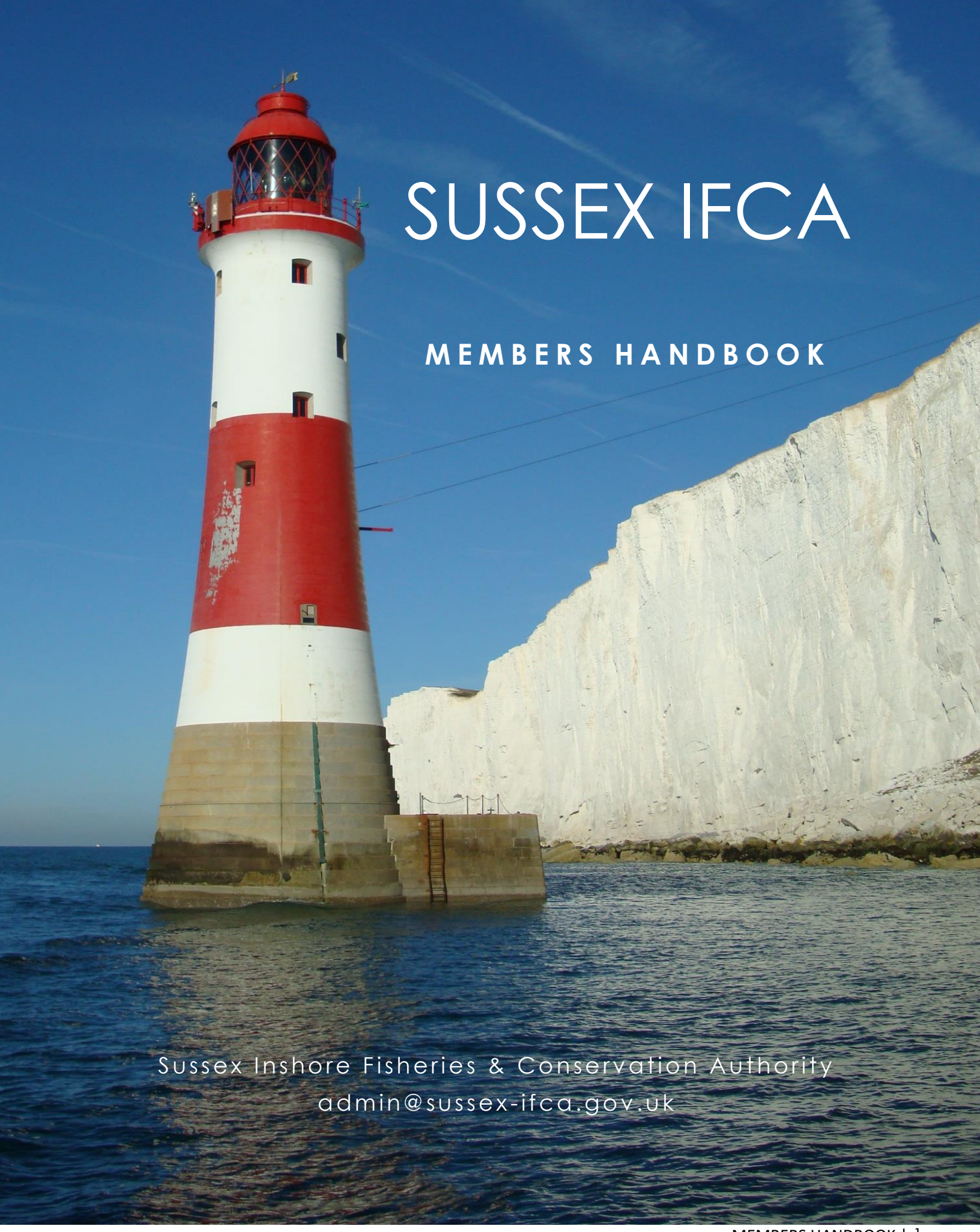
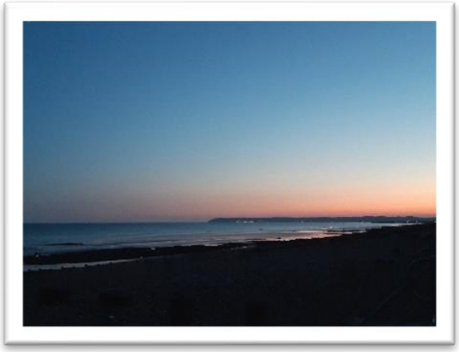


SUSSEX IFCA

MEMBERS HANDBOOK

Sussex Inshore Fisheries & Conservation Authority
admin@sussex-ifca.gov.uk



INTRODUCTION

In this document you will find the information that you need to inform you about how Sussex IFCA is governed and how it carries out its operations. With this information, together with your meeting papers, your time in the Authority should be effective and rewarding.

