

North Eastern
Inshore Fisheries
and Conservation
Authority

ANNUAL REPORT

2023/2024



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FOREWORD

This report provides a summary account and review of North Eastern Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority's (NEIFCA) main outputs and achievements between 1 April 2023 and 31 March 2024.

Whilst the year presented some challenges for NEIFCA staff, there were also some notable, landmark achievements. Following almost a decade of preliminary work, on 6 October 2023, a contract was signed with Parkol Marine Ltd, a local ship builder, based in Whitby, North Yorkshire, to build and commission a new main offshore vessel to replace North Eastern Guardian III. This new vessel will be unique in its class and the next generation of a long line of vessels, dating back to 1905, designed and built to further the protection, enhancement and development of inshore fisheries along the North East coast of England.

Significant progress was also made in the development and progression of a new shellfish management byelaw which will enable NEIFCA to deliver a much more effective and proactive system management across commercial and recreational fisheries targeting crab, lobster and other shellfish species. Following a comprehensive period of formal consultation the byelaw was submitted to the Marine Management Organisation (MMO) for stage 1 Quality Assurance on 11 January 2024.

During the reporting year NEIFCA operational support staff played a key role in furthering the development of the Authority's fisheries permitting database to a point where the majority of permit applications and re-applications are processed electronically alongside the submission of monthly commercial catch and effort return. This work has significantly improved service delivery.

Finally, 2023/2024 also heralded some notable changes in terms of the internal leadership of NEIFCA. During December 2023 Caroline Lacey stepped down from her role as the Clerk and Darren Stevens, Director of Corporate Resources at East Riding of Yorkshire Council (ERYC), was appointed as her successor. The Clerk provides independent governance and procedural oversight within NEIFCA. Throughout her time as Clerk, Caroline played a central role in progressing the build of the new main offshore vessel and also overseeing the implementation of the 2020 NEIFCA organisational review.

Professor Mike Elliott

Chair of North Eastern Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority (NEIFCA)



NATIONAL 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. ”

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

NEIFCA was formally established on 1 April 2011 under provision contained within the 2009 Marine and Coastal Access Act. It replaced North Eastern Sea Fisheries Committee (NESFC), assuming new duties and responsibilities for managing the sustainable exploitation of sea fisheries resources within its district.

This Annual Report covers the period 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024. It provides a comprehensive review of its main outputs and achievements across key work areas including: Organisational; Legislative Enforcement; Environmental and Scientific Research; Staff training and development; Communications; Partnership working and additional work supporting the delivery of national work streams. The report also provides a summary of NEIFCA's performance and progress against both longstanding national and local working objectives.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY ACHIEVEMENTS

Main achievements and outputs during 2023/2024 included the following:

- 🐟 Agreement achieved with members on an uplifted, sound and stable operational budget of £1,377,464.
- 🐟 On 17 July 2023 NEIFCA utilised its emergency byelaw making powers under Section 157 of the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009 to ensure the effective and proactive management of an emergent beam trawl fishery targeting king scallops within its district.
- 🐟 On 17 July 2023 NEIFCA published its second appraisal of landing trends at key ports surrounding the Tees and North Yorkshire following the shellfish mortality events which occurred in the region during October 2021.
- 🐟 During October 2023 NEIFCA commenced a pilot trial supporting the electronic submission of fishing catch and effort returns as part of the ongoing development of the new fisheries permitting database. This work paralleled the implementation of a new electronic application process for recreational shellfish permits.
- 🐟 On 6 October 2023 a contract was signed with Parkol Marine Ltd, based in Whitby North Yorkshire, for the build and commission of a new main offshore fisheries vessel. The new vessel is expected to be delivered sometime during the spring of 2025.
- 🐟 On the 11 January 2024 the Humber Estuary Fishing Byelaw and the new shellfish permit byelaw were submitted for first stage MMO Quality assurance representing the first step towards formal confirmation. The Humber Estuary Fishing Byelaw will enhance protection for sensitive eelgrass beds occurring on the Humber Estuary and the shellfish management byelaw will enable more proactive and effective management of exploited shellfish stocks both offshore and onshore.
- 🐟 Active engagement and involvement in the national development and implementation of Fisheries Management Plans (FMPS) for key stocks including, King Scallops, Crabs and Lobster, sea bass and whelk through the associated working groups, consultation and publication on 14 December 2023.
- 🐟 Successful completion of the final years survey work relating to the European Lobster Settlement Index (ELSI) project.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

