

**NWIFCA Technical, Science and Byelaw
Committee**

6th November 2018: 10:00 a.m.

**AGENDA
ITEM NO.**

10

DEFRA iVMS CONSULTATION

Purpose: Consider an Authority response to the Defra consultation

Recommendation: The draft response at Annex A is approved

Consultation

1. The iVMS consultation is at: <https://consult.defra.gov.uk/marine-management/introduction-of-inshore-vessel-monitoring-systems/>
2. The consultation is short, 6 weeks only closing on 14th November.
3. Plans to install iVMS on 4 patrol vessels are continuing. It is expected that the iVMS project will provide EMFF funding as before that each IFCA will purchase and install units and apply for reimbursement.

Annex A

Dear Defra,

iVMS consultation

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the consultation proposal to introduce iVMS on all under 12m licensed fishing vessels. The NWIFCA supports the proposal in principle but is concerned that the project is going ahead before all the details of the system are known and wishes to raise the comments listed below.

If you need any further detail on this response, please let me know. Please acknowledge receipt.

Yours sincerely

Stephen M Atkins
CEO NWIFCA

NWIFCA comments on the consultation.

1. The Authority is pleased the earlier funding model requiring IFCA to fund iVMS units and reclaim costs via EMFF has been dropped. The financial risks which that funding model entailed were unacceptable.
2. A new approach to iVMS provision remains unclear pending MMO agreement to provide funding. This continued uncertainty raises doubt over whether the timescale for completing installation of units can be achieved.
3. The consultation document is unclear on the distinction between the new iVMS system and the requirement for VMS on over 12m vessels in place since 2013. The first sentence of the section '**why do we need to install iVMS**' implies that about 90% of English vessels do not fully meet EU VMS requirements at present. This is incorrect as only over 12m

vessels are required to have VMS at present and compliance is good.

4. The iVMS SI is not yet published and the rules which will govern the use of iVMS are not yet known. How data generated will be accessed, used, protected and used is also not known. The Devon and Severn iVMS trial has not yet reported. The Authority is concerned that this consultation is taking place before details of how the system is intended to work are known.
5. The Defra commitment to provision and installation of the first iVMS unit free of charge on all under 12m licensed fishing vessels is welcome. However, vessel owners will be responsible for ongoing repair or replacement of failed units and for running costs. At present the running cost is 'airtime' estimated at £150 per year.
6. The Authority is concerned that the purpose and justification for iVMS on all vessels has changed. There is now no reference to iVMS becoming a requirement for fishers to sell fish in the EU. This was the major justification both for the introduction of iVMS and for the urgency to get the system operational. If iVMS is not going to be an EU requirement then installation of units on English vessels is not urgent.
7. The policy objective for iVMS introduction is now framed around gathering fishing information. This has changed from earlier objectives for better regulation and enforcement. The authority is not convinced that iVMS is the simplest or most efficient way of gathering the limited fishing information which iVMS will provide. iVMS provides data which may be more detailed than existing AIS systems but not different in kind, It does not record when fishing took place, the type of gear used, the amount or species caught. If the system will not assist regulation and enforcement its value is much reduced and may not justify the cost of installation.
8. The Authority is concerned that that iVMS has been oversold as a fisheries management tool. No VMS or iVMS systems can report when fishing is taking place, what gear is being used or the fish that are caught. A recent failed court case in Devon and Severn District has shown that prosecutions for illegal fishing are very difficult to achieve with evidence based on VMS data alone.
9. The consultation says the SI will apply to all licensed vessels indicating that unlicensed vessels or charter angling type vessels will not be required to have iVMS. This would create an unfair regime in favour of charter angling vessels which catch significant quantities of fish on trips which will be unrecorded. For environmental reasons it is surely just as important that non-commercial fishing activities are recorded as commercial.
10. If there are to be exceptions from the iVMS requirement, then the requirement for iVMS on the smallest vessels (4-6m category) should be reviewed as these vessels operate over small areas catching relatively small quantities of fish. Requirements for commercial unpowered vessels are undefined, indeed it is unclear how or if units can be fitted to unpowered vessels or those without a suitable power source or to open vessels with no protective cover.
11. The consultation says units must be installed. It does not say they have to work. Presumably the SI will clarify this but if fishing without a functional iVMS unit is prohibited there would be a disproportionately large impact on the income of small vessels. This will be because iVMS costs will be the same for large and small vessels and also units are likely to be less reliable on small vessels lacking weather protection.