STRUCTURE, PLANNING & GOVERNANCE

Sussex IFCA, like all ten English IFCAs, was set up under the Marine and Coastal access act (2009).

The legislation sets out who should sit on the Authority. How members should act and be treated has been defined in;

> Standing Orders

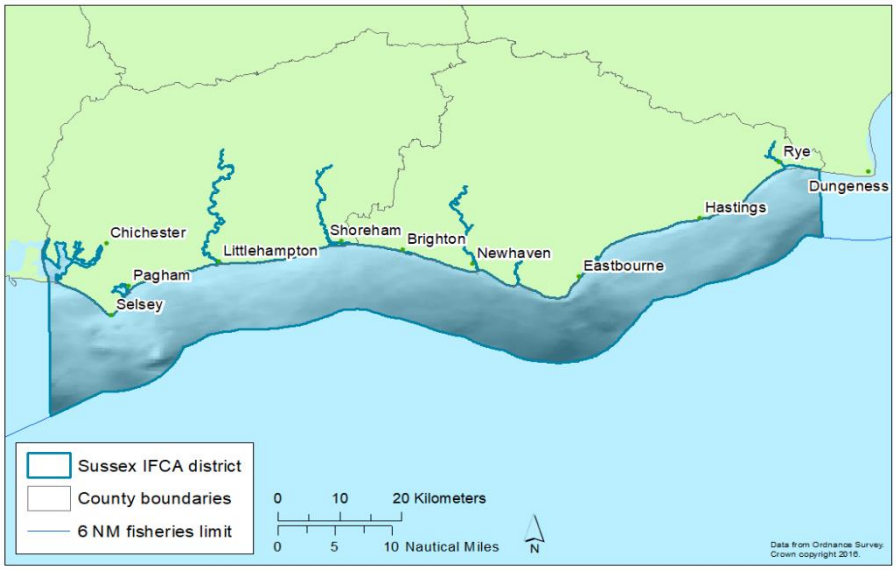
> Members code of conduct

Dealing with privacy and data protection policy and principals:

As part of the IFCA duties it must plan effectively. In Sussex this is done through the four-year management plan. Together with the subsidiary Conservation & Research Plan, the Compliance plan and the Communications plan this makes for a well-structured, transparent work plan. Reporting back to government and stakeholders on progress is done through the Annual Report. Full details of the four-year plan and the Annual report can be found here.

SUSSEX IFCA DISTRICT

The District covers the sea area out to 6 nautical miles from Chichester Harbour in the West to Camber Sands in the east. The boundaries are defined in the Sussex Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Order 2010. You can explore our interactive map of the District and a selection of information layers here. On this map you can explore the District boundaries, fishing activity, Marine Protected Areas, wrecks and more.



THE MARINE ENVIRONMENT OF SUSSEX

The marine environment of Sussex is varied and interesting with its range of wildlife habitats and species. We are lucky to have some of the few chalk reef habitats on the planet, as well as sandstone reefs and all varieties of sediment habitats where fish like the black seabream come to spawn.

You can explore these habitats in detail on our interactive map.

Much of our marine environment is designated, and helps UK action to achieve 30% protection of the seas. These specific designated sites can be explored here. Putting management in place on Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) has been a significant core piece of work for the IFCAs since their inception.

FISHERIES IN THE DISTRICT

The fishery in Sussex is predominantly inshore in nature (with certain notable exceptions). There are 12 principle-fishing stations in the District from east to west these are: Rye, Hastings, Eastbourne, Newhaven, Brighton, Shoreham by Sea, Worthing, Littlehampton, Bognor Regis, Selsey and Chichester Harbour.

The majority of registered vessels within the District (approximately 90%) are less than 10 meters in length. The nature of the inshore fleet in many cases makes for cohesive fishing communities; this is a more traditional feature and is important in the effective management of the fleet. This situation provides for a sense of ownership of the resource.

The main target fish species within Sussex are sole, plaice, bass, cod, black bream, cuttlefish, huss, whiting, mackerel, red/grey mullet, and squid. Target species can be determined by quota allocation from DEFRA, and the majority of the vessels in Sussex are not affiliated to Producer Organisations.

SHELLFISH

The main crustacea and mollusc fisheries in the District are: whelk, lobster, scallop, common spider crab, brown crab and oysters. The importance of the whelk in the landings of the Sussex vessels has risen considerably over the years. In some stations such as Eastbourne it is the singularly most important species, vessels from all stations will take this mollusc at various times of the year. The importance of the lobster fishery increases as one travels from east to west within the District, with Selsey landing the most and having virtually all its vessels dedicated for the most part on crustacea fisheries.