ACHIEVEMENTS CONTINUED

Partnership Working

- NEIFCA retains a strong commitment to active partnership working and continues to build on that through active collaboration with the Marine Management Organisation (MMO), the Department for the Environment Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA), the Seafish Industry Authority and the Centre for the Environment, Fisheries and Aquaculture Science (CEFAS). During 2023/2024 much of that work involved supporting the national development and implementation of Fisheries Management Plans (FMPS) a new statutory requirement of the 2020 Fisheries Act. With additional grant aid support, provided by Defra, NEIFCA was able to enhance resourcing within its Environmental and Scientific team and strengthen its active involvement in the development of six 'front runner' FMP's including King Scallops, Crab and Lobster, sea bass, whelk and Southern North Sea and English Channel mixed flatfish. This work included attending national and local workshops, imputing directly into the development of the draft plans and responding to the formal consultation through to publication on 14 December 2023. Going forward from 2023/2024, NEIFCA's involvement in both the implementation of established FMPS and the development of new plans for other species will become an established component of its annual work programme.
- From an enforcement and compliance perspective NEIFCA maintained an active and collaborative working relationship with MMO colleagues which included attendance and participation in monthly joint Tasking and Coordination Group (TCG) meetings. These meetings enable the review of shared intelligence and the associated tasking of joint actions to tackle issues as they emerge and develop locally. During 2024 this work was further enhanced through the commissioning of a bespoke joint intelligence database known as 'CLUE'. As a result of this collaborative approach several joint enforcement operations were undertaken to target illegal activities. During 2023/2024 NEIFCA officers issued 24 verbal warnings and 4 written warnings for a range of offences and a further 7 cases were formally prosecuted in local Magistrates Courts for non-compliance with local byelaw and national fisheries legislation.
- During 2023/2024 further joint working was undertaken in conjunction with the Gangmasters and Labour Abuse Authority (GLAA), the Borders Agency and local policing and public protection teams in response to the illegal gathering of certain intertidal shellfish species within the Authority's district. Officers also worked actively with the Environment Agency (EA), policing intertidal netting activity along the coast.

North Eastern Guardian III

Whitby Harbour 2019



INTRODUCTION

Introduction

This 2023/2024 Annual Report provides a summary of NEIFCA's main outputs and achievements across Central policy, encompassing strategic development and legislative review; Legislative enforcement; Environmental and scientific research, encompassing fisheries stock assessment, marine survey and monitoring, data management, review of marine consents and licensing applications and marine habitat protection; Staff training and development; Communications and partnership working. The report complements NEIFCA's 2023/2024 Annual Plan and also provides a summary of progress against longstanding national IFCA success criteria and high-level objectives.

Background

NEIFCA was established in October 2010 under provisions contained within the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009. On 1 April 2011, it assumed full statutory responsibility for managing the exploitation of sea fisheries resources within its jurisdiction. Since its inception it has drawn professional service provision including legal, financial and human resource support from its lead Local Authority member, East Riding of Yorkshire Council (ERYC). NEIFCA membership totals 30 and comprises of 13 elected councillors, representing 11 coastal local authorities together with 14 members appointed by the Marine Management Organisation and singular members representing Natural England, the Environment Agency and the Marine Management Organisation.

