

IFCA Planning Policy

Sussex IFCA policy, with regard to town and country planning and marine planning and licence applications, is to inform applications with sound advice to help achieve the goals of a sustainable marine environment and inshore fisheries during development. Advice will be given on relevant and significant applications only. This is in line with IFCA duties.

The following Sussex IFCA guidance statements are established to inform decision makers with regard to Sussex coastal and marine locations that lie within the IFCA District. The adopted positions are developed from the UK Marine Policy Statement, the duties of the IFCA as defined within the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009 and the IFCA Vision statement as follows. As such, the guidance statements are intended to support existing policies.

The UK's Marine Policy Statement vision is for clean, healthy, safe, productive and biologically diverse oceans and seas.

Section 153 of the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009 defines the main duties of the Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority that include;

- (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, and
- (d) seek to balance the different needs of persons engaged in the exploitation of sea fisheries resources in the district.

The IFCA vision states that 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.

1. Marine Protected Areas

Within its District the Sussex IFCA is responsible for delivering fisheries management to achieve appropriate conservation on designated marine and estuarine sites such as European Marine Sites (SACs and SPAs) and Marine Conservation Zones. Management is required in order to achieve the sites conservation objectives. There are IFCA byelaws and non-regulatory mechanisms (e.g., codes of conduct) that cover such areas, and we ask that the conditions of these measures and their intended benefits are not compromised by planning decisions.

Appropriate evidence and monitoring surveys to adequately understand and quantify significant impacts of activities on marine features should be required. Where relevant the Authority may be able to work with the authorising body to identify appropriate monitoring plans. A review of proposals should be carried out if new evidence comes to light.

2. Intertidal Habitat

The Sussex IFCA manages and regulates sustainable fisheries as part of the marine ecosystem. Intertidal habitats such as saltmarsh are vital nursery habitat for important marine fish species including bass and flatfish. These in turn support local economies and communities. These habitats are a key component of the marine environment which supports food webs and natural functioning aquatic systems. The threat of sea level rise, onshore development, flood protection and pollution place these vulnerable areas under constant pressure.

We support development approaches that lead to the creation of intertidal habitats and improvements to existing areas. In addition we strongly advise that any risks to such environments, from for example development, are minimised and that any losses are fully mitigated, such that there is a net gain of intertidal habitat for Sussex.

Appropriate evidence and monitoring surveys to adequately understand and quantify significant impacts of activities on intertidal habitats should be required. Where relevant the Authority maybe able work with the authorising body to identify appropriate monitoring plans (e.g. supporting fish survey programmes). A review of proposals should be carried out if new evidence comes to light.

This policy is consistent with the UK Marine Policy Statement which aims to halt, and if possible, reverse biodiversity loss with species and habitats operating as part of a healthy, functioning ecosystem.

3. Energy Production, Infrastructure Development, Aggregates and Dredging

The Sussex IFCA seeks to take steps that are necessary or expedient for the purpose of making a contribution to the achievement of sustainable development. The Authority recognises the UK Government's international commitments toward achieving sustainable development in respect to climate change and reducing carbon emissions. Developments such as offshore wind farms, should not compromise the Authority's ability to maintain and promote sustainable fisheries and protection of the marine environment within its District.

Where a development is considered to present a significant risk to sustainable objectives, bodies authorising developments should consider and explore all appropriate technologically and economically feasible mitigation measures. Mitigation may include the establishment of compensation mechanisms through sustainable fisheries community funds.

Opportunities should be sought to co-locate sustainable fisheries activities including aquaculture and sustainable tourism including scuba diving with such developments. Heritage assets should be recorded and protected where possible.

Significant development should be required to monitor relevant impacts on fisheries, the marine environment and associated natural communities through survey work and/or supporting local marine monitoring programmes, including relevant research conducted by the Authority.

4. Ports and Shipping

The Sussex IFCA seeks to take steps that are necessary or expedient for the purpose of making a contribution to the achievement of sustainable development. Port developments should enhance the ability of Sussex to develop sustainable commercial and recreational boat fisheries by the inclusion of, for example, appropriate berthing facilities, fishing waste facilities and supply chain facilities. Consideration should be given to aquaculture infrastructure.

Appropriate evidence and monitoring surveys to adequately understand and quantify significant impacts of activities on marine features should be required. Where relevant the Authority may be able work with the authorising body to identify appropriate monitoring plans. A review of proposals should be carried out if new evidence comes to light.

5. Tourism and Recreation

The Sussex IFCA seeks to take steps that are necessary or expedient for the purpose of making a contribution to the achievement of sustainable development. Development should include facilities to increase the awareness and sustainable use of the marine environment. Sustainable tourism development should co-exist with the fisheries sector and Marine Protected Areas.