

Devon & Severn Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority

Quarterly Report for the Period Ending June 2016

General Situation

Chief Officer T Robbins

The team have been pushed hard this quarter to try and keep up with the amount of work coming from all sides. The individual reports from the Deputy Chief Officers will set out the nature of the work that the team have been working through but I believe this quarter has been the busiest experienced by the D&SIFCA since vesting in 2011. The amount of requests from external organisations for information and for officers to attend meetings and conferences is starting to put a severe strain on the team and individual officers.

The illegal activity reports to the office and to the duty phone mean that the enforcement team are either out on the ground or in the office investigating the reports and compiling case files for determination of whether a prosecution or Financial Administrative Penalty is required. During the past quarter there have been 21 active case files for officers to deal with, this requires an investigation, evidence to be gathered and a case file to be prepared. This is a huge workload for a relatively small team with a large geographical area to cover and a complex fishery. The new Netting Byelaw and consultation events have also taken up large amounts of officer time to ensure that as much information is gathered as possible in order for the Authority to make a decision. The loss of all the seconded officers being used by the Authority following a reorganisation by the Environment Agency (EA) and the closing down of Salcombe Security has left a large hole in the enforcement officers that the Authority is able to have out on the coast on a regular basis. With effectively only three full time enforcement officers to cover two coasts and 4,000km² of coastal waters there is urgent need for the Authority to decide how this situation can be improved in the short term and more importantly long-term. The need for officers on the northern coast is now critical.

The deadline for the completion of the Habitat Regulation Assessments (HRA) for the entire district is now six months away. The Environment team have completed a huge amount of HRA already but still have not completed the work. Completed assessments are sent to Natural England (NE) for their formal acceptance of the findings of the IFCA officers, sometimes additional information is required and after this hopefully the management approach suggested by the IFCA is then accepted and we move on to the next HRA. NE staff have been very helpful in turning round the HRAs in good time. As well as the HRAs, work is ongoing to ensure that management is in place in the first tranche of Marine Conservation Zones (MCZ) which also have to have management in place by the end of the year. Tranche 2 sites are also being assessed for management and the consultation on Tranche 3 sites has already begun. The environment officers are also assisting with the netting byelaw impact assessments looking at impact data as well as landing records produced by the MMO. At the same time the new survey season has started and so planning is underway to deliver the monitoring work required this year in order to be able to report on the progress of the current byelaws in protecting the local coastal environment. This has been and will continue to be a massive amount of work again for a relatively small team, we have been lucky to have funding from Defra to employ a research officer on a twelve month contract but this funding ends at the end of this year. Unfortunately the amount of work will not.

The current Defra Marine Review and MMO Southern Area Marine Planning Area are also taking up large amounts of time for all officers in the requests from these two plans for data that can be used to deliver better results for the future of coastal operations. Both are very important for the future of the IFCA but the time requirements to service the requests mean that other areas of work are being neglected or dropped all together. There are yet more national consultations coming over the next few months and again they will require input from senior officers both in advice and attendance of planning meetings.

The Joint Working Task Group between the IFCAs and MMO has also been working over the past twelve months, is now putting together a twelve month report which will be fed into the Defra Marine Review. The work is already been put forward as a template for other departments to work more closely to identify cost savings and benefits to public finances. But with four meetings a year and a great deal of correspondence in between these pieces of work drain a lot of resource from this IFCA.

The European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF) was launched at the beginning of the year and there have been several national meetings with the MMO to look at the grants available to the IFCAs and how this money will be distributed. It is unclear as yet how this will affect the D&SIFCA and in particular the requirement for a new patrol vessel hopefully funded through EMFF. More meetings have been scheduled over the next few months. The CO now sits on the EMFF Advisory Panel which will oversee all bids to the fund over the next five years.

Following on from the last quarterly meeting legal advice has been sought jointly with Cornwall IFCA on the exact legal situation regarding the protection of migratory fish by the IFCA through our new byelaws. This advice has now been received in draft form and will be available for the Byelaw and Permitting Sub Committee whilst they make final preparations for the new netting byelaw. It was very important that the IFCAs obtained this independent advice to ensure that the byelaw was made legally. Failure to make the netting byelaw in accordance with the law could have led to legal challenge and the byelaw falling which would have left no protection on the coast to migratory fish.

Mussel stocks in the district remain at an all-time low, not in thirty years have the stocks on all rivers been so low. There seems to be a complete failure of the mussel seed to either be produced or to settle where it would normally do so in all the estuaries. This is of concern to the mariculture operators in the district whose businesses depend on these stocks. The two offshore sites do not seem to be suffering from a lack of small mussels. This would indicate that there has been a significant change to the way that our estuary ecosystems are operating. With the trend for low spat fall affecting the whole country there will be a need to undertake a national research project in the very near future to try and detect what this change might have been.