Financial Overview

NEIFCA's total annual budget for the reporting period 2023/2024 was agreed by members during March at £1,377,464. The budget was allocated across four main areas:

Corporate

Expenditure relating to corporate governance.

Headquarter

The cost of management and administrative support.

Operations

Direct expenditure incurred in the performance of the authority's objectives comprising of offshore, land-based and environmental activities.

Grant aided projects

Projects which are specific or time bound and wholly funded by external sources.

See table on Page 10

COMPREHENSIVE INCOME AND EXPENDITURE STATEMENT

Income versus expenditure is summarised in the following tables covering the 2023/2024 financial year. The final budget outturn shows an underspend of £283,944. This outturn position is made up of a number of compensating variances including: Staffing vacancies, some of which were planned, and additional income which had not be factored into original budget projections including, external grant aid payments and more favourable banking interest rates. Due to extensive periods of vessel layups through 2023/2024 the offshore fuel budget was also under utilised. The savings generated through 2023/2024 were transferred to support the financing of the new vessel build.

2022/2023		2023/2024				
Net Expenditure		Expenditure	Income	Net Expenditure	Original Budget	Variance
£402,975	Central / Headquarters	£450,594	£56,625	£393,969	£429,330	£-35,361
£127,796	Land Based Operations	£142,433	£5,467	£136,965	£135,590	£1,375
£670,812	Offshore Operations	£505,627	£26,989	£478,638	£559,510	£-80,872
£101,725	Environment	£129,122	£18,050	£111,072	£140,130	£-29,058
£-31,013	Grand Aided Projects	£112,876	£194,404	£-81,528	£70,000	£-151,528
£1,272,295		£1,340,652	£301,535	£1,039,117	£1,334,560	£-295,442

Income	Sources of Finance	Expenditure	Income	Net Income	Original Budget	Variance
£1,337,344	Annual levy on Local Authorities	£0	£1,377,465	£1,377,465	£1,377,460	£-5
£0	Contribution from Reserves	£0	£58,497	£58,497	£70,000	£11,503
£0	Contribution to / from Capital - Vehicles	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0
£-112,900	Contribution to Earmarked Reserves	£112,900	£0	£-112,900	£-112,900	£0
£1,224,444		£112,900	£1,435,962	£1,323,062	£1,334,560	£11,498

NORTH EASTERN GUARDIAN III

Fisheries Patrol



ORGANISATIONAL REVIEW 2023/2024

Main Achievements

- During December 2022 members endorsed and set an operational budget of £1,377,464 for the 2023/2024 year, providing a stable and uplifted funding base
- On 17 July 2023 NEIFCA utilised its emergency byelaw making powers under Section 157 of the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009 to ensure the effective and proactive management of an unforeseen, emergent beam trawl fishery, targeting king scallops within its district which couldn't be managed under existing fisheries byelaw provisions.
- On 17 July 2023 NEIFCA published its second appraisal of landing trends at key ports surrounding the Tees and North Yorkshire following the shellfish mortality events which occurred in the region during October 2021. This report included a more detailed assessment of available catch and landing data, covering a longer time frame, and highlighted significant reductions of crab and lobster catches, particularly at Redcar and Hartlepool surrounding the Tees Estuary.
- During October 2023 NEIFCA commenced a pilot trial supporting the electronic submission of fishing catch and effort returns as part of the ongoing development of the new fisheries permitting database. This work paralleled the implementation of a new electronic application process for recreational shellfish permits.
- On 6 October 2023 a contract was signed with Parkol Marine Ltd, based in Whitby North Yorkshire, for the build and commission of a new main offshore fisheries vessel. By the end of the reporting period on 31 March 2024 much of the after-hull structure had been completed. The new vessel is expected to be delivered sometime during the spring of 2025 and remains on time and on budget.
- On the 11 January 2024 the Humber Estuary Fishing Byelaw and the new shellfish permit byelaw were submitted for first stage MMO Quality assurance representing the first step towards formal confirmation. The Humber Estuary Fishing Byelaw will enhance protection for sensitive eelgrass beds occurring on the Humber Estuary and the shellfish management byelaw will enable more proactive and effective management of exploited shellfish stocks both offshore and onshore.
- Throughout the reporting period NEIFCA staff have been actively engaged and involved in the national development and implementation of Fisheries Management Plans (FMPs) for key stocks including, King Scallops, Crabs and Lobster, sea bass and whelk through attendance on associated working groups and submitting responses to formal consultative processes which culminated in the publication of 6 'front-runner' FMPs on 14 December 2023. Engagement in this workstream has been supported by additional grant aid provided by Defra and included the appointment of an additional officer on a one year fixed term contract.
- With support from external partners, including Hull marine laboratory based in the University of Hull and some local fishing vessel operators the final planned year of the European Lobster Settlement Index (ELSI) project was successfully completed and a final report on the project will be released sometime during the Spring of 2025.

