Western IFCA are identified within the Marine and Coastal Access Act, 2009⁴ (MaCAA), Part 6 (Sections 153 and 154). In performing its duties under this legislation North Western IFCA must:

Section 153 (2)

- a) Seek to ensure that the exploitation of sea fisheries resources is carried out in a sustainable way.
- b) Seek to balance the social and economic benefits of exploiting the sea fisheries resources of the District with the need to protect the marine environment from, or promote its recovery from, the effects of such exploitation.
- c) Take any other steps which in the authority's opinion are necessary or expedient for the purpose of making a contribution to the achievement of sustainable development.
- d) Seek to ensure that the conservation objectives of any Marine Conservation Zones in the District are furthered.

Section 154

- 1) Seek to ensure that the conservation objectives of any Marine Conservation Zones in the District are furthered.

The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulation

Duties under Regulation 63 of The Conservation of Habitats and Species (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019⁵ ('Conservation Regs. 2019'), require North Western IFCA, as a defined competent authority, to make appropriate assessments of a plan or project which is likely to have a significant effect on a European Marine Site (EMS) (either alone or in combination with other plans or projects).

The Conservation Regs. 2019 transpose the land and marine aspects of the Habitats Directive⁶ (Council Directive 92/43/EEC) and the Wild Birds Directive⁷ (Directive 2009/147/EC) (known collectively as the Nature Directives) into UK statute. Under these Directives IFCA's must ensure that fishing activity does not damage, disturb or have an adverse effect on the wildlife or habitats for which a European Marine Site (EMS) is legally protected.

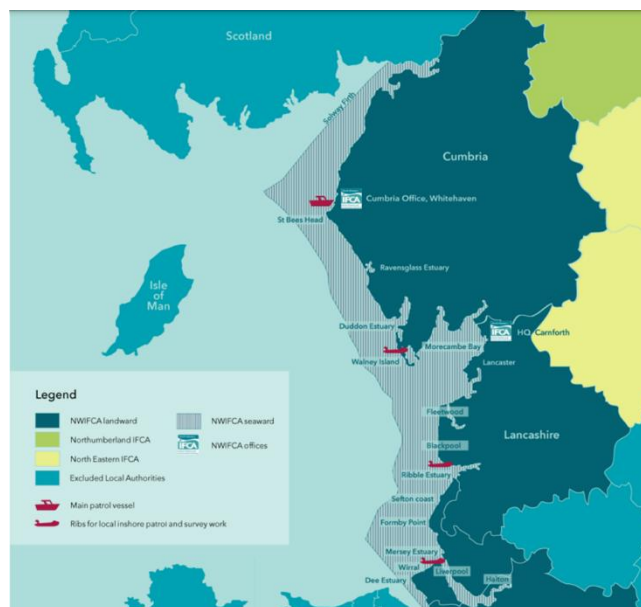
The Wildlife and Countryside Act

Under Sections 28g and 28i of The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981⁸, when carrying out our duties, North Western IFCA must consider any Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) with marine components which are providing protection to species and/or habitat of national importance.

North Western IFCA

The District

The North Western Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority district spans 850km of coastline. It reaches from the Welsh Border in the Dee Estuary to the Scottish Border in the Solway Firth. The area covered includes coastal council landward areas and sea areas up to 6 nautical miles off shore. The NWIFCA District is different in not sharing a coastal area with another IFCA District.



The District's Fisheries and Conservation

Commercial Fisheries

Commercial fisheries in the NWIFCA District cover a diverse range of métiers from traditional trawl fisheries to hand gathering for shellfish intertidally. Morecambe Bay contains the largest mussel beds in Europe and are fished by hand for size and undersize mussels under a byelaw permit, there are also dredge permits issued to larger vessels when conditions allow. Commercial potting for crab, lobster and whelk take place across the district.

Recreational Fisheries

Recreational gathering of shellfish, push netting for shrimps and recreational sea angling take place across the district. There are numerous intertidal net fisheries and boat based net fisheries and recreational potting. All managed under byelaw. In recent years recreational hand gathering of bivalves has increased.

Aquaculture

Oyster farming occurs in the North of Morecambe Bay and where permission allows for the removal of undersize mussel fisheries are accessed and ephemeral seed taken to on growing sites across the UK.

Marine Conservation

Across the district there is an exceptional array of different marine habitats and species. Huge expanses of sand and mudflat estuaries punctuate the coastline of the North Western District which support thousands of overwintering birds. There are honeycomb worm reefs and the largest mussel bed in Europe in the North of Morecambe Bay, the diversity of these habitats provides diverse fauna for both commercial and recreational fisheries.

The importance of the marine environment throughout the North Western IFCA district is reflected by the number of marine protected areas (MPAs) designations across the district. There are six special areas of conservation (SACs) and seven special protection areas (SPAs), seven marine conservation zones (MCZs) and due to be designated in July 2023 one of the first highly protected marine areas (HPMA) to be announced in the country. This broad spectrum of designation is a part of the governments approach to providing a coherent network of MPAs across the UKs marine environment.

