

Exploring future opportunities for collaborative working with the Marine Conservation Society



The Marine Conservation Society (MCS) Board Members and Directors recently visited the Devon and Severn Inshore Fisheries Conservation Authority (D&S IFCA) to explore future possibilities for collaborative working and learn about what makes Brixham such a prosperous, well-documented and managed fishery.

The visit started bright and early with a tour of the bustling Brixham Fish Market, packed with a stunning array of the freshest lobster, scallop, sole, line caught mackerel and seabass, hake, pollack, turbot and some of the finest crab in the southwest.



Unlike many other UK ports, the Brixham fishery has thrived in recent years resulting in the highest value catch in England and a world-class reputation for quality. The value of its landings has doubled in value over the last three years from £20m to £40m, in part due to the emergence of a local cuttlefish fishery, much of which is exported to Europe, and a rapidly growing Far East market. Brixham's market also leads the way in innovation within the industry, with further technological advances planned soon with the UK's first fully electronic web-based auction starting in January.

Jim Portus, Chief Executive of the South Western Fish Producers Organisation, was our very informative market guide and touched on the challenges facing fishermen, including Brexit, quotas and regulation.

Later in the morning, a presentation by D&SIFCA provided a greater understanding of the IFCA's role, responsibilities and objectives within the Inshore District.

The D&S IFCA works closely with the fishing industry, stakeholders, including Defra, Cefas, MMO, Natural England, Academia, Environmental Health and SeaFish to deliver a sustainable and prosperous fishing industry. New opportunities within the district are emerging with an increase in Mariculture with rope grown mussel farms, seed mussel collection sites, a scallop rearing trial and estuarine oyster cultivation. A new Mariculture Strategy is being developed to facilitate this increase in activity.

The IFCA aims to lead, champion and manage a sustainable marine environment and inshore fisheries, by successfully securing the right balance between social, environmental and economic benefits.



The IFCA's objective is to ensure healthy seas, sustainable fisheries and a viable fishing industry based on joint working and shared expertise with local fishermen, researchers, special interest groups and conservationists.

The IFCA's joint working approach with all stakeholders has enabled adaptive and flexible management of the inshore fisheries with supporting byelaws to protect both species and the local marine environment by monitoring levels of fishing effort. Joint working and the introduction of a Permit Byelaw approach has enabled adaptive MPA management, support for new and emerging fisheries and response to new policy drivers.

D&S IFCA manages the Inshore fisheries in the District, encompassing 4.5km² of the sea, 1.3km² of coastline and 9.1km² of land. It is the largest IFCA with two coasts, sharing boundaries with Cornwall IFCA, Southern IFCA and the Welsh Government. MPAs extend to 42% of the D&S District, before Tranche 3 Marine Conservation Zone designations.

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