CENTRAL POLICY 2023/2024

Central Policy and Strategic Development

Central policy and strategic development is supported by two key internal sub-groups, the Executive Committee and the Science Advisory Group. The Science Advisory Group comprises of MMO appointees and representatives from Natural England, the Environment Agency and the MMO and is responsible for overseeing regulatory review, development and implementation, scientific and survey work, projects and licensing applications and consents. The Executive Committee comprises of elected and appointed MMO members and provides a smaller more focused decision making group to undertake any work delegated by the full authority, including ratifying emergency byelaw provisions and considering appeals against process. These groups work in tandem with recommendations passing through the Executive Committee for final endorsement by the full authority.

Risk Management

The effective management of risk remains a key priority for officers and members of the authority. A formal strategy supporting the identification and management of risk was first agreed and adopted by members of the shadow authority on 25 January 2011. The strategy and its provisions are reviewed on an annual basis to ensure that it remains 'fit-for-purpose'.

Alongside the strategy, the identification and management of risk is supported through a number of risk registers covering both strategic and operational risk, including a risk-based enforcement matrix. All risk registers are subject to six-monthly review with updates reported to authority members and posted on the authority's website. During the reporting year, these reviews and updates were completed during March and September 2023.

Emergency IFCA Byelaws

Section 157 of the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009 provides a mechanism for IFCA's to introduce emergency byelaw regulations to deal with unforeseen issues requiring urgent action. Emergency byelaws are time limited to a maximum period of eighteen months. Since its inception in 2011, NEIFCA has effectively utilised its emergency byelaw making powers on six separate occasions, including this current, 2023/2024, reporting year. On 17 July 2023 NEIFCA confirmed an emergency byelaw to enable the effective management of an unforeseen emergent beam trawl fishery targeting King Scallop within its district. This has enabled NEIFCA to control the numbers of vessels accessing the fishery, set fishing conditions and in combination with existing byelaw regulations, gather for information on the fishery to inform future management. This emergency byelaw is scheduled to expire on 17 January 2025.

LEGISLATIVE ENFORCEMENT

Legislative enforcement forms a key element of the authority's drive to achieve the sustainable management of sea fisheries resources within its district. Enforcement is undertaken by fourteen warranted Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Officers (IFCOs) who are responsible for monitoring and inspecting fisheries activities, both offshore and along the coast. Enforcement work is supported by a dedicated 26 metre patrol vessel, North Eastern Guardian III (NEG III), which carries a 6.4 metre rigid inflatable boat (RIB) that is utilised to board and inspect fishing vessels at sea and a 9.5 metre cabin RIB to support its offshore operations. NEG III will be replaced during the 2025/2026 reporting year with a new 'state of the art' 25 metre catamaran with significantly enhanced enforcement and offshore survey capabilities.

During the 2023/2024 reporting period offshore enforcement and compliance work was impacted by unforeseen mechanical issues onboard both NEG III and Protector III, NEIFCA's 9.5m cabin RIB. These issues were rectified by the end of the reporting year but critical and often complex repair work left both vessels out of service for extended periods.