Further details surround the District's commercial, recreation and aquaculture fisheries and marine conservation can be found at: <https://www.nw-ifca.gov.uk/>

Resources

The North Western IFCA Authority

Membership of the Authority

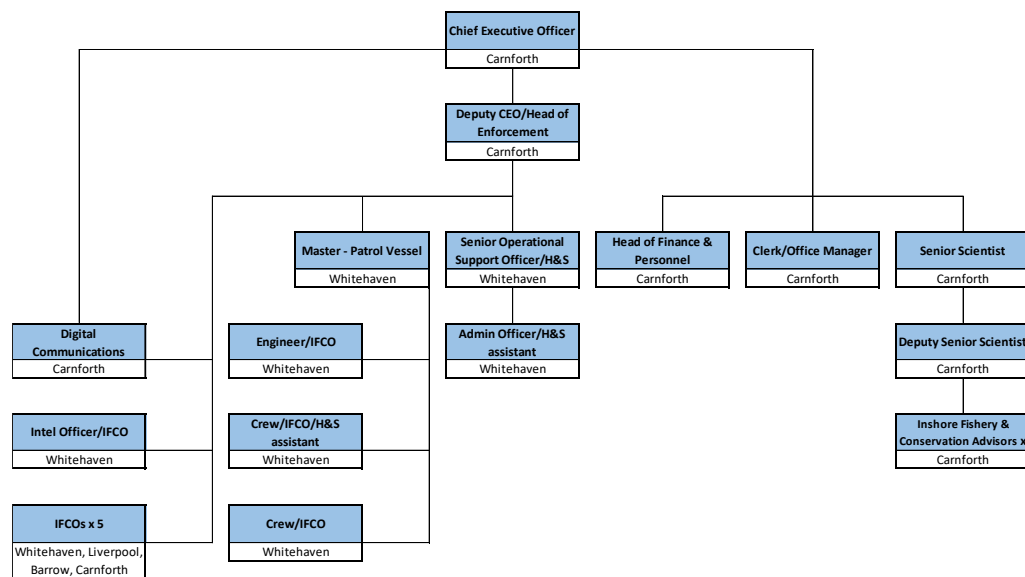
Appointed by Constituent Authorities	
Cllr. A. J. Markley	Cumbria County Council
Cllr. M. Wilson	Cumbria County Council
Cllr. N. Brookes	Blackpool Borough Council
Cllr. S. Clarke	Lancashire County Council
Cllr. J. Parr	Lancashire County Council
Cllr. D. Mitchell	Wirral Council
Cllr. B. Woolfall	Halton Borough Council
Cllr. P. Williams	Cheshire West & Chester Council
Vacant	Liverpool City Council
Cllr. S. McGinnity	Sefton

The above members of the Authority are correct at the time of writing. It should be noted that this will change as Cumbria County Council is split into two unitary Authorities from 1st April 2023, being replaced by Westmorland & Furness Council and Cumberland Council. Thus membership of the committee is likely to change.

Appointed by Marine Management Organisation	
Dr. J. Andrews (Vice Chair/TSB)	Mr. D. Harpley
Mr. N. Baxter	Mr B. Leigh (Chair TSB)
Mr. R. Benson	Mr. R Lomax
Mr S. Brown	Mr S. Manning
Mr. P. Capper (Chair)	Dr. C. Mihailovici
Mr. R. Donnan	Mr G. Piddock
Mr W. Friend	Dr. A Richardson
Ms. C. Salthouse	Mr. L. Stainton
Mr K. Thompson	

Representatives of Partner Organisations	
Ms. J. Turner	Environment Agency
Mr S. Johnson	Marine Management Organisation
Mr L. Browning	Natural England

The North Western IFCA Team



Professional Development

Staff Appraisals form a crucial function in providing clarity on how the Authority will support the performance and development of its staff. The North Western IFCA recognise the importance of both individual and team performance as critical in building and maintaining a high performing Authority.

Assets

Vessels	FPV "North Western Protector"	2018 - 20m Aluminium catamaran hull - based in Whitehaven
	FPV "Protector Charlie"	2018 - 5.3m daughter boat/boardng vessel on board NWP, constructed of aluminium alloy with rigid collared sponsons
	FPV "Protector Bravo"	1999 - 7m Osprey Viper RIB - based in Whitehaven
	FPV "Protector Gamma"	2011 - 6m Humber RIB - based in Barrow
	FPV " Bay Protector"	2013 - 7.5m Humber RIB - based in Liverpool
Road vehicles	5 x Nissan Navara - 4WD	2 Whitehaven, 1 Carnforth, 2 Liverpool
	1 x Peugeot Partner	Barrow
	2 x Renault Kangoo	1 Whitehaven, 1 Carnforth
	1 x Toyota pro-ace	Carnforth
	1 x Vauxhall combo	Carnforth
ATV (quad bikes)	10 Honda ATVs	2 x Whitehaven, 1 x Barrow, 5 x Carnforth, 2 Liverpool

The North Western IFCA Budget 2023-2024

Local Authorities are supported in part by an area based grant from DEFRA of £..... This grant recognises the new burdens of the MaCAA and supports fisheries and conservation functions of the Authority. At the time of writing there may be specific funding available for new work burdens from DEFRA but this has not been finalised for 2023-2024, it is assumed the 'area based grant' will remain the same as previous years, with the proportion paid from Cumbria County Council split between the two new unitary Authorities, Cumberland Council and Westmorland & Furness Council.