The CO and both DCOs went on a media training day during the quarter along with colleagues from Southern and Cornwall IFCAs. The day was focussed on interview training with a journalist and a film crew. The interviews were then replayed to the group for a discussion and feedback. There were a wide variety of scenarios worked on over the day and the feedback from the training team was that all IFCA officers had performed well and given good honest interviews with no major issues that could have come back to cause concern for the Authority. It was a very intense day but all officers enjoyed the experience and feel much better able to deal with media requests for interviews as well as appearing in front of the camera if required. The training came in very useful two days after the training when the BBC requested an interview to go with a piece they were doing in Brixham on the Brexit debate.

At the beginning of April, the 12 metre RIB, *Atlas*, was returned to Southampton following the expiry of the hire agreement. The Authority's own 6.4 metre RIB, *Enforcer*, became the main enforcement vessel available to the Authority. Unfortunately soon afterwards, following a patrol around the Plymouth area, the RIB was damaged in a road traffic accident. The officers were towing the RIB back to Brixham when a car, driven by a man suspected to have been over the legal alcohol limit, drove into the trailer. Neither of the two officers nor the two occupants in the other car were hurt but the force of the collision subsequently led the insurers writing off the trailer and the RIB was sufficiently damaged to require repair to the inflatable sponson and hull's gel coat.

Dealing with the insurance companies and organising the repair resulted in the Authority having only a 12ft aluminium boat to undertake patrols. The size of the vessel meant that estuaries became the focus of the Authority's enforcement efforts on the water.

During the reporting period the Authority were formally notified that the Environment Agency's (EA) remaining enforcement officer, based in North Devon could no longer continue to provide the level of support that had been achieved through the formal secondment route. This is a significant setback for the Authority as not only have the Authority lost the post, the IFCA officers recognised how capable an officer they were losing in Paul Carter. In addition, it was likely that the use of the EA's RIB based in Alverdiscott would also be more restricted as EA policy requires a qualified EA officer to be present on board the vessel.

The owner of the security company, Salcombe Security Ltd, announced that the company had ceased trading. This was another significant blow to the Authority as it was again recognised that the presence of the Salcombe security team on the water and the assistance that they had provided to the Authority's enforcement officers had led to a significant reduction in the level of illegal activity being undertaken or not identified. A further Agenda item reports on the implications and options open to the Authority to tackle this loss of enforcement resource.

Despite these challenges and the varied other responsibilities that enforcement officers have some successful enforcement action was achieved during the quarter. Details of the enforcement action are set out later in the report.

Byelaw Review

At the meeting of the Byelaw and Permitting sub-committee, held on 23rd May 2016, members agreed the management measures that should be consulted on during the formal consultation phase of the Netting Permit Byelaw. In anticipation of the full Authority making the Netting Permit Byelaw (agenda item 11) the members of the sub-committee reviewed the draft Netting Permit Byelaw, the Permit conditions and the Impact Assessment.

Officers reported at the sub-committee meeting on four drop in sessions that had been held at Barnstaple, Weston-super-Mare, Ivybridge and Clyst St George (nr Exeter). The drop in sessions were held to publicise the current fisheries topics including the netting byelaw review. Netsmen from both the Taw/Torridge and Salcombe attended the events and expressed their continued concerns regarding the proposals to prohibit all netting (except seine nets for sandeel) in the estuaries.

Members of the sub-committee and, as importantly, feedback from those that attended the events felt that the drop in session should be developed further as they offered an important alternative for those people that wanted to get involved in local fisheries and conservation issues that were not so comfortable with doing so in writing. It also gave officers and members of the Authority the opportunity to talk directly to fishers.

Counsel's advice on the Authority's responsibilities for managing sea fisheries directed activities and the conservation of salmon and sea trout had not been provided in time to inform the sub-committee's decisions. In the absence of the advice the management measures had been drafted in such a way that they reflected the Authority's position on its

responsibilities prior to the advice being sought. It is the officers' understanding that the Counsel's opinion on this matter will be available prior to the Authority meeting.

A meeting of the Southwest IFCAs Byelaw working group was held during the quarter. The group's discussions included updates on the on-going developments of byelaws in each area with a view to potential harmonisation opportunities. As yet harmonisation on some key areas has often not been achieved with notable differences remaining between adjoining IFCAs on their byelaw strategy (such as stand-alone byelaws, permits or regulatory notices). Recent developments on a national scale have indicated that the D&SIFCA activity based permit byelaw strategy is proving less problematic than some alternatives being pursued elsewhere.

IVMS

Officers understand that an IVMS unit has been submitted for testing in the final testing window. Officers believe that a further application for a European Maritime and Fisheries Fund grant would be successful but will not be formally applying to the fund until it is clear that at least one unit passes the type approval testing.

Training

One of the new enforcement officers successfully completed his advanced power boat training and along with two other members of the enforcement team successfully completed a further online course in order to get their helming certificates commercially endorsed. It is the intention that the other new enforcement officer completes the same training in the next month.

The enforcement officers joined the rest of the Authority's staff to attend a one day appropriate behaviour training course.