New Vessel Build

On 6 October 2023 a contract was signed with Parkol Marine Ltd, based in Whitby North Yorkshire, for the build and commission of a new main offshore fisheries vessel to replace NEG III. The new vessel, a 25m aluminium catamaran, has been designed to meet NEIFCA's developing operational needs and will significantly enhance its offshore capabilities particularly in relation to the assessment of marine habitats, fish stocks and the effective delivery of its enforcement and compliance work. By the end of the reporting period, on 31 March 2024, much of the after-hull structure had been completed and the project remains on schedule for delivery sometime during spring 2025. The new vessel build is funded through a combination of planned savings, capital raised through the sale of NEGIII and funding accessed through the Defra IFCA Capital Delivery programme.

ENFORCEMENT OUTPUTS 2021/2022

Enforcement Output	Frequency
Vessel Inspections	143
Vessel observations	705
Inspection Reports completed	549
Verbal Warnings	24
Written Warnings	2
Offences Reported	16
Formal Cautions	2
Financial Administrative Penalties	0
Formal prosecutions	7

ENVIRONMENTAL AND SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH

Marine environmental and scientific research functions continue to develop and expand in line with the developing role and remit of the authority. The environmental and science team undertake fisheries stock assessment work, collate and analyse seabed habitat and water column data, review marine licensing applications and consents, support marine habitat conservation and management through engagement with European Marine Site (EMS) management schemes and Marine Conservation Zone (MCZ) programmes and oversee the internal management of data. This work is guided by an annual research and evidence plan and a five-year strategic plan.

Fisheries Stock Assessment work

The majority of species exploited within the NEIFCA district are a component of wider stock units which extend beyond the six-mile limit and also into neighbouring IFCA districts. During 2011/2012 officers developed some multiple fishery indicator frameworks, a combination of specific reference points and proxies for measuring progress towards achieving sustainable fish stocks. Alongside and at the request of NEIFCA members, officers have incorporated a broader overview, detailing information on gear types, additional species alongside economic and socio-economic factors. This analytical work continues to develop and evolve and is underpinned by a comprehensive stock assessment programme which includes quayside sampling at four main ports including Hartlepool, Whitby, Scarborough and Bridlington and an offshore monitoring programme covering each of the five main ICES areas located within and surrounding the authority's district.

Marine Licensing and Consents

During the reporting period, authority officers reviewed 18 licensing and consent applications covering a wide range of projects from maintenance and capital dredging to discharging at sea and large infrastructure applications, including developments within major ports in the Tees and Humber estuaries, offshore renewables, pipelines and cabling.

Shellfish Mortality - Tees & North Yorkshire

Since the shellfish mortality event in October 2021, NEIFCA Officers have been supporting the key agencies (DEFRA, EA, CEFAS & MMO) with sampling and logistics, dissemination of any further wash-up events and reports, liaising between agencies and engaging industry through working groups. Monitoring trends in MMO and NEIFCA landings data also continued and a second landings monitoring report was published in July 2023. A wash-up log was initiated at the start of the shellfish mortality event in October 2021 capturing records of any wash up events and associated reports from the industry, public and social media. This log was also used to support the assessment of the shellfish mortality event by an Independent, expert panel appointed by government in December 2022. The panel reviewed all available evidence and published its findings in January 2023 concluding that it was highly unlikely that capital dredging works surrounding the Tees estuary could have caused the mass mortality. Officers continue to monitor the relevant sites for any potential wash up events and are prepared to respond quickly and liaise efficiently with key agencies if such an event ever re-occurs. NEIFCA's annual stock monitoring programme will also pick up trends in fisheries within the affected areas in the medium to longer term. At present those trends are improving as recovery continues.

Education and Outreach

Scarborough 2019



MARINE PROTECTