

North Eastern
Inshore Fisheries
and Conservation
Authority

ANNUAL PLAN

2026/2027

North Eastern

IFCA

Inshore Fisheries and
Conservation Authority



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North Eastern Inshore Fisheries and Conservation authority

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VISION

“To 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.”

FOREWORD

Looking ahead it will be another exciting and busy year for North Eastern Inshore Fisheries and Conservation authority (NEIFCA).

During February 2026 NEIFCA's new main vessel, North Eastern Guardian IV, entered operational service following an extended period of commissioning and trials. Through 2026/2027 the new vessel will play a key role in the delivery of NEIFCA's offshore survey programme which is detailed within this latest annual plan.

Alongside NEIFCA's offshore survey programme, key priorities include: The implementation of new shellfish permitting schemes, including a cap on the maximum number of pots allowed; The implementation of a sea bass tagging scheme; A review and revision of NEIFCA's current mobile gear management measures and continuing active engagement in the delivery of the national Fisheries Management Plan (FMP) programme.

Finally, I would like to pass on my very best wishes for 2026/2027 to all NEIFCA staff, officers and members and in particular, to those that have recently been appointed to the authority.

Professor Michael Elliott, Chair of NEIFCA.

FLAMBOROUGH



INTRODUCTION

Plan content

This plan covers the period 1, April 2026 to 31, March 2027 and has been developed through North Eastern Inshore Fisheries and Conservation authority's (NEIFCA) main committee and internal working groups. The plan sets out the main performance targets and objectives for the year ahead and will be reviewed and updated annually to reflect improvements in performance brought about by achieved targets and any changes in national objectives and success criteria.

Functions

NEIFCA is responsible for managing the exploitation of sea fisheries resources within its area of jurisdiction. This includes all animals and plants which habitually live or are cultivated in the sea. In delivering this function it is required to ensure that all exploitation and development, taking place within its district, is sustainable and socio-economic needs are balanced with marine environmental protection. NEIFCA is also required to balance the needs of all stakeholders exploiting resources within its district and further

the conservation objectives of any Marine Conservation Zones (MCZs). NEIFCA's principal enforcement functions relate to minimum landing sizes, net and fishing gear regulations, restricted fishing areas and Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) including the protection of European Marine Sites (EMSs) and (MCZs).

NEIFCA maintains a range of resources and assets to support the effective delivery of its statutory duties, most notably, its new main fisheries vessel, North Eastern Guardian IV (NEG IV) which will play a central role in supporting offshore enforcement and compliance work and monitoring the impact of offshore fishing activities on key stocks such as lobster, crab and scallop and seabed habitats.

Following a seventeen month build programme NEG IV was formally accepted from its manufacturers, Parkol Marine Ltd, on 31 January 2026 and entered service during February 2026. A 26m aluminium catamaran, NEG IV is designed primarily to support the delivery of NEIFCA's expanding offshore marine survey programme.

That programme covers the assessment and monitoring of (MPAs), the assessment and monitoring of key fish and shellfish stocks and the enforcement of fisheries legislation including local byelaw regulations.

NEIFCA can also make fisheries byelaw regulations (*subject to final confirmation by the Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs*) to address a wide range of local fisheries and marine environmental management issues. This statutory function also extends to emergency byelaw regulations which are time limited to a maximum period of eighteen months.



ENVIRONMENTAL RESPONSIBILITIES

Since its inception in 2010, NEIFCA's role in marine conservation and protection has continued to develop. The 2009 Marine and Coastal Access Act provides clear duties to ensure that any exploitation of sea fisheries resources is carried out in a sustainable way and the conservation objectives of MCZ are furthered. There are currently two MCZ designated within the authority's jurisdiction:

- Holderness Inshore
- Runswick Bay.

NEIFCA is also a statutory consultee for all marine licensing applications and consents occurring within its area of jurisdiction. These include applications relating to the discharge of effluents, marine water extraction, removal and deposition of dredged materials, harbour and coastal construction projects, scientific investigations and renewable energy projects.

The MMO acts as the primary consultative 'hub' for the majority of licensing applications and consents involving construction. The Environment Agency (EA) is the primary statutory lead in relation to consents relating to the discharge of effluents and marine water extraction in England and Wales.

The majority of consultations are now dealt with electronically via a national system operated by the MMO.

Key NEIFCA Officers are registered on this system and receive electronic alerts when relevant licensing consents are opened for consultation, comments are then drafted and submitted electronically on behalf of the authority. This work is currently led by the Environmental and Scientific Manager, Dr Ralf Bublitz.

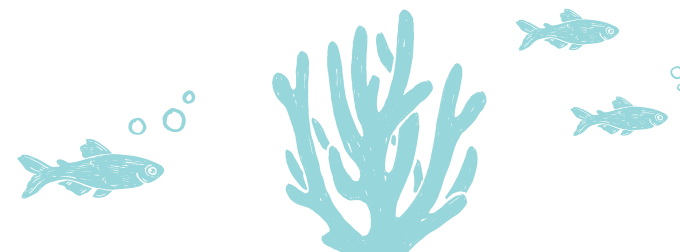
A similar electronic consultation process is in place through the EA to deal with any applications and consents relating to marine discharging. In addition, NEIFCA is also a '*relevant and Competent authority*' under the Conservation (*Natural Habitats &c*) Regulations 1994. This means that it, along with other partners, has a statutory duty to ensure that the conservation objectives of EMS are upheld. Currently five EMS are designated within NEIFCA's jurisdiction:

- Northumbria Coast
- Teesmouth and Cleveland Coast
- Flamborough Head
- Humber Estuary and the Greater Wash site through a formal management group.

During 2012, DEFRA commenced a project aimed at strengthening the assessment and management of fishing activities within European Marine Sites to ensure much greater compliance with Article 6 of the Habitats Directive. This revised approach was subsequently extended to include MCZ.

All UK sites and associated fishing activities have been categorised according to their features and the level of risk presented by both current and potential fishing activities. Each site is subject to ongoing monitoring and assessment of the potential impacts arising from fishing activity. This allows tailored management to be introduced to protect and conserve sensitive environmental features such as salt marsh or sub-tidal reef habitat.

Many sites have established management schemes in place that help to coordinate the work of relevant Authorities, including IFCAs, through a formal management group.



AUTHORITY AREA

NEIFCA's statutory district extends six nautical miles seaward from the baselines, from the River Tyne to a point drawn True East from 'Haile Sand Fort' on the North East Lincolnshire authority boundary, close to Humberston, on the South Bank of the Humber Estuary. It also encompasses all estuarine areas, landward to tidal limits, occurring within the boundaries of member local authorities.

- | | | | |
|---|--------------|----|------------------|
| 1 | River Tyne | 1 | South Shields |
| 2 | River Wear | 2 | Sunderland |
| 3 | River Tees | 3 | Seaham |
| 4 | River Esk | 4 | Hartlepool |
| 5 | River Humber | 5 | South Gare |
| 6 | River Ouse | 6 | Redcar |
| 7 | River Trent | 7 | Marske |
| | | 8 | Saltburn |
| | | 9 | Skinningrove |
| | | 10 | Staithe |
| | | 11 | Port Mulgrave |
| | | 12 | Runswick Bay |
| | | 13 | Sandsend |
| | | 14 | Whitby |
| | | 15 | Robin Hoods Bay |
| | | 16 | Scarborough |
| | | 17 | Filey |
| | | 18 | Flamborough Head |
| | | 19 | Bridlington |
| | | 20 | Hornsea |
| | | 21 | Tunstall |
| | | 22 | Withernsea |
| | | 23 | Kilnsea |
| | | 24 | Stone Creek |
| | | 25 | Hull |
| | | 26 | Immingham |
| | | 27 | Grimsby |
| | | 28 | Cleethorpes |
| | | 29 | Humberston |



FUNDING

Levy

The levy for the 2026/2027 financial year has been agreed and set by the local authority members at **£1,763,870**, a three per cent uplift on the previous year.

Overall budget

The authority's budget is spent in the following major areas:

Central management budget

Expenditure relating to the cost of corporate management and administrative support, including human resource, legal, financial, administrative support and training. The draft budget resources the main objectives and work priorities for the year ahead in order to deliver the strategic '*road map*' towards the achievement of both the authority's overarching national vision and local priorities. It has been produced in line with the annual plan and Strategic risk register.

Operations

Direct expenditure incurred in the performance of the authority's objectives, comprising land-based, offshore and environmental activities including salaries and asset running costs relating to vessel and vehicle fuel, maintenance, berthing fees, storage costs, leasing and hire costs and the purchase of equipment.

Financial risks 2026/2027

The following financial risks have been identified for the year ahead:

- Inflationary pressures driven by conflict in the Middle East
- Associated volatility in global fuel prices
- Changes in Local Government financing.

Operational budget for the authority for 2026/2027

Net expenditure

Central management **£465,360**

Operations

Land based operations **£150,390**

Offshore operations **£890,780**

Environment **£158,610**

Funded projects **-£14,170**

Net cost of service £1,650,970

Funding

Contribution to vehicle replacement reserve **£10,000**

Contribution to renewals fund **£102,900**

Transfer to revenue from renewals fund **£0**

Local authority levy £1,763,870

RESERVES



Reserves are held to manage the above risks. In the short-term the general reserve will be available to meet the ongoing known pressures, but it is expected that proposed charges or additional income will eventually balance the budget. The Authority maintains a general reserve to meet unforeseen events and specific reserves to even out cash flow for individual projects or purchases. The Authority currently holds three specific reserves.

General reserve

The general reserve enables the authority to demonstrate its financial standing as a 'going concern', to be in a position to meet unforeseen liabilities. The requisite level of reserves is subjective, since any such liability is neither known nor anticipated. Setting the level of general reserves is just one of several related decisions in the formulation of the budget for a particular year. Account is taken of the key risks, stated above, that could impact on the financial assumptions underpinning the budget alongside a consideration of the authority's financial management arrangements. A good track record for managing in-year budget pressures and operation of robust financial reporting arrangements is evident.

The expected balance of the general reserve as at 1 April 2026 is **£228,450**.

Specific reserve

This reserve is used to manage the risk associated with patrol vessel maintenance.

The expected opening balance as at 1 April 2026 is **£50,000**.

The vehicle replacement reserve is used to fund the maintenance and replacement of vehicles.

The balance on the reserve is forecast to be **£32,782** at 1 April 2026.

Following the completion of the build of NEG IV a new vessel replacement fund has been established from 1 April 2026.

The balance on the reserve is forecast to be **£342,559** at 1 April 2026.

The external projects reserve is used to manage and utilise external funding sources to support a range of work including national policy delivery and other project work.

The balance on the reserve is forecast to be **£0** at 1 April 2026.



ASSETS



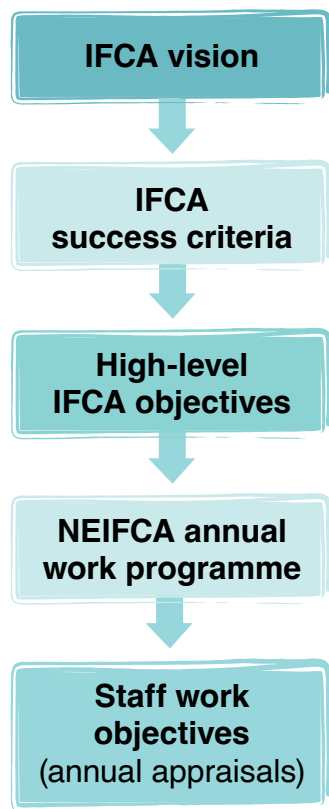
NEIFCA operates a diverse fleet of vessels and equipment to support its statutory duties. Its largest asset is the North Eastern Guardian IV (NEGIV), a newly commissioned 24.5 metre aluminium survey and patrol catamaran delivered in February 2026. Purpose built to meet NEIFCA's research, survey and enforcement requirements, the vessel is capable of reaching speeds of up to 24 knots and is equipped with a small Rigid Inflatable Boat (RIB) for boarding operations at sea. In addition, a 9.5 metre cabin RIB capable of reaching speeds up to 40 knots and a 6.4 open RIB play a key role in delivering enforcement activities across the district.

The authority operates a fleet of three pick-up trucks, a transporter van and a small caddy van, all of which support the transport and launch of vessels and equipment, as well as access to coastal and estuarine locations. The organisation is staffed by a full time team of fourteen personnel, bringing together a broad range of skills, expertise and professional competencies.



CONSTITUTION

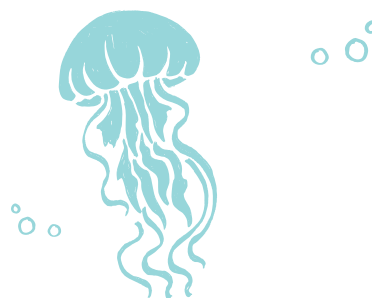
The authority's work programme for the year ahead is reviewed and adopted annually, reflecting local, regional and national priorities for the year ahead. The relationship between the national IFCA vision, national objectives and the annual work programme is diagrammatically represented below:



NEIFCA is one of ten such authorities established in October 2010 under provisions contained within the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009.

On 1, April 2011 the authority assumed full statutory responsibility for managing the exploitation of sea fisheries resources within its jurisdiction.

The authority currently consists of representatives from the eleven coastal local authorities within its area, comprising 13 local authority members, together with 14 members appointed by the MMO and singular members representing Natural England, the Environment Agency and the MMO. The total membership of the authority is 30 members.



FLAMBOROUGH NORTH LANDING



MEMBERSHIP OF AUTHORITY

Appointed by Constituent Authorities:

Durham County Council

Councillor. M Wilkes

East Riding of Yorkshire Council

Councillor. J Owen
Councillor. T Norman (E)

Hartlepool Borough Council

Councillor. R Creevy (E)

Hull City Council

Councillor. T Henry

North East Lincolnshire Council

Councillor. R Augusta
Councillor. S Farren

North Lincolnshire Council

Councillor. N Poole

North Yorkshire County Council

Councillor. D Chance (VC,E)
Councillor. N Swannick (E)

Redcar and Cleveland Borough Council

Councillor. C Cawley

South Tyneside Metropolitan Borough

Councillor. E Gibson

Stockton-On-Tees

Councillor. C Gamble
Councillor. N Cooke

Sunderland City Council

Councillor. L Scanlan

Appointed by Marine Management Organisation

Professor Mike Elliott (C,E)
Mr M Montgomerie
Mr W Jenkinson
Mr T Pearson
Miss R Lynham
Mr K Woodcock
Mr A Faichney
Mr G Collins (E)
Dr C Fitzsimmons
Dr S Axford

Nominated by Marine Management Organisation

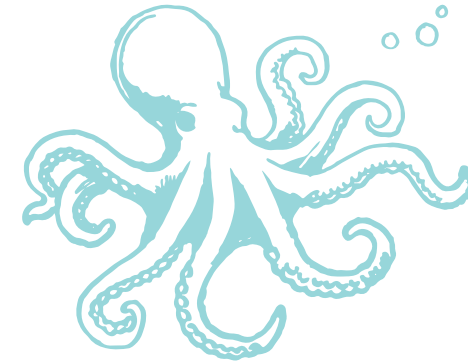
Mr C Proud Mr A Earle

Appointed by the Environment Agency

Mr M Christmas

Appointed by Natural England

Mrs C Argent



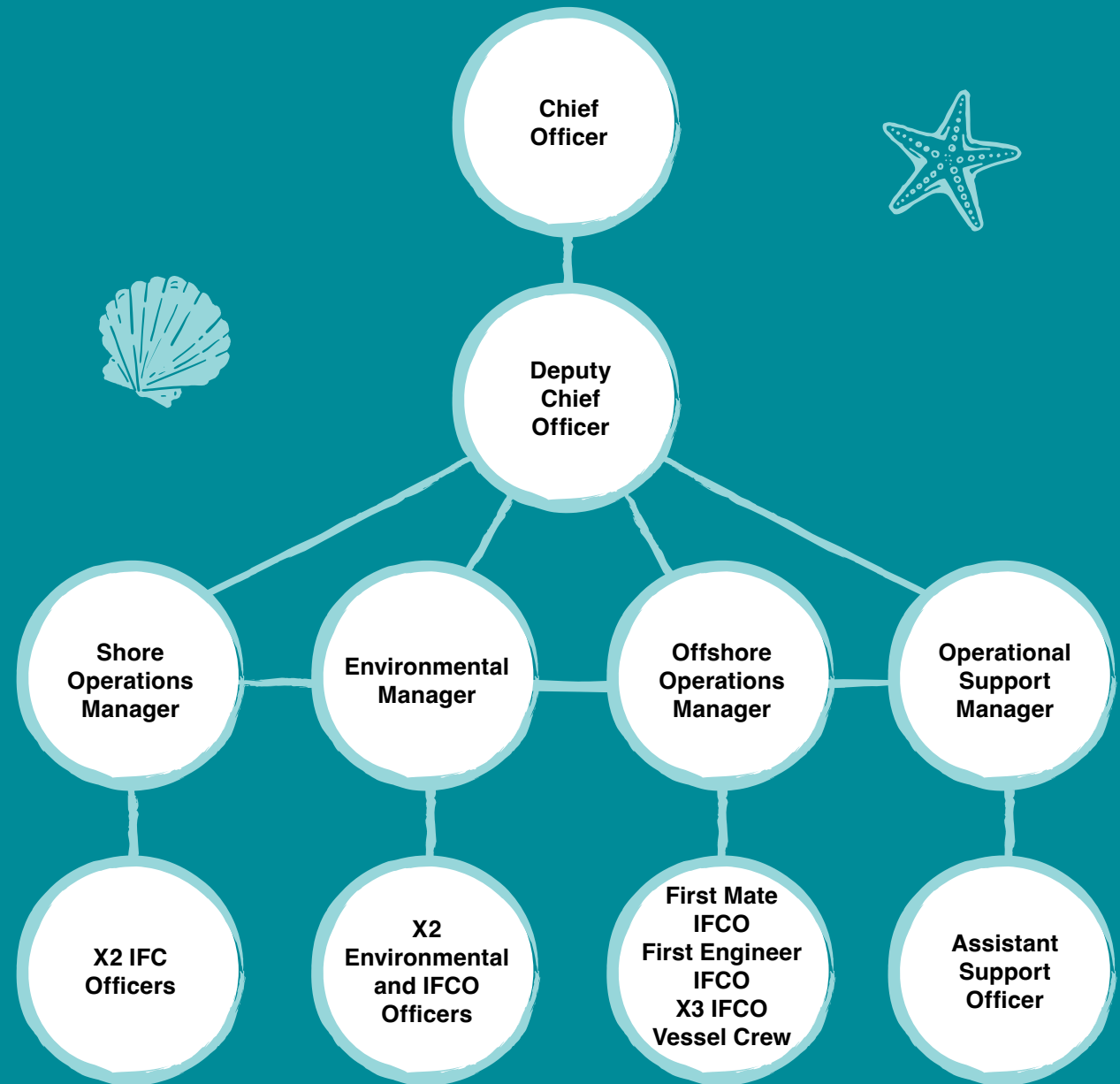
(C) Chairman
(VC) Vice Chairman
(E) Members of the Executive Committee

STAFF AND STRUCTURE

NEIFCA is a direct employer with an establishment currently comprising a Chief Officer (CO); Shore Operations Manager and two Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Officers (IFCOs); Environmental and Scientific Manager and two Environmental and Scientific Officers; Offshore Operations Manager and First Mate, First Engineer, and three IFCO Vessel Crewmen; Operational Support Manager and Assistant Support Officer. The Offshore Operations Manager also acts as Deputy Chief Officer (DCO) providing management and leadership across all 'day-to-day' operational activity and support to the CO.

The CO heads NEIFCA's operational delivery and alongside the DCO, is supported by a senior management team comprising of the First Mate, First Engineer, Shore Operations Manager, Environmental and Scientific Manager and Operational Support Manager.

North Eastern IFCA Organisational Structure



SERVICE STANDARDS



- Staff will always identify themselves when dealing with you.
- Respond to written correspondence within ten working days.
- Respond to email correspondence within five working days (*we will respond by email*).
- Deal with complaints in accordance with the feedback procedure.
- Be courteous and helpful.
- Provide information on our services and facilities.
- Consult on important issues and ask your views about our services.
- Provide confidential interview facilities.
- Provide an inspection record form at the end of any premise, vessel or vehicle inspection.
- In terms of any formal prosecutions, all proceedings to have commenced within six months of the detection of the original offence.



TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT

Following the completion of a comprehensive staffing and organisational review in December 2020, a new annual appraisal process was implemented during November 2021 and is now well established. This process remains central to supporting the ongoing training, development and support needs of all NEIFCA staff. Annual appraisals are typically held between January and March supported by continuous supervision throughout the year. All training and development needs identified through the appraisal process, are incorporated into a training plan which is centrally managed within the operational support team. The Appraisal process also links to progression through NEIFCA's pay structure. Alongside annual appraisals for established staff, the training, development and support needs of newly appointed staff continue to be actively managed through NEIFCA's probation programme.

It is important that training and development activities are focused on those areas which are relevant to the workplace and that there is mutual commitment from both the employee and manager. NEIFCA views training and development in a much wider and holistic sense, including not only specific formal 'classroom' based training courses but also conferences, seminars, workshops, presentations to external groups and representing NEIFCA at relevant public events.

SCALLOP DREDGER



CORE STRATEGIES

NEIFCA's operational delivery is guided by a number of core or 'key' strategies and policies which are integral to this plan and its successful implementation. These strategies are reviewed and updated regularly. The risk management policy and associated risk registers are reviewed and considered on a minimum sixth monthly basis. Other strategies, such as enforcement and compliance and research are reviewed on an annual basis. These core or key policies which inform the work of NEIFCA are summarised as follows:

Enforcement and compliance policy

The enforcement policy statement has been drafted in accordance with the Regulators' Compliance Code and the regulatory principles required under the Legislative Regulatory Reform Act 2006.

It sets out the general principles and approach which NEIFCA will follow. The appropriate use of enforcement powers, including prosecution, is important both to improve compliance with the legislation and to hold those to account who cause significant harm to marine ecosystems.



Research strategies

The authority's research work includes fisheries stock assessment programmes, environmental research and monitoring work and occasional 'ad hoc' project initiatives. This work is supported and informed by an annual research strategy and five-year strategic plan. The content of the research strategy is agreed annually by the authority's Science Advisory Group and reviewed throughout the year. The strategy can also be updated to support the planning and delivery of national work streams as and when they arise.

Risk management strategy

The aim of this strategy is to manage risk and to successfully integrate risk management into existing business and management processes. Risk management is a key part of this authority's corporate governance arrangements providing assurance to meet the requirements of the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2003 and is reviewed and adopted annually.

Strategic environmental assessment

Is a statutory process which aims to provide high level protection of the environment and to ensure integration of environmental considerations in the preparation and adoption of plans and programmes with a view to promoting sustainable development. This methodology underpins the authority's fisheries management processes.



NEIFCA SUMMARY WORK PROGRAMME 2026 / 2027

Authority Officers and members have developed the following summary work programme for the year ahead. The work programme covers a wide range of local and regional priorities and links to the delivery of the national IFCA Success Criteria.

Organisational development

A range of ongoing work will continue through 2026/2027, This work will focus on strengthening leadership, management and communication skill sets across the operational Senior Management Team to improve and strengthen the efficiency and effectiveness of service delivery. This will be facilitated through a range of individually focused training and development initiatives.

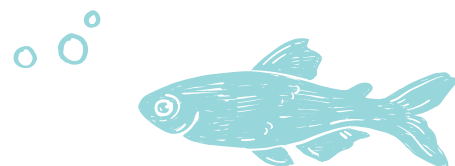
Performance matrices

NEIFCA is currently working with the national Association of IFCAs (AIFCA) and DEFRA to develop a set of performance matrices to better inform and publicise the extent of its work and associated outputs across the year. This work is ongoing and will cover a wide range of delivery areas from enforcement, through to fisheries

and Marine Protected Area (MPA), marine licensing and consenting and national policy engagement and delivery such as the Fisheries Management Plan (FMP) programme.

Review of IFCA Conduct and Operations

Every four years there is a statutory requirement under Section 183 of the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009 for the Secretary of State to 'lay' a report to Parliament on the conduct and operations of IFCAs. The third such report, covering the period 2018 to 2022, was published by Defra on 6, February 2025. Following publication, NEIFCA has been working in partnership with Defra and the national Association of IFCAs, through a Conduct and Operations Report Recommendations Implementation Steering group (CORRIS), to address some of the key issues identified within the report. This partnership work, through CORRIS, will continue during 2026/2027 and include preparation and participation in the next review, covering the period 2022 to 2026, planned for 2026.