The two new enforcement officers joined the DCOs for two days training by Andrew Harfoot from Southampton University in the use of QGIS™. QGIS is a relatively new, licence free, electronic mapping programme similar to Mapinfo™ GIS that the research team currently use. The mapping training is seen as essential to support the officers in preparing the case files relating to towed gear offences. Increasingly the evidence obtained by current vessel monitoring systems is being used to secure the successful prosecution of towed gear vessel fishing in prohibited areas. It is not uncommon for over 20 charts to be produced as evidence in a single case. The training not only covered the mapping techniques using the software but more importantly also covered the management of the positional data obtained from the vessel monitoring systems.

Joint Working

Officers have continued to work with colleagues from the MMO, the Environment Agency and the Police on enforcement matters. The DCO attended a Southwest illegal meat meeting. As a result of this meeting the DCO along with officers from the local Environmental Health Office and HMRC identified areas of joint interest that would be developed over the next few months.

In the latest incident, an IFCA officer with the assistance of Devon and Cornwall Police officers removed an illegally set net from the River Plym in the early hours on 24th May 2016. The incident was reported by the MOD police to the EA. The EA officer called the Authority's duty officer number and the officers planned the response. Similar to the netting case reported last quarter these incidents would not have had an immediate response from the Authority before the introduction of the extended cover period offered by the duty phone.

Enforcement

During the quarter a total of 15 suspected breaches of legislation have been investigated. Potentially up to seven of these cases are serious enough to require prosecution through the Courts. A case involving a local scallop vessel fishing inside the Torbay and Lyme Bay SAC contrary to the Mobile Fishing Permit Byelaw resulted in the Master accepting a £1,000 Financial Administrative Penalty.

Investigations

Offence Date	Investigation complete	Prosecuting Authority	Offence	Location	Outcome/ Current Status
03/12/15	Yes	D&SIFCA	Scallop dredging contrary to the Mobile Fishing Permit Byelaw	Torbay	Master and Owner accepted £1000 FAP
03-13/12/15	No	D&SIFCA	Scallop dredging within the Lyme Bay to Torbay SAC and contrary to the Mobile Fishing Permit Byelaw	Lyme Bay	On going
16-23/12/15	No	D&SIFCA	Scallop dredging contrary to the Mobile Fishing Permit Byelaw	South of Salcombe	On going
15/01/16	No	D&SIFCA	Landing of undersize bass	Brixham Market	On going
15/01/16	No	D&SIFCA	Landing of undersize lobsters	Brixham Market	On going
21-25/01/16	No	D&SIFCA	Beam trawling contrary to the Mobile Fishing Permit Byelaw and Vessel Size Byelaw	South of Salcombe	On going
01 -19/02/16	No	D&SIFCA	Scallop dredging contrary to the Mobile Fishing Permit Byelaw	South of Salcombe	On going
10/02/16	No	MMO	Fishing commercial from an unlicensed powered vessel and retaining prohibited species (Small eyed Ray)	Lyme Bay	Case file forwarded to MMO
11/02/16	No	D&SIFCA	Scallop dredging contrary to the Mobile Fishing Permit Byelaw	Lyme Bay	On going
14/02/16	No	D&SIFCA	Fishing with a fixed net contrary to Fixed Engine Byelaw	Salcombe	On going

31/03/16	No	D&SIFCA	Undersize female edible crab	Dartmouth	On going
05/04/16	No	D&SIFCA	Scallop dredging contrary to the Mobile Fishing Permit Byelaw	South of Start point	On-going
26/04/16	No	D&SIFCA	Undersize spider crab	Beer	On going - case file forwarded by MMO
28/04/16	Yes	D&SIFCA	Potting with no permit	Brixham	Written Warning
17/05/16	No	D&SIFCA	Undersize spider crab	Beer	On going