The scallop fishery is variable and seasonal. Important fisheries exist in the eastern English Channel and extend into the Sussex IFCA boundaries. Although the spat and therefore the stocks are variable year on year, the landings can be quite considerable, and the Authority plays an important part in the protection of these sites from vessels which are prohibited from fishing by nature of their size and nationality. Scallops provide large vessels with a valuable alternative fishery. When stock is abundant this species can receive considerable effort directed towards it. In the 1980's a boom in the number of scallops saw intense pressure, the stocks have only returned to something relating to their previous levels since the late 1990's.

At the turn of the 19th century Shoreham by Sea was built on its oyster fishery, today, however, the only native oyster fishery that remains is in Chichester Harbour. Bonamia and Diarrhetic Shellfish Poisoning (DSP) have been an issue in this Harbour and the landings have been seen to decline. At present the traditional dredge fishery supports inshore vessels based within the Eastern Solent. The oyster permit byelaw ensures that the fishery is only open when sufficient stock is on the ground.

FISHING METHODS

Methods utilised within the Authority's District fall into two major sub-divisions (1) fixed gear (2) mobile gear. The fixed gear category has two further sub divisions (a) nets (b) pots.

STATIC GEAR: NETS

There are a variety of types of nets deployed within the District, the most common of which is the trammel net. The trammel is constructed of three 'sheets' of nets, the outer nets are rigged one each side of the inner mesh panel. These nets have a cork line (top line) and lead line (bottom line). The nets sit or 'swim' in 3 to 8 feet of water. The fixed net only fish es on the slowest run of the tide. Fish targeted in this manner are plaice, sole, cod and cuttlefish. Gill nets and tangle nets are also used for targeting fish such as cod, these nets are fished in a similar manner to trammel nets but are rigged from a single sheet that sits vertically on the seabed. Nets are usually made from monofilament, although nylon is essential when targeting spider crabs, due to the abrasion caused by this crab during entrapment. The fixed net vessels work various styles and combinations according to the season: gill nets for cod in the winter and trammel nets for plaice and sole in the early spring. In the spring / summer season trammel nets are set for plaice, cuttlefish, and sole and gill nets for bass. In the autumn, trammel nets are set for plaice and sole and gill nets set for bass and cod. These net combinations are found from all stations, and they are different to most other parts of the country due to the diversity of the fishery.

The drift net cannot be considered a static gear, as it is not attached to the seabed. The net is rigged from a single sheet of monofilament with a depth of up to twenty feet. The float line keeps the top on the surface whilst the lead line stands the net in the water. These nets are shot across the tide and allowed to drift.

STATIC GEAR: POTS & TRAPS

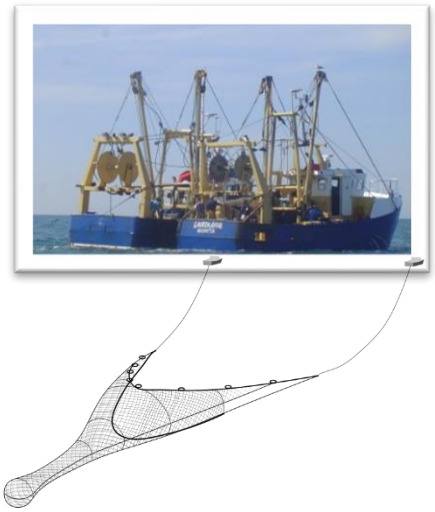
The Parlour pot is the most common method for targeting lobster within the District; these are fished in strings of up to about twenty pots by the larger vessels and singly by the smaller open boats. Inkwell pots are more usually deployed for brown crab, which, inshore, are mostly to be found in the west of the District. A small number of boats set prawn pots, with enough landed to supply small local markets. As well as the trawl and net fisheries for cuttlefish, in certain seasons the cuttlefish trap can be effective. The trap is 'baited' with a live female or a white ceramic tile, which attracts this short-lived species. Whelks are targeted in reclaimed 25-litre drums that are weighted at one end with concrete and shot in strings in a similar fashion to the lobster pots. Whelks prefer 'softer' ground, the paleo-arctic deposits found in the channel provide the ideal substratum.

TOWED GEAR: BEAM TRAWLS

Beam trawls target mainly flatfish, including plaice, sole, turbot and brill, other ground feeding fish such as codling, gurnard and cuttlefish may be caught by way of a bye catch. The substrate over which the gear is towed is usually sand and shingle, however slightly 'harder ground' can be worked with the aid of wheels on the beams. The addition of flip up footropes also facilitates the working of slightly harder ground. Beam trawls are towed either astern of the vessel on the smaller boats, or off the derricks forward of amidships on the larger boats. National legislation limits the engine power of beam trawlers, and the length of the beam is also restricted. Those vessels not fulfilling the requirements must fish outside of 12nm miles.

TOWED GEAR: ROCK HOPPER

Normally used in conjunction with steel otter boards and wire bridles these trawls target cod, whiting, lemon sole, squid, cuttlefish, and bass. Larger sole, skate and dogfish are also caught. This gear can be worked on the grounds with harder substrates such as the fisheries off Dungeness, Beachy Head and Worthing.



TOWED GEAR: PAIR TRAWL

The pair trawl is made from hardwearing gear, but, instead of the otter boards, it is the two vessels that open the trawl. In Sussex, this method is used primarily for bass and black seabream. One method used in the practice is an adapted pelagic or semi-pelagic single boat trawl. Vessels from ports within and outside the District engage in pair trawling although this activity is seen far less since the introduction of the Near Shore Trawling Byelaw. The areas previously fished were predominantly off Littlehampton and Worthing but also off Beachy Head later in the season.

TOWED GEAR: SMALL FOOT ROPE OTTER TRAWL

The small footrope otter trawl again uses otter boards although wood instead of steel is used in their construction. Wire or combination wire bridles are also used but they are longer than the rock hopper rig typically 60 to 100 fathoms. The main species targeted with this method are plaice, sole, codling, cuttlefish and any other fish that bury themselves in the sand. This trawl cuts through the top layer of the soft sea bottom and the tickler chain digs the fish out. This rig is used predominantly to the east of the District due to the softer seabed.

TOWED GEAR: DREDGES

Two types of dredges are used within the District, the oyster dredge and the scallop dredge. The targeting of scallops within the District is restricted to the use of the Newhaven type dredge. This dredge consists of a steel frame to which a 'belly' of heavy steel rings is connected; the back of the dredge is made of trawl mesh and lightly constructed steel rings. Forward are the high tensile spring-loaded teeth, these teeth contact the seabed and rake the scallops into the dredge. This method is only allowed beyond three nautical miles of the land, by way of a byelaw restriction.
Between 4 and 14 dredges aside are used, and some of the smaller vessels tow astern working the dredges across the transom of the vessel. The ability of vessels to keep dredges on the seabed is affected by weather and tide. Heavy bars increase the seabed keeping ability but this remains a limit on the effectiveness of this method for the smaller vessels. The oyster dredge is much lighter in construction and is exclusively used within the boundaries of Chichester Harbour. The dredge has a fixed flat bar across the forward section of the dredge and they are towed from astern.

A Seafish guide to the basic fisheries methods can be found here.

A guide to Sussex key fish species and their fisheries can be viewed here.

CONSERVATION & RESEARCH

The work of our Conservation and Research department ensures that we can make fisheries and conservation management decisions based on good evidence. The department carries out a wide range of activities that include field monitoring and surveys, stakeholder consultations, analysis of data and mapping using Geographical Information Systems (GIS).

The Department also ensures effective working in partnership with local and national organisations such as Natural England, the Sussex Marine & Coastal Forum, the Solent Forum, The South Downs National Park, and many more.

The Conservation and Research work can be explored here.

COMPLIANCE

The work of the Compliance Officers is vital in ensuring that the stakeholder community understands and abides by the regulations put in place by the Sussex IFCA and National Fisheries regulators (the MMO and Defra). The Officers are all warranted under the Marine and Coastal Access Act (2009) and associated legislation. Officers' powers are wide ranging so that effective inspections and enforcement actions can take place.

The Compliance Plan and other useful materials can be found here.

COMMUNICATIONS

At the national level our goal is to participate fully in the national marine communications initiative to ensure that IFCA efforts to protect the inshore marine environment and to support and enable activity within it are recognised and understood. At a local level our aim is to create a stakeholder community that is well informed about the work of the Sussex IFCA and that stakeholders are confident that we represent value for money in delivering our core values of healthy seas, sustainable fisheries and a viable industry.

Through our consultations and research outreach we generate a number of communications materials. Examples can be seen on the following pages.

Consultations on management reviews can be viewed here.

Numerous reports and publications can be viewed here.

MARINE OPERATIONS ASSESTS

The Fisheries patrol vessel *'Watchful'* is the primary marine asset of the Sussex IFCA and is complemented by the daughter vessel *'Delta One'*. The 18 metre LOA (length overall) *'Watchful'* is of aluminium alloy construction and a bespoke design and was constructed to operate effectively in the district. *'Watchful'* routinely undertakes research tasks in the diverse waters of Sussex, these include small fish beam trawl surveys and cuttlefish research. *'Watchful'*s primary role is compliance, both inshore and offshore.

The Fisheries patrol vessel *'Merlin'* is a rigid hulled inflatable boat of 8 metre LOA. *'Merlin'* was built with support from the Environment Agency and is owned and operated by the IFCA, providing a compliance platform for both organisations. Due to its shallow draught and waterjet propulsion the vessel is ideal for joint operations with the Environment Agency, for both near shore coastal and river patrols. The vessel is ideal for routine patrol operations and fast interception work both inshore and further out to sea.

Read more here.