Policy and strategy work

Throughout the scope of this plan of programmed work through 2026/2027, NEIFCA is committed to furthering the development of a number of new strategies as follows:

Incident and response strategy and monitoring policy

Following the shellfish mortalities and associated challenges in 2021, NEIFCA introduced a incident response strategy building on lessons learned and provide a guiding framework for dealing with any similar future events. Whilst there are clearly defined strategies and processes in place for managing anthropogenic events such as oil spillages there is very little guidance on managing naturally occurring events. NEIFCA is committed to periodically reviewing and developing this strategy in close collaboration with the relevant agencies. As part of this work, during 2026/2027, NEIFCA will participate in the delivery of a joint national project designed to improve our understanding of the health of the coastal ecosystem and establish a comprehensive coastal monitoring framework. The project titled 'CHLE', 'Coastal Health Livelihoods and Environment' will be led by CEFAS and funded by DEFRA.

Recreational sea angling strategy

NEIFCA has always carried an ambition to strengthen its active engagement with the recreational fishing sector. During 2022 the authority's first recreational sea angling strategy was drafted and officers will continue to actively build on that strategy through the further development of associated projects and initiatives and working in partnership with the Angling Trust. One particular focus for the year ahead relates to the management and development of Blue Fin Tuna fisheries within the NEIFCA district.

IT systems and processes

Website

A new NEIFCA website was launched during February 2022 and officers are committed to both maintaining and developing its functionality through 2026/2027.

Fisheries database

Since 2021 NEIFCA has been working in partnership with Sussex IFCA and an external IT company to develop a bespoke IFCA fisheries database. It is now well established and its use is expanding across the other IFCA areas. Within NEIFCA, the database currently supports the administration and management of its shellfish permit schemes and officers will continue to widen its scope and enhance its functionality across other managed fisheries throughout 2026/2027.

Integration with national fisheries systems

Nationally IFCA's link into a number of enforcement and compliance and intelligence systems which are managed by the MMO. Engagement is supported by formal data sharing agreements and Memoranda of Understanding (MoU). Active work will continue in this area during 2026/2027 both in terms of maintaining input into the national fisheries enforcement and compliance database MCSS and a new joint intelligence gathering system, 'Clue' with the MMO. Pilot work is also planned with the MMO during 2026/2027 to explore the use of a new mobile working application.

Byelaw development and review 2026/2027

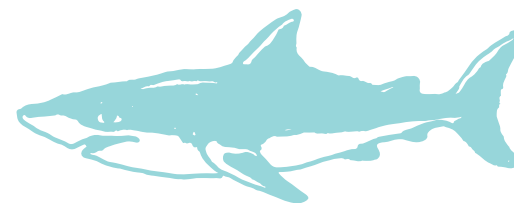
Shellfish permit byelaw

A new shellfish byelaw was formally made by the authority on 1, December 2022. The statutory consultation period closed on 27, October 2023, and the MMO's quality assurance process was completed following its submission to DEFRA for final confirmation in July 2025. This byelaw introduces a permitting framework supported by flexible conditions that can be adapted in response to changes within the exploited stocks. These conditions will cover species, catch limits, gear type, vessel specifications and temporal restrictions. The new framework will enable NEIFCA to manage its pot fisheries far more proactively,

efficiently and effectively. This byelaw was confirmed by the Secretary of state on 4, March 2026 and implementation has already commenced and will continue through 2026/2027.

Mobile gear byelaw

The primary aim of introducing a new byelaw is to simplify the current legislative framework, improve clarity for stakeholders and update byelaws that are no longer reflective of modern fishing practices or contemporary environmental management requirements. The proposed approach would introduce a single, consolidated byelaw supported by flexible permit conditions. This would enable NEIFCA to respond more effectively and proportionately to emerging evidence, environmental pressures, and changes in fishing activity. Given that the dynamic nature of the marine environment and potential challenges due to climate change, the use of flexible permit conditions would allow appropriate management measures to be implemented or amended in a time efficient manner where necessary to protect stocks, the fishing industry and sensitive habitats.



Provisional timescales

- Informal Consultation
– January to February 2026.
- Present draft byelaw to authority for approval – June 2026.
- Statutory consultation
– July/August 2026.
- Submission to MMO for Quality Assurance – September 2026.

Management of Blue Fin Tuna

The recreational catch and release Bluefin Tuna fishery opened in 2024, permitting 100 licensed charter vessels to operate under strict regulations. In 2025, the MMO issued 140 recreational Bluefin Tuna licences, a small number of which were allocated to the North East. DEFRA and the MMO are currently developing mandatory training for licence holders to help reduce mortality within the fishery. However, significant concerns remain regarding illegal fishing activity and the resulting high levels of tuna mortality linked to inadequate knowledge and training.

The popularity of recreational Bluefin Tuna fishing increased sharply during 2025. While conducting offshore patrols, NEIFCA officers encountered numerous unlicensed recreational angling boats carrying gear specifically designed for tuna fishing.

In response to this unexpected rise in unregulated activity, NEIFCA will continue to work jointly with DEFRA and the MMO during 2026/2027 to address these challenges alongside considering further regulatory intervention.

National work stream engagement

Fisheries Management Plans (FMPs)

In December 2023, DEFRA published the first five Fisheries Management Plans (FMPs) covering Bass, Channel demersal non quota species, Crab and Lobster, King Scallop and Whelk, fulfilling key requirements of the Fisheries Act 2020. Each plan sets out specific objectives to address the specific needs of these fisheries within English waters.

For the Crab and Lobster and King Scallop FMPs, the main priorities are to strengthen the evidence base and to introduce both short term and longer term measures aimed at improving stock protection. The first short term measure for lobsters is scheduled for introduction in March 2026 and will gradually increase the minimum conservation reference size to 90 mm over three years, with an annual rise of 1 mm.

NEIFCA is actively supporting DEFRA and the fishing industry in implementing these new measures. Officers are participating in various FMP working groups to contribute to the development and delivery of medium and long term actions.

This collaborative work with the AIFCA, MMO, DEFRA and other IFCA's will continue throughout 2026/2027. NEIFCA also welcomes the additional funding provided by DEFRA to support this programme.

Fisheries stock assessment work 2026/2027

Stock assessment for lobster and crabs

Collection of biometric data for lobsters and edible crabs at the quayside remains ongoing and additional offshore observer trips and surveys are planned for the 2026/2027 season.

Scallop dredging fishery

The scallop dredging fishery within the NEIFCA district is currently limited to two designated areas, with three permits issued for the 2025/2026 season (*November to April*). In addition to these permits, a dispensation was granted to one vessel to trial an alternative, lower impact dredging gear. The submission of monthly catch and effort returns has remained a mandatory condition of holding a permit. Offshore observer trips on permitted vessels started in November 2025 and will continue until the end of April 2026. Additional surveys are planned for May and September 2026 to assess stock status including the exploration of new fishing grounds for Scallops.



Beam trawling for Scallops

The beam trawling fishery targeting King Scallops is managed through a new flexible permitting byelaw regulation. Better understanding of the stocks outside the permitted Scallop dredge areas is needed and the collection of further data on the King Scallop stocks and fisheries is planned for the 2026 season.

Intertidal fixed net fishery

This fishery was closed for three years due to a Europe wide prohibition on the commercial exploitation of sea bass from the shore. Following a change in UK fisheries legislation it reopened on the 1, of October 2021 and the 2025/2026 season (*October to June*) commenced on 1, October 2025. Catch returns and bycatch are continuously analysed as part of a long-term monitoring strategy for this fishery and that will continue during 2026. Officers are also planning to enhance that work where possible by periodically gathering length, weight and age data from sea bass caught in the fishery and bycatch throughout 2026.

Marine Conservation Zones (MCZ) monitoring

IFCAs duties are to assess, monitor and manage fishing impacts on protected features in MCZ. Additional surveys are planned for May and September 2026 to assess stock status including the exploration of new fishing grounds for Scallops.

Recreational Sea Angling

NEIFCA officers are planning to work in collaboration with the Angling Trust to gather additional biometric data on sea bass from recreational sea anglers in 2026/2027. This work will enhance the new sea bass monitoring program and support a stock assessment for the local sea bass populations.

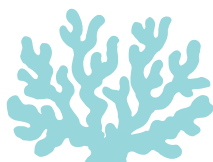


IFCA SUCCESS CRITERIA

To support the delivery of the national IFCA vision, IFCA's work to a set of success criteria matched with corresponding high level objectives. The vision, success criteria and high level objectives are designed to assist in the creation of a shared understanding of the collective aims and objectives of IFCA's, and focus service delivery towards achievement of the national vision. These national IFCA performance criteria also link directly to the UK Marine Policy statement.

The following success criteria have been agreed and adopted nationally:

- 1. IFCA's are recognised and heard, whilst working in partnership and engaging with stakeholders.**
- 2. IFCA's implement a fair, effective and proportionate enforcement regime.**
- 3. IFCA's use evidence based and appropriate measures to manage the sustainable exploitation of sea fisheries resources and deliver marine environmental protection within their districts.**
- 4. IFCA's have appropriate governance in place and staff are trained and professional.**
- 5. IFCA's make the best use of evidence to deliver their objectives.**



DELIVERABLES

Working level objectives:

- Maintain a database of stakeholder contacts updated annually.
- Maintain and review a communication strategy annually.
- Review and update website by the end of each month.
- Review and update national MoUs annually.



SUCCESS CRITERIA 1

IFCAs are recognised and heard, whilst working in partnership and engaging with stakeholders.