Warnings

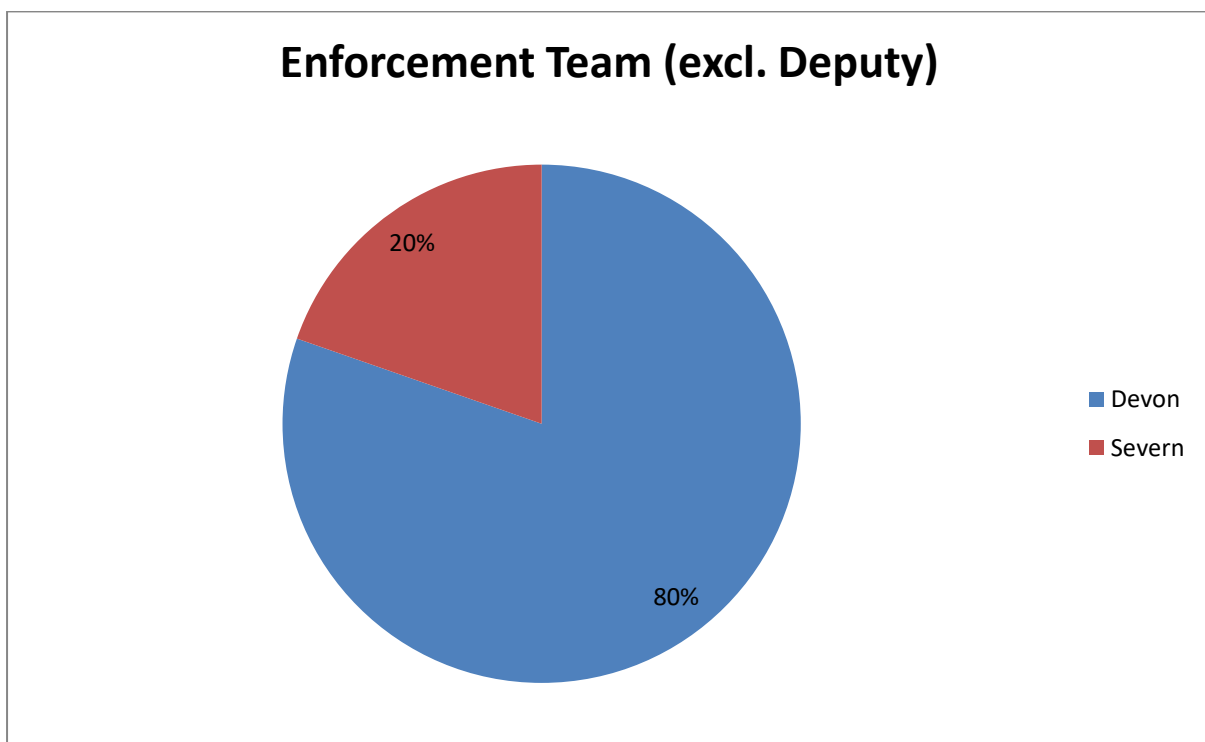
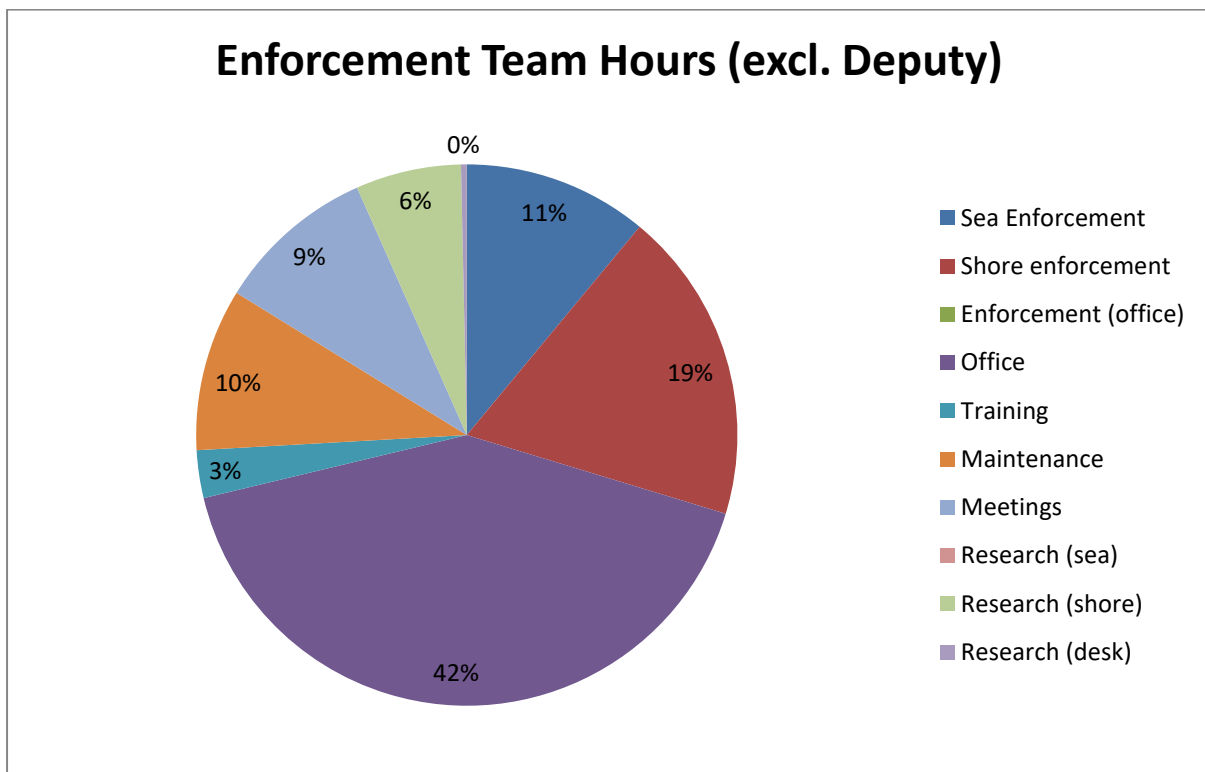
A written warning was issued to the owner of a commercial vessel for fishing without a valid permit issued under the Potting Permit Byelaw. No other offences were identified during the investigation.

Summary Table: Enforcement Officers' activities undertaken this quarter that fulfill Devon and Severn IFCA Success Criteria.

Success Criterion (SC)	Activities undertaken
SC1: IFCAs are recognised and heard, whilst working in partnership and engaging with stakeholders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> D&SIFCA is building on its own database through the introduction of permit byelaws. Netting byelaw communication strategy revised and implemented Website developed to allow purchase of permits on line.
SC2 IFCAs implement a fair, effective and proportionate enforcement regime	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All investigations follow the Enforcement procedures for infringements of fisheries legislation adopted by CIFCA and D&SIFCA
SC3 IFCAs use evidence based and appropriate measures to manage the sustainable exploitation of sea fisheries resources and deliver marine environment protection within their districts.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Completion of pre-consultation phase of Netting Byelaw review. Drop in session completed to complete pre-consultation phase. Detailed information of the pre-consultation process, data collection and summary reports available on website
SC4 IFCAs have appropriate governance in place and staff are trained and professional	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> QGIS mapping training Appropriate behaviour training Powerboat commercial endorsement training Case file review undertaken Detailed minutes of the byelaw and

	Sub-committee meetings made publicly available.
<p>SC5 IFCAs make best use of evidence to deliver their objectives.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Officers' enforcement activities are guided by the targeted enforcement plan referring to received information (SARs and NIRs) • Patrol vessels task and review logs maintained. • Officers use information on illegal activity to inform and develop enforcement plans • EA emergency hotline operatives and Police aware of D&SIFCA • D&SIFCA introduced out of hours contact number 07740 175479 to report suspicious activity.

Summary of Enforcement Officers' duties carried out during the quarter.



Acronyms used:

- MPA= Marine Protected Area*
- HRA = Habitat Regulation Assessment*
- EMS = European Marine Site*
- SAC= Special Area of Conservation*
- SPA = Special Protection Area*
- MCZ= Marine Conservation Zone*
- NE=Natural England*
- DCO = Deputy Chief Officer (Environment)*
- MCRS = Minimum Conservation Reference Size (aka Minimum Landing Size)*

All members of the Environment team have been working hard to progress the important HRA work stream and the IFCA is on target to complete all the necessary assessments by the end of 2016 and have the appropriate management in place. The improved weather and big spring tides has allowed the survey season to start in earnest with side scan sonar work, grab sampling and intertidal hand-gathering, netting and mussel surveys to take place .

Marine Protected Area Management

The last quarter has provided the opportunity for the Environment team to continue the HRA work needed to fulfil the requirement to assess and bring in management of commercial fishing activities within the MPA in the district by the end of 2016. Natural England has signed off some assessments, others are being checked by the Deputy Chief Officer before being sent to NE and others are still awaiting feedback from NE. HRAs for the Severn are complete for most gear types and sub-features. Some of the more detailed HRAs such as those for stake netting against *Sabellaria* reef, the fish assemblage and the bird assemblage are almost completed, having required additional data collection. This involved meetings with fishermen in Cardiff, Stolford and Minehead who net commercially in the Severn Estuary after Natural England requested additional information on effort, seasonality, location and species composition of fishing activities. These meetings were also used to collect additional data needed for the Netting Byelaw pre-consultation.

IFCA officers and Natural England staff joined in a teleconference concerning feedback for Plymouth Sound and Estuaries beach seine/ringnets HRAs. More fishing effort information is needed for ringnets and in-combination assessments need to be amended

After advice from Natural England, in-combination assessments for Plymouth Sound and Estuaries EMS HRAs have been amended. Information on fishing activities within Plymouth Sound is also being collected especially relating to netting and potting to provide more information for these assessments. HRAs for Start Point to Plymouth Sound and Eddystone SCI have progressed greatly this quarter. Work has also begun on Tamar Estuary MCZ Assessments.

Extra HRAs have also been carried out to assess numerous derogation requests the IFCA has received for undertaking survey work within European Marine Sites. Several telecalls have been held with Natural England to discuss MPA matters, such as the progress of the HRAs and the Bristol Channel Approaches pSAC for harbour porpoise.

The DCO attended several meetings this quarter relating to management of fishing activities in the Skerries Bank and Surround MCZ. The DCO presented to the Defra MPA Project Board to highlight the potential impacts on the socio-economics of the fisheries taking place within the site (not considered during the finding Sanctuary Project) should changes in management, which currently exists through the IPA, be considered necessary. Meeting

were held with the MMO and Natural England to discuss these issues further. This work stream is ongoing.

Recreational Sea Angling

The twelve-month period of monitoring for the Skerries Bank Angling Zone reached a conclusion this quarter. Surveys were carried out at Hallsands, Beesands, and on-board the Bay Surveyor. The data collected will be used to determine whether the voluntary code is an effective means of managing this area, and to identify any non-compliance with the code. In April, the IFCA received several reports of non-compliance with the plaice bag limit, with reports of one group catching up to 200 plaice between five people (although most are believed to have been returned). This will require further monitoring. Monitoring of the Burnham, Berrow & Brean Angling Zone is still ongoing. Approximately one survey per week is carried out and data will be used to inform the next iteration of the RSA Strategy.

Aquaculture

There is great concern with the estuarine shellfishermen in the district regarding the on-going viability of their fisheries and businesses. There have been massive mortalities of oysters in the Dart Estuary and on the Teign Estuary – with up to 90% mortalities. Whilst these mortalities have slowed down over winter, there are no longer viable stocks to supply their market. On the Teign and Exe Estuary, problems have arisen due to the lack of mussel spat falls within or just outside of these estuaries. Again this means that the shellfishermen do not have a seed supply to grow on over the next two years and this will seriously affect the viability of these fisheries. Because of these natural phenomena the shellfishermen are looking for other ways of growing bivalves and collecting seed. Therefore, developments in aquaculture are progressing in the district.