The budget for 2023-2024 agreed a proposed levy of 3% at the meeting of the full Authority in December 2022. This uplift accounts for the NJC salary rise from the 21-22 financial year which was concluded in October 2022.

NWIFCA LEVY 2022-23	Levy	% of	Levy
3% INCREASE	2023-23	NWIFCA	2022-23
	3%	Total	3%
COUNCIL	Increase	Levy	Increase
Blackpool Borough Council	£23,873	1.65%	£23,178
Cheshire West & Chester Council	£105,622	7.30%	£102,546
Cumberland Council	£296,176	20.47%	£575,098 (Cumbria CC)
Westmorland & Furness Council	£296,176	20.47%	
Halton Borough Council	£32,121	2.22%	£31,185
Lancashire County Council	£479,495	33.14%	£465,529
Liverpool City Council	£61,637	4.26%	£59,842
Sefton Council	£73,646	5.09%	£71,501
Wirral Council	£78,131	5.40%	£75,856
TOTAL	£1,404,735	100.00%	£1,404,735

NWIFCA BUDGET 2023-24 including 3% LEVY INCREASE from 2022-23		
EXPENDITURE	2023-24	2022-23
Employees	£1,022,103	£1,028,694
Premises	£74,139	£60,800
Transport	£246,990	£205,490
Replace Patrol Vessel	£121,151	£121,151
Supplies & Services	£58,000	£53,600
Corporate	£42,500	£28,000
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	£1,565,883	£1,497,735
INCOME		
7151 Levy 3% Increase	£1,404,735	£1,363,820
7251 Shellfish Sampling	£9,000	£9000
7257 Permit Fees	£75,000	£65,000
7351 Interest	£9000	£8000
TOTAL INCOME	£1,497,735	£1,445,820
SURPLUS/DEFICIT	NIL	NIL

North Western IFCA's Delivery priorities 2023-2024

The Annual Plan seeks to demonstrate where possible how NWIFCA consider their work for the forthcoming year, aligns with IFCA success Criteria, the fisheries Objectives and should move towards assisting with minimising and reducing emissions as a part of UK Net Zero Strategy.

Following the exit from Europe and the realisation of the Fisheries Act 2020 and changing demands across regulators as well as an internal change in leadership this years work programme will be supplemented with an element of unknown. There will be a proactive roll out of FMP management under the direction of DEFRA and the Authority will be required to support the implementation of the newly announced Allonby based HPMA in North Cumbria.

Compliance & Enforcement Priorities

The majority of stakeholders utilising the North West marine environment are compliant with the regulations which affect them. NWIFCA will continue to make very effort to ensure that all stakeholders understand the legislation which applies to them and the rationale for it being in place.

There are a number of key species and fishing types which are at the centre of enforcement activity in the North Wester IFCA District and officers or IFCOs will continue to focus compliance checks on these area in an intel led manner. With staffing and resources always a limiting factor we will always aim to focus on priority areas which are decided through tasking and coordination group meetings both locally and regionally. Joint working with other agencies will continue to be key to meeting shared deliverables.

Risk Register

Enforcement activities are carried out year-round across the district but at certain times of the year during peak efforts for certain activities or species enforcement activity will be focused on these areas. The table below highlights these times of year.

[illegible]

Key Fisheries

Cockle Fisheries

Cockle enforcement will be specific to fisheries which are opened by the TSB committee subject to habitats regulation assessments. Fisheries will be opened under flexible permit conditions with varied measures depending on the location, stock assessment and enforcement requirements. As most fisheries occur within marine sites with protected features this prevents not only loss of stock in the event of non-compliance but also mitigates against potential for damage to features. Fisheries are enforced through operational plans building on previous experience, information, and intelligence current to the time and with the assistance of multi-agency groups to deliver common outcomes through effective use of resources. With this enforcement regime there has been a good reduction in offences reported for cockle fishing over last 10 years. The penalty points scheme under the new Byelaw 3 has seen a reduction in the number of lower sanctions needed to be issued such as for non-compliance with the shellfish returns.

Mussel Fisheries

Different to cockle fisheries in the fact that under NWIFCA Byelaw 3 all size mussel fisheries are open in the district. They are generally fished throughout the year however depending upon activity of cockle fisheries, market factors and classification there will be ebbs and flows of activity. Operational plans are reactive to this, and staff resources are tasked depending on increases in numbers and any intelligence concerning issues with minimum landing size or other matters.

Ephemeral seed mussel

Seed mussel fisheries generally appear in the summer months and are opened under flexible permit conditions for either hand gathering or dredging in the late summer or Autumn. There is a fine balance with when the fisheries are ready to be accessed and officers conduct regular assessments of prospective beds for when they should be opened. Operational plans are in place for these specific areas. In the coming years managers are keen to develop more holistic methods of managing these fisheries with stakeholder engagement and developing new technologies to assist in survey and compliance.

Bass Compliance

European Seabass is a species found across the district and is fished through a variety of different methods. IFCOs often conduct inspections of fishermen during routine patrols focusing on popular areas or as a part of operational plans targeting high risk areas such as Heysham Bass Nursery Area. Compliance of bass fishing in many areas is a multi-agency issue, in particular with the MMO, but also during joint working with policing colleagues where there are safety issues. Marine assets are used to target boats at sea during summer months. Officers use of body worn video and other devices to gather evidence of offences has been crucial in developing good case files but in increasing officer safety.

Whelk Compliance

Permits have been issued under NWIFCA Byelaw 4 for commercial potting of Whelks. NWIFCA officers will maintain an effective enforcement presence at sea and on land to ensure the sustainability of this fishery. Inspections will be carried out on landings and on gear to ensure compliance with permit conditions. Officers will also monitor the recordings of catch returns.

Science Priority Work Streams

The NWIFCA Science team will continue to work strategically towards the deliverables described below. This involves both routine surveys and new work such as research projects and fisheries management plans.

Performance indicators for inclusion in Annual Report 2023/2024	Work Stream	Responsible
5a) Scientific surveys (sea-going)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Plan and carry out habitat surveys in the Solway to inform future mussel fisheries (side scan ground discrimination)• Plan and carry out Solway cockle survey – dry out on beds.• Process and analyse survey data• Prepare project report	Science team
5b) Scientific surveys (shore based)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Plan and carry out annual shore based surveys (cockles, mussels, bivalve etc. in addition to those included in 5e and 5f)• Process and analyse survey data• Prepare reports and inspection notes. Make available on the NWIFCA website.• Report to TSB and Authority meetings.	Science team
5c) Participate in TAG meetings	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Attend and contribute to TAG meetings and report on meeting outcomes to the Authority and NWIFCA staff.	Senior scientist
5d) Consultation and engagement with major development	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provide feedback on relevant marine works to developers, MMO and the planning inspectorate	Science team

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide evidence to help with development decisions and impact assessments where required • Attend relevant meetings with external stakeholders regarding proposed works • Disseminate relevant information to industry 	
5e) Cockle fishery stock assessment and fishery recommendations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual cockle survey schedule planning • Annual cockle surveys • Analysis of survey data • Preparation of HRA's and delivery of recommendations for management • Production of survey notes / results • Consultation with NE re. HRA advice and conclusions • Update technical science and byelaw committee on progress and management decisions • Develop permit conditions / authorisations 	Science team
5f) Mussel fishery stock assessment and fishery recommendations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual mussel survey schedule planning • Annual mussel surveys • Analysis of survey data • Preparation of HRA's and delivery of recommendations for management • Production of survey notes / results • Consultation with NE re. HRA advice and conclusions • Update technical science and byelaw committee on progress and management decisions 	Science team

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop permit conditions / authorisations • Exploration of drone technology to monitor stocks and inform management. 	
5g) Whelk SOM study	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Undertake summer sampling of whelks – industry provision of samples • Analyse data • Prepare report on the research findings • Present work to TSB with recommendations for the minimum landing size increments in Byelaw 4 flexible permit conditions 	Science team
5h) Annual research plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepare annual research plan by April 2023 – present to Authority • Assess research priorities and time planning • Identify funding streams • Apply for funding projects – FISP scheme etc. by developing proposals and engaging industry partners. Potential project involving shrimp fishery declines, and mussel monitoring through drone use (5f). 	Senior scientist
5i) Dispensations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assess the suitability of dispensation applications and proposed activities • Provide dispensation for activities from byelaws in consultation with enforcement team 	Science team
5j) Data analysis and services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision of GIS, data and analysis to inform evidence requirements e.g maps, vessel sightings and fish stocks etc. • Training in QGIS for whole team and transfer from Mapinfo 	Science team

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain data sources and analyse IFCO shore sightings, and patrol vessel sightings • Training in R-stats for team members • Explore new approaches to analysing survey data • Development of new landings/returns database and establishing new reporting mechanisms 	
5k) Support development and maintenance of MPA management measures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop MCZ and EMS fisheries assessments for outstanding sites • Prepare any required evidence needed for management 	Science team
5l) Develop species management plans for district fisheries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regional management plans: Review Fisheries Act and Statements and scope of requirements, national, regional, and priority species etc. Attend national workshops and engage through TAG as to progress of FMPs. • NWIFCA management plans: Assess data held and data requirement to inform species management plans. • NWIFCA management plans: Prioritise cockle and mussel management plan. Develop a management plan based on best available examples, and identify knowledge gaps for future research proposals. 	Senior Scientist
5m) Biosecurity plan updates	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain and implement the NWIFCA biosecurity plan alongside NE. 	Science team
5n) Scientific survey capability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintenance of vehicles and equipment for shore based scientific surveys. 	Science team