	2024	2025	2026	2027
A. Implement an effective communication strategy.	○	○	○	Ⓧ
B. Maintain a website.	○	○	○	Ⓧ
C. Maintain MoUs with the MMO, Natural England, Environment Agency and CEFAS and explore and implement opportunities for effective joint working.	○	○	○	Ⓧ*

○ Achieved / Delivered
 ● Partially Achieved / In Progress
 ● Not Achieved / Implemented
 Ⓧ Target

* MoUs have now largely been superseded by a range of active joint working groups both at regional and national level.

DELIVERABLES

Working level objectives:

- Enforcement strategy and risk register are published annually from 1st April each year.
- Detail application and enforcement of management measures within annual report.
- Compile and publish records of enforcement activity in standard format.
- Adopt, review and publish national code of conduct for IFCOs and integrate with annual appraisal process.
- Warranted officers attain national accreditation and continue professional development.



SUCCESS CRITERIA 2

IFCAs implement a fair, effective and proportionate enforcement regime.

	2024	2025	2026	2027
A. Maintain and publish an enforcement risk register.	●	●	●	● T
B. Develop consistency in regulations.	●	●	●	● T
C. Manage operational activity. Capture, record, evaluate and disseminate intelligence. Engage in joint working.	●	●	●	● T*
D. Ensure IFCOs are warranted, trained and accredited to national standards. Maintain professionalism and deliver efficient effective enforcement activity.	●	●	●	● T**

● Achieved / Delivered
● Partially Achieved / In Progress
● Not Achieved / Implemented
T Target

*This is an ongoing national work stream in partnership with both DEFRA and the MMO.

**NEIFCA continues to work in partnership through the National IFCA Training Group and Chief Officers Group to maintain and enhance training standards.

DELIVERABLES

Working level objectives:

- Record site-specific management considerations for MPAs and report progress.
- Publish data analysis and evidence supporting new management measures.
- Collect information to assess the effectiveness of new management measures.
- Develop a range of criteria based management options which are reviewed and updated annually.
- Deliver new management measures within agreed timescales.
- Management plans published annually and progress noted in Annual Report including MSY commitments.



SUCCESS CRITERIA 3

IFCAs implement a fair, effective and proportionate enforcement regime.

	2024	2025	2026	2027
A. Identify issues likely to affect sustainable management, undertake a risk assessment and gap analysis, review appropriateness of existing measures, evaluate management options and develop and implement proportionate marine management solutions.	●	●	●	T*
B. Support the implementation of a well-managed network of marine protected areas and contribute to delivery targets for MSFD, WFD and Marine Plans.	●	●	●	T**
C. Develop fisheries management plans for priority species where appropriate.	●	●	●	T***

● Achieved / Delivered
● Partially Achieved / In Progress
● Not Achieved / Implemented
T Target

*Due to the dynamics and complexities of assessing sustainable management this will remain an 'in progress' work stream for the authority.

**Due to the dynamics and complexities of assessing well managed MPAs this will remain an 'in progress' work stream for the authority.

***Engaged in the national fisheries management plan work stream through 2026/2027.

DELIVERABLES

Working level objectives:

- Annual plan published by 31, March each year and submitted to the Secretary of State.
- Annual report produced and published by 30, November each year and submitted to the Secretary of State.
- All staff have annual performance management plans in place and annual appraisals are completed by 31, March each year.
- An efficient secretariat of IFCA staff support IFCA authority meetings.
- Annual report demonstrates how marine, land and water management mechanisms have worked responsively and effectively together.
- All MMO appointees to the authority have an annual appraisal review.



SUCCESS CRITERIA 4

IFCAs implement a fair, effective and proportionate enforcement regime.

	2024	2025	2026	2027
A. Demonstrate a long-term strategic approach to sustainable marine management.				
B. Staff performance management systems are in place that link to IFCA success criteria. Induction procedure for new joiners. Staff training and development needs identified. Performance managed.				
C. Efficient and effective secretariat in place to support the authority. New members will receive an induction pack. There will be a 'rolling' twelve month schedule of authority meetings. Notice of meetings and documentation will be made available in line with standing orders.				
D. IFCA Committee meetings will be held in public unless material is either confidential or exempt				

Achieved / Delivered
 Partially Achieved / In Progress
 Not Achieved / Implemented
 T Target

DELIVERABLES

Working level objectives:

- An annual research plan will be published each year.
- An annual research report will be published each year.
- The authority's contribution to Technical Advisory Group and progress towards a national evidence needs programme will be recorded within the annual report.



SUCCESS CRITERIA 5

IFCAs are recognised and heard, whilst working in partnership and engaging with stakeholders.

	2024	2025	2026	2027
A. Strategic research plan that contributes to a greater understanding of the marine environment and delivery of cost-effective management of sea fisheries resources.	●	●	●	T
B. Standard operating procedures describe how data is captured and shared with principal partners.	●	●	●	T
C. Non-confidential meta-data collected through IFCA research programmes is recorded in databases available to the marine research community.	●	●	●	T



Inshore Fisheries and
Conservation Authority



North Eastern
Inshore Fisheries
and Conservation
Authority

Annual Plan

2026/2027