A fisherman from the Dart has applied for an aquaculture site in Start Bay, in an area outside of the Dart Estuary but within the area closed to towed gear. He is looking to trial a subtidal system by putting oysters in bags placed inside large store pots, to see if the deeper water and more constant sea temperature will prevent the mortalities he experienced last year. The community fishing partnership at Porlock along the Somerset coast, who currently have one of the few Grade A oyster harvesting areas in the country, is also looking to place oysters subtidally in Porlock Bay in a caged on-growing system to develop their fishery further.

One shellfisherman from the Teign is trialling a subtidal rope mussel spat collection system within Labrador Bay. This will be placed within the static potting gear in the area in an attempt to lesson conflict with the mobile fishing gear vessels operating in the vicinity. A scallop spat on-growing system is currently being trialled in Torbay. The fisherman, who is progressing this aquaculture system, collected a number of adults scallops from the Lyme Bay/ Torbay area and sent them to a scallop hatchery in Norway (as there are none in this country). Using adult scallops from the local area to rear spat means that the genetic make-up of the local populations will remain the same rather than introducing spat from potentially different populations. The reared spat have been brought back to Devon and are now being grown on in pearl and lantern nets. At one of the D&SIFCA drop-in sessions in May a researcher from National Marine Aquarium discussed, at length, a proposal to develop a hatchery and range scallops. D&S IFCA indicated they it would like to be involved in this project.

Due to the increase in the level of interest in Aquaculture, the DCO is looking to work with the Environment team to develop aquaculture guidelines potentially through D&S IFCA strategy or development plan.

Projects / Surveys

The IFCA is looking to bring partner organisations together on research and management of the spiny lobster, *Palinurus elephas*. The IFCA would like to initiate population and tagging work, which will help with our monitoring the recovery of crawfish in Lundy and Skerries Bank MPA. The Lundy MPA advisory group meeting was attended and discussions were had with the divers who operate around Lundy Island about the possibility of working with them to tag crawfish. They are keen to work with the IFCA to support this monitoring.

Finfish Research

Libby Ross spent a day at Steart managed realignment in Somerset assisting the PhD student Tom Stamp and Institute of Fisheries Management chair, Steve Colclough, to plan fieldwork at the site that will form part of the European sea bass PhD. A meeting was held directly after the field work to discuss the project with Wildfowl and Wetland Trust staff who manages the site. Additional officer time has been spent discussing work on bass and finfish with officers from other IFCAs and Cefas.

An update on the current situation relating to small-eyed ray in North Devon was prepared for the Authority and circulated.

Start Bay Whelks

All analysis of whelk samples for Size of Maturity (SOM) is now complete. The estimates of SOM for all areas sampled are much higher than the current Minimum Conservation Reference Size (MCRS) of 45 mm. The table below shows the SOM determined for whelks from the three sites in the district.

Site	Female SOM (mm)	Male SOM (mm)
Start Bay	57.8	64.4
Exmouth	69.3	70.9
Ilfracombe	76.5	76.4

Possible management, that is currently being discussed to protect the whelk populations within the district, is to increase MCRS by 1mm per year, up to 60mm or maybe to 65mm. The phased increased would allow the IFCA to monitor the effectiveness of the changes.

Torbay MCZ

Officers spent four days surveying the seabed using the shared IFCA Edgetech side scan sonar in Torbay as part of an MSc with a Plymouth University student to investigate the impact of scallop dredging on the mud feature of the MCZ. This surveys aims to identify any differences between the mud habitats in the areas currently closed to towed mobile gear and the area that is open. The student will analyse the side scan data along with data from a number of other surveys, which are taking place in the upcoming weeks. The results of the research project will feed into the Torbay MCZ assessment and inform any management decisions for the MCZ. Officers have also worked with the student to design a sediment grab survey, which took place in May. Grab samples were taken from the mud habitat of the MCZ to identify any impacts of the scallop dredging on the feature through changes in Particle size and Infaunal species and abundance. This work took place in collaboration with EA and will be part funded by DWT and NE.

Mussel Stock Assessments

The annual stock assessments of the intertidal mussel beds in the Exe Estuary were carried out in April, with assistance from the Exe Estuary Officer and Natural England. Following the extensive mussel loss within the estuary in 2014, personal observations suggest the beds are still showing little sign of recovery, although the data has yet to be analysed to give exact stock levels. Surveys to assess the mussel stocks on the Taw-Torridge mussel beds were conducted in May, and were assisted by Natural England and WeBS. The Taw-Torridge beds had previously suffered significant losses in 2014, but large amounts of seed were found during these surveys (data still to be analysed). Natural England and D&S IFCA will use the results of these surveys to assess food availability for the birds, which are protected under the SSSI designation, and to help determine suitable harvesting levels for shellfishermen and possible future management of the resource.