5o) Participate in and contribute to relevant groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain attendance and involvement with national, regional and area specific groups such as FISHGIG, Whelk working group, Blue carbon working group, NW standing environment group, NW Shellfish liaison group, Solway firth partnership, Mersey tidal power etc. 	Science team
5p) Annual research report	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepare the Annual Research Report: Report on achievement of objectives set in Annual Research Plan and demonstrate use of evidence for decision making – April 2024 	Senior scientist
5q) Monitoring and control plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carry out review of HRAs in line with the monitoring and control plans to ensure the HRA's previously completed are still appropriate for current activity • Check conservation advice hasn't changed, and activity levels not changed 	Science team
5r) Highly Protected Marine Areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engage in evidence sharing and discussions with Defra and ther partner organisations regarding Allonby Bay HPMA • Maintain and/or facilitate stakeholder engagement • Report quarterly on the progress of designations to the Authority • Dependant on the site selection, develop implementation plans to identify knowledge gaps and areas of priority. 	Science team
5s) Mussel MLS investigation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Undertake the action plan agreed at the TSB meeting to investigate the stunting of mussel in Morecambe Bay and potential management options. 	Science team

5t) Joint working	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Small fish surveys with the EA as part of the WFD and natural capital work 	Science team
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Science Team work stream schedule:

The proposed work stream schedule shows the annual timeline for works with set time frames. Some work streams are liable to change.

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Research work streams

Ongoing research

The work streams provided in the table above include both ongoing and new research work. Ongoing research work is carried out annually by NWIFCA such as: cockle and mussel surveys (including data analysis), which inform stock assessments and fishery HRA's.

1) Cockle and mussel surveys

Cockle and mussel surveys are carried out annually from spring until late summer. The surveys collect information on the spatial distribution, abundance and biomass of cockle across the main cockle beds in the District. The information is critical to informing HRA's and ensuring sustainable management of the District stocks. This work is high priority and resource intensive. These surveys take place from quads and/or by foot. For mussels, surveys are undertaken using the Dutch Wand method, and for cockles, samples are taken by quadrat on a grid system across the bed. The information is gathered and analysed, and is then provided to the Authority at both the quarterly meetings of the Technical Science and Byelaw Committee, and the full Authority for approval and recommendations regarding the annual fishery openings. This work stream helps to ensure sustainable fisheries and protection of the districts protected area features.

2023/24 new research streams

In addition to our ongoing work streams, we have discrete research work planned for 2023/24. A full research plan will be developed for April 2023. These new projects aim to fill knowledge gaps that will promote sustainable management of our fisheries and improve our data handling and reporting. The work will aim to be initiated this year, with potential conclusion this year or the following dependant on resource constraints and timings of work.

1) Whelks

In 2022, Byelaw 4 – Potting permit byelaw was introduced in the NWIFCA district. Under this new byelaw fishers can now pot for whelks across the NWIFCA district, a practice previously prohibited under old sea fisheries committee byelaws. Whelk are commonly known to mature at different sizes across the UK. An incremental increase in the minimum landing size (MLS) of whelk was introduced into the flexible permit conditions of Byelaw 4, to promote sustainable harvesting. The MLS was based on information from populations in close proximity to NWIFCA District. However, there is very little information regarding the size-at-maturity of whelk in the NWIFCA District, and therefore, it is essential that this work takes place to ensure that the SOM provided in the flexible permit conditions is fit for purpose. Samples for this work will be collected in the summer and analysed in the autumn months to be completed by winter 2023.

2) FISP

The Fisheries Industry Science Partnership (FISP) scheme is a £10 million government fund which seeks to: improve data collection, particularly for data limited species, enhance knowledge of technical measures including fishing gear selectivity, and/or build a better understanding of the ecosystem benefits and environmental impacts of aquaculture.

NWIFCA science officers have developed a proposal for the following round of funding from 15th of December to 19th of Jan 2023, looking into the long-term sustainability of shrimp fisheries in the District.

3) Mussel MLS

Industry has requested NWIFCA look into an area of 'stunted mussel' on the main mussel beds in Morecambe Bay and investigate reasoning for this. An action plan has been agreed to identify the area, take samples, and conduct a review into the potential management options for this area.

Data and evidence work streams

NWIFCA manages a number of different datasets that are used to inform management decisions based on scientific evidence. In the coming year, the science team will look to streamline many of the current datasets and update our analytical capabilities to help provide better evidence in support of management decisions and feed into fisheries management plans.

2023/24 new work streams

1) GIS improvements

There is a significant need to improve our Geographic Information System (GIS) handling and data analysis procedure. Currently NWIFCA operate using Mapinfo which is outdated and limited in its abilities. Training for staff in QGIS is planned for the beginning of 2023, and will offer the chance to transfer our current working practices into a more user friendly and efficient system. This will enable more evidence sharing and analysis

2) Landings/returns database

In 2022, NWIFCA identified concerns with monitoring landings data received from fishers. Currently there are three byelaws requiring fishers to provide landings returns, and differing methods of reporting dependant each. In addition, the use of paper forms leads to concerns with accuracy of data entry, and incomplete datasets. To streamline this approach NWIFCA are investigating the implementation of a new database system currently in use by Sussex IFCA. The aim of the new system is to promote accurate recording and reporting of returns, improve efficiency of reporting for fishers, increase our confidence in long term datasets, and inform stock monitoring and aid in sustainable management. The work stream is not time specific but is already underway and will aim to be completed by the end of 2024.

3) Statistical analysis development

There is a need to improve our current analytical capabilities, and review our longstanding procedures for analysing datasets. NWIFCA will undertake training in R-stats to help build our in-house abilities in data analysis. This predominantly will focus on analysis of our cockle data.

Management and Engagement work streams

In addition to the research and evidence work, NWIFCA science will be involved in development of species management plans within the District, and the continued work regarding selection of the candidate Highly protected marine area, Allonby Bay in Cumbria.

1) Species management plans

Work under this heading falls into two categories. 1) providing data and information to assist in the development of regional fisheries management plans and 2) developing NWIFCA species management plan for cockles and mussels which can aid in management decisions and identify clear research gaps. This is a priority work stream for 2023/24.

2) Highly protected marine areas

NWIFCA will look to support ongoing work by Defra regarding the selection of the first candidate HPMA. This will involve providing information where necessary, attending online workshops and meetings, and facilitating engagement with stakeholders. Dependant on the outcome of the selection in summer 2023, further work may be anticipated and developed at such time accordingly.

Table- Summary of NWIFCA main priorities aims and monitoring for 2023-2024

		Update Feb 2023
1.	Operate the Authority to highest standards of probity and in compliance with the Authority's constitution, standing orders, public sector regulations and policies on health and safety, financial auditing, risk assessment, transparency, freedom of information, data protection, and operation of meetings.	
2.	The Authority will progress to address issues raised within the Review of Governance Policies & Procedures as well as the Cultural Review.	
3.	Properly manage and care for officers and members by providing training, job reviews, information and consultation on all relevant matters and delegating responsibility appropriately. This will include the development of policies and procedures.	In progress 22-23
4.	Contribute to delivery of Defra work streams such as fisheries management plans and delivery of highly protected marine area of Allonby Bay in the North of the District.	
5.	Require compliance by fishers with, UK and NWIFCA regulations in line with objectives of the JFS covering exploitation of sea fisheries resources in the District by planning, patrolling and inspecting all parts of the District according to risk, utilising available resources. Collect and record data on fishing and fishing vessels in line with agreed protocols and apply sanctions fairly when offences are detected following the Authority's enforcement strategy.	Ongoing
6.	Further conservation and sustainable management of sea fisheries resources by developing fisheries management plans, applying Habitats Regulations and MCZ assessments to fisheries in MPAs and implementing management measures as required and agreed with other regulators.	Ongoing
7.	Manage shellfish beds (mainly cockle and mussel), so that stocks are exploited sustainably and in compliance with Habitats Regulations, in partnership with other regulators, advisors and industry by means of stock surveys, stakeholder consultations, multi-agency management plans and permit conditions. Expand communications with permit stakeholders and assist with delivery of Cockle Management Plan.	Ongoing
8.	Byelaw development: Continue, priorities as follows: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Netting Byelaw 2. Continue Byelaw review and make recommendations to the Authority. 	Ongoing.
9.	Re manufacturing of the patrol vessel "North Western Protectors engines", develop a new patrol and survey plan. Start procurement of new patrol vessel capable of lifting pots and enhance capacity for regulation of HPMA. Develop a vehicle asset management plan. Continue with developing remote sensing capability through use of UAV drones.	Ongoing
10.	Develop Communications and stakeholder engagement with better engagement through social media and district wide stakeholder meetings.	Ongoing
11.	Deliver a flexible science programme which supports fisheries and conservation management in the District and byelaw development according to short, medium and longer term priorities.	Ongoing See reports

Success Criteria 1

IFCAs are recognised and heard, balancing the economic needs of the fishery whilst working in partnership and engaging with stakeholders.

IFCAs will be visible, respected, and trusted regulator within coastal communities and will maintain and deliver a strategy to communicate their vision and duties effectively. IFCAs will engage with policy makers, industry, Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), recreational and commercial users and other regulators. They will work jointly and collaboratively with partner organisations across boundaries; will participate and contribute to the development and implementation of regional and national marine policy, including the marine planning regime; will take long-term strategic decisions and manage risks effectively. IFCAs may maintain a national body to co-ordinate the activities of authorities that are party to arrangements.