Exe Intertidal Hand-gathering

To help inform the HRAs for the Exe Estuary, shore visits are taking place throughout May and June to collect information on hand-gathering activities. These visits are taking place twice weekly, for four hours covering the period over low tide. Data are being collected on type, location and level of hand-gathering activity and what species are being collected. Natural England will also be carrying out shore visits to supplement these data.

Meetings & Outreach

Environment Officers attended many meeting and events through the last quarter. The Tamar Estuaries Consultative Forum (TECF) was updated on the 2016 bass regulations from the EU. An update on the D&S IFCA's netting byelaw consultation and the new EU bass regulations was given at the Exe Estuary Management Partnership (EEMP) meeting. A Steering Group meeting for the Exe Local Fisheries Group was attended and the next steps, in raising the profile of locally caught Exmouth fish, were discussed. Both the Salcombe-Kingsbridge Estuary Conservation Forum and the Avon Estuary Forum were attended. Updates were provided on the IFCA's review of netting byelaws, the 2016 bass regulations, and recent estuary-based enforcement work.

The MMO launch of South West Marine Plans was attended in Plymouth. This was an opportunity to find out how D&S IFCA could contribute to the marine planning process. Further meetings are planned

The IFCA attended the SAGB Mollusc Committee meeting held at Billingsgate Market. Issues discussed included the EU survey of norovirus in oyster; the spurious E.Coli results recorded in shellfish samples taken from many sites in Devon and Cornwall in July 2015; how to improve bivalve sampling/classification protocol; the newly developed Seafish Aquaculture Toolbox, and the emerging Tertodotoxin (TTX) which is a neurotoxin found in some fish and may be associated with certain bacteria. An Emerging & Novel Shellfisheries seminar was held at Bournemouth University, providing an opportunity for shellfish researchers and managers to get together and discuss current issues.

Four "IFCA Roadshows" were held throughout the District. These drop-sessions provided stakeholders with the opportunity to discuss any concerns they may have, with a particular focus on bass regulations, netting byelaw proposals, whelk management, and aquaculture.

D&S IFCA continues to take part in the monthly Fisheries in EMS teleconferences, with all IFCAs, Natural England and the MMO. A telecom, with Cornwall IFCA and MMO, was attended to discuss the proposal of the Bristol Channel and Approaches SAC. The feature of this SAC is porpoises and part of the site is within the Devon and Severn IFCA district. The requirements for possible future management were discussed.

Libby Ross, as the chair of Association of Severn Estuary Relevant Authorities (ASERA) attended meeting with Natural England to discuss ways of the two organisations working more closely together and a way forward was agreed. A successful meeting of the ASERA management group was chaired and participants stayed on for the joint estuaries day afterwards, allowing for meeting with a wider group of stakeholders from around the Severn Estuary. A number of meetings relating to coastal development on the Severn Estuary have been attended this quarter. Devon and Severn IFCA's involvement with the Hinkley Point C marine technical forum continued this quarter. A meeting in Bristol continued discussions with EDF regarding the detailed design work for the fish returns system. The IFCA is working closely with the EA and MMO and a meeting will be held soon for the three organisations to discuss any key areas of interest or concern. The site of the planned Bridgwater Barrier was the subject of a public meeting held in Bridgwater this quarter. The IFCA remains engaged in this process as it is thought the Parrett Estuary is likely to be important habitat for many of the fish species found in the Severn Estuary. Fish survey work is being undertaken by environmental consultants on behalf the Environment Agency and D&S IFCA officers are working closely with them to identify any opportunities for working together, such as tying it in with fish sampling at Steart Managed Realignment.

Officers attended the South West Marine Ecosystems Forum hearing interesting talks on the current challenges to the fishing industry, especially relating to the landings obligation and the importance of the Bristol Channel to juvenile sprat. The DCO gave a talk on 'Myths and misconceptions mask true progress on management of fisheries in MPA', which highlighted the hard work, that IFCA are undertaking to assess and management of fisheries in MPA. Positive feedback was received. DCO also gave a keynote speaker talk to South Devon Marine Degree students describing her path to marine biology and the D&S IFCA.

IFCA officers met with North Somerset Council to discuss the IFCA's HRA work on the Severn Estuary and the potential for the Severn Councils to have Severn-specific meetings with officers prior to the quarterly meeting. This was agreed and will start in June 2016.

DCO attended the first steering group meeting of 'Project UK'- a follow-on project from 'Project Inshore'. This new project will take those fisheries that are very close to the Marine Stewardship Council certification standard for sustainability and seek to develop Fisheries Improvement Plans to meet certification standards and facilitate fisheries development as well as market opportunities to buyers, retailers and food service industries. In the Southwest Crab and Lobster have been identified as being close to the certification standard and the project will focus on these species in the area.

IFCA senior managers attended meetings with Cloudberry, a company that are developing our website and creating the facility for on-line payments for IFCA permits. Officers have been working with a chart software company to develop software that can be used to provide permit holders with digital charts of all spatial restriction in our district. These charts will be downloadable from USB pens to the plotters fishermen use on their fishing vessels. The software has been received and will be trialled in the next few weeks.

Training

All IFCA officers undertook training on Acceptable Behaviour in the Workplace. Training was carried out at Eastern IFCA to learn how to use the new-shared IFCA sonar camera. Officers learnt how to set up and use the camera along with discussions for the best application of the equipment. This piece of kit has the potential to allow high-quality sonar images of the seafloor to be taken, even in highly turbid waters. Natural England plans to trial it in the Severn Estuary in 2016 to look at areas of *Sabellaria* reef. Senior managers undertook Media training with Louise Midgley in Plymouth.

Enforcement work

Officers spent a day of checking areas illegally netted along with a member of the IFCA enforcement team. The area south of Oldbury was checked and a number of locations of past reports of netting and potential areas for netting were highlighted to the IFCA enforcement officer who is focusing their work on the Severn area. Posters and flyers about the restriction on recreational bass catches were distributed at Minehead, Dunster and Watchet, along with flyers advertising the Severn 'Let's talk fisheries' event following requests from local charter boat operators. This event was held at the Rugby Club in Weston-Super-Mare and allowed local recreational anglers and fishermen to find out about latest developments in fisheries management. There was a huge amount of interest in bass and the netting byelaw.

Success Criterion (SC)	Activities undertaken
SC1: IFCA's have sound governance and staff are motivated and respected	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Production of quarterly reports. • On-going meetings with all environment staff on the progress of research projects and HRA • Training was given to raise awareness of acceptable behaviour in the work place. • Media training for senior managers
SC2 Evidence based, appropriate and timely byelaws are used to manage the sustainable exploitation of sea fisheries resources within the District	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meetings regarding stake netting in the Severn Estuary EMS to inform HRA. • Netting survey within the Severn EMS will inform byelaw review • Final analysis of whelk size of sexual maturity data to inform any review of potting permit conditions,
SC3: A fair and appropriate enforcement regime is in place	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Many stakeholder meetings especially with members of the fishing industry and anglers were undertaken to inform the Byelaw review process, EMS and MCZ work, and New Bass regulations. • Several shore enforcement patrols were undertaken in the Severn part of the district • Statements and GIS charts were produced to support case files for prosecutions.
SC4: IFCA work in partnership and are engaged with their stakeholders.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Authority Officers met, engaged and worked with members of SD&CSA, NE, EA, and with fishers around the district • Recreational Sea angling meetings were attended. • Survey work planned in partnership with other IFCA's, NE, and Cefas • Telecoms have been attended to discuss EMS and MCZ work. • Responded to research and environment enquiries via telephone, e-mail and attended telecoms. • Officers attended EMS working and management group meetings. • Local partnership meetings and fora were attended. • Severn Estuary Netting survey undertaken with local stakeholders • ASERA meetings chaired and partnership working discussed. • Meetings with NE to discuss HRAs, SPA and bird count data. • Mussel surveys carried out with NE staff • D&S IFCA drop in session to discuss management and survey work • Skerries Bank Angling Zone surveys undertaken

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lundy MPA Advisory and Management Group meetings attended • Project to develop digital charts to be uploaded onto fishermen's plotters
<p>SC5: IFCAs make best use of evidence to deliver their objectives</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HRAs undertaken for amber gear feature interactions using available data and fishing activity reports completed. • Meetings with PhD and MSC students to look at impacts of fishing activities have taken place • Meetings with Bass PhD student and supervisors have taken place both in the field and in the office. • Annual mussel stock assessments/survey carried out on Taw Torridge and Exe Estuaries. • Input of scientific survey of crab catches from fishing vessels. • Available evidence reviewed to support netting byelaw development. • Intertidal Hand-gathering surveys carried out on Exe Estuary to inform HRA. • Side scan survey and grab survey in Torbay MCZ to inform assessments completed.
<p>SC6:IFCAs support and promote the sustainable management of the marine environment</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Detailed shore and boat monitoring of the Skerries Bank Angling Zones has concluded. • Berrow Brean and Burnham Angling Zone monitoring has commenced. • HRA were undertaken this quarter on activities in MPA • HRA undertaken for derogation requests • Meetings held with Natural England on EMS & MCZ in the district. • Meetings with angling clubs and angling representatives to discuss its development and management. • Meeting attended regarding PhD on Bass with student and supervisors • Input given to review Management Plans for Devon Estuaries • Further Analysis of whelk data to inform the future management of the stock in the district • Aquaculture developments have been discussed with fishers and relevant organisations • Exe Local Fisheries Group Steering Group attended. • Project UK steering group meeting attended • Poster and Fliers on bass restrictions distributed through the district.
<p>SC7: IFCAS are recognised and heard</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ENv Officer sits on TAG. • SEO chaired ASERA meetings and AGM • DCO gave presentation to Defra and the Project Board regarding Skerries Bank & Surrounds MCZ. • Presentations given at fora and stakeholder meetings including TAG. • Engaged with the Bridgewater Barrier project • Presentation given to South West Marine Ecosystem's Conference • Keynote Speech given to South Devon College University Programme • Development of website and on line payments system discussed.

Summary of Environment Officers' duties carried out during the quarter