Indicators

Performance indicators for inclusion in Annual Report 2023/2024	Work Streams	Responsible
SC1A: The IFCA will maintain a database of stakeholder contacts that will have been reviewed and updated by 31 March each year.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implement a new permit and stakeholder database. Database will allow stakeholders to review data they have submitted via an online portal. Communications strategy will be reviewed. Committee papers will be published on the website Website will continue to be reviewed and modernized with relevant information. Objectives of the comms strategy will be met. Code will continue to be implemented, standardisation of policies and procedures has been developed across IFCAs from national working. All regional MoUs with partner agencies will be reviewed. NWIFCA will continue to contribute to local, regional and National meetings, COG, NIMEG, TAG & SOG, Regional Fisheries groups, MAFCO, Regional Coastal Forums. 	Clerk/Comms officer
SC1B: The IFCA will have completed a review of its communication strategy and implementation plan by 31 March each year.		Comms
SC1C: The IFCA will have reviewed its website by the last working day of each month.		Comms Officer
SC1D: The IFCA will have reviewed its website and ensured it meets the objectives of its communication strategy, by 31 March each year.		CEO
SC1E: The IFCA will have reviewed all of its Memoranda of Understanding by 31 March each year. There will be a clear plan in place to update MoUs where necessary, to an agreed timescale.		
SC1F: By 31 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 identified in the annual plan.		

Success Criteria 2

IFCAs implement a fair, effective and proportionate enforcement regime.

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 IFC Districts and management by other organisations including the MMO and Environment Agency. Consistency and fairness is important. Regulatory compliance is promoted. Enforcement action is carried out by trained, professional officers working to clear standards of conduct.

Performance indicators for inclusion in Annual Report 2023/2024	Work Streams	Responsible
SC2A- The Authority will publish its enforcement strategy on the website by the 1st of April. This strategy ensures that the Authority implements a balanced and fair enforcement regime for all stakeholders.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enforcement Strategy will be reviewed annually and clearly describe the approach to achieving regulatory compliance and the potential for sanctions to be applied. Enforcement will continue to be applied relating to risk and intelligence allowing the strategic deployment of resources across the NWIFCA District. Joint working with other regulatory agencies will be reported. Joint patrols with other agencies will be shared through TCG process and successes shared. Enforcement activity reported in quarterly reports and on website. Data to be stored on NWIFCA intelligence management system and reported to NIMEG. PFVs to be entered on to MCSS. Code adopted in 2012 and applied through Enforcement strategy. Operational activities are managed through Tasking and coordination groups and intelligence disseminated to partner agencies. New IFCOs will be trained to comply with CoP. Performance assessed and monitored by the Head of Enforcement and in annual appraisals. Training to be kept up to date. Warranted IFCOs will be trained and accredited to nationally agreed standards. They will maintain professionalism and make appropriate interventions to deliver efficient & effective enforcement activity. Vessel & Survey plan to be developed. 	Head of Enforcement & Fisheries compliance team
SC2B- The Authority will through annual reports demonstrate joint working with other agencies to achieve consistent quality, application and enforcement of management measures will be reported.		
SC2C- Enforcement data will be reported in quarterly meeting reports and on the website. Data is stored on NWIFCA intelligence systems, disseminated to the MMO and other relevant agencies.		
SC2D- A standard code of practice for Inshore Fisheries officers has been applied since 2012 and is reviewed annually by the National Inshore Marine Enforcement Group.		
SC2E- New IFCOs trained to comply with code. Performance assessed and monitored by the Head of Enforcement and in annual appraisals. Training to be kept up to date. This includes enforcement and work-related training.		
SC2F- The Authority will contribute to development of national IFCA Training programme. Mandatory training of all IFCOs to be maintained to nationally agreed standards. All IFCOs to receive CPD to meet needs. Training register to be maintained. Training in-house following national scheme, jointly with partner		

agencies or purchased from external providers to be reviewed. Training objectives to be identified in job reviews.		
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Success Criteria 3

IFCAs use evidence based and appropriate measures to manage the sustainable exploitation of sea fisheries resources and deliver marine environmental protection within their districts

The IFCAs were created as statutory inshore regulators by the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009. They are relevant authorities for implementing international environmental commitments including the Birds, Habitats, Water and Marine Strategy Framework Directives and make an important contribution to securing a network of well managed marine protected areas, including EMSs and MCZs.

Fisheries Management Plans identify local management measures which should be based on evidence; be timely; subject to appropriate consultation and in step with national initiatives and priorities. An IFCA should balance the social and economic benefits of exploiting sea fisheries resources with the need to protect the environment and should make a contribution to sustainable development.

Indicators:

Performance indicators for inclusion in Annual Report 2023/2024	Work Streams	Responsible
SC3A: The IFCA will record site specific management considerations for Marine Protected Areas and report progress to the Authority.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Government MPA policy will be implemented subject to resources. The NWIFCA MPA Monitoring and Control Plan continues to be implemented. Management of MPAs will be reviewed in collaboration with other regulators. MCZ management will be developed in line with government policy with decisions based on best available evidence.NWIFCA will follow Defra lead on highly protected marine area (HPMA) management upon implementation in July 2024.Data and evidence will be compiled in Impact Assessments for new measures posted on website. Stakeholders will be consulted before introduction. Impacts of new measures will be assessed from survey and enforcement data and reported at quarterly meetings and on website.Post implementation survey jointly with partners will inform ongoing fisheries management and effectiveness of new measures. Results will be reported to Authority and on website. Inspection and enforcement data will inform the Authority of the effectiveness of measures.	Science Team
SC3B: The IFCA will publish data analysis and evidence supporting new management measures on its website.		
SC3C: Management information (e.g. sampling and/or survey results) will be collected periodically after new management measures have been implemented, to demonstrate the extent of the effectiveness of the intervention.		
SC3D: The IFCA will have developed a range of criteria-based management options that are explained to stakeholders through the IFCA website and reviewed by 31 March each year.		

<p>SC3E: New IFCA management measures selected for development and implementation are delivered within agreed timescales.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New management measures will be developed after assessment of options against criteria defining objectives. • The byelaw review follows agreed priorities according to risk. Byelaw development will follow Defra guidance. • 23/24 Annual plan will be published April 23. • Cockle and mussel management plans and priority byelaws to be further developed. Science team will develop species management plans within available resources 	
<p>SC3F: The IFCA will include shared agreed objectives and actions from Fisheries Management Plans in its own Annual Plan, which will be published by 31 March each year.</p>		<p>CEO</p>
<p>SC3G: Progress made in relevant Fisheries Management Plan areas, including Maximum Sustainable Yield commitments, will be noted in the IFCA's Annual Report.</p>		

Success Criteria 4

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

IFCAs are statutory authorities and sit within the local government family.

They exist as a joint committee of the constituent Authorities in accordance with the 2010 Statutory Order. Authority members may be general members, statutory appointees or local councillors. They comply with Codes of Conduct and the Standing Orders that apply to meetings of the IFCA. Councillors are subject to the code of conduct in force in their own appointing Authority.

Members decide the policy of the IFCA through formal voting arrangements at quarterly meetings of the IFCA. General members are appointed on merit, through open competition and for a term. They are subject to an annual performance appraisal.

An IFCA is funded by levy, charged to its member councils. Funding originates in local taxation. An IFCA is accountable for its use of public resources and should ensure that a proper auditing regime provides confidence in its commitment and spend of public money. It should make effective use of its resources, including staff and assets. An IFCA has a statutory obligation to prepare and publish Annual Plans and Annual Reports.

Performance indicators for inclusion in Annual Report 2023/2024	Work Streams	Responsible
SC4A: The IFCA will publish a Plan on its website by 31 March, setting out the main objectives and priorities for the next financial year. A copy will be sent to the Secretary of State.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Annual plan 2022-2023 is scheduled for publication by end March 2022 and sent to Secretary of State. Plans include objectives and priorities under criteria in this table set by Defra and local priorities. Annual report 20/21 to be published by 31 December 2021. Activity in the year and audited financial information will be included. Job plans 23/24 will be agreed with officers subject to management change. An efficient secretariat is in place. Documentation will be produced and meetings will continue to be run in line with Standing Orders. Targets for Marine Strategy and Water Framework Directives will be delivered as directed by EA. 	CEO
SC4B: After the end of each financial year, the IFCA will publish a Report on its website describing its activities, performance and a summary of audited financial information in that year, by 30 November. A copy will be sent to the Secretary of State.		
SC4C: IFCA staff will have annual performance management plans in place. Annual appraisals for all staff will have been completed by 31 May each year.		
SC4D: An efficient secretariat of IFCA staff support IFCA Authority meetings which are held quarterly and are quorate. Meeting documentation will meet Standing Orders.		CEO/ Clerk
SC4E: The IFCA will have demonstrated, in its Annual Report, how marine, land and water management mechanisms in the Inshore Fisheries & Conservation District have worked responsively and effectively together.		CEO

Success Criteria 5

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

IFCAs are statutory regulators for their Inshore Fisheries and Conservation District. Decision making should be based on evidence. All IFCAs are supported by officers who pool their expertise and share best practice as a Technical Advisory Group (TAG). A programme of research activity and monitoring is planned, developed, and updated in consultation with partners. The programme informs management decisions and supports justification for additional research and evidence gathering.

Indicators:

(pg)

Performance indicators for inclusion in Annual Report 2023/2024	Work Streams	Responsible
SC5A: The IFCA will demonstrate progress that has been made towards identifying its evidence needs by publishing a research plan each year.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Research plan 2023-24 in the years deliverables shows current projects, future proposals subject to resources and outline survey programme to be adjusted as required. Collaboration with universities, other agencies, NGOs and industry to be developed.All science work to be reported at quarterly and technical, Science and byelaw meetings showing how evidence is used to support decision making. A summary to be included in Annual Report.NWIFCA will continue contributions to national programmes through the technical advisory group and report to the Authority.	Science
SC5B: The IFCA will publish a research report annually that demonstrates how evidence has supported decision making.		Science
SC5C: The IFCA's contribution to TAG and progress that has been made towards a national evidence needs programme will be recorded in the IFCA's Annual Report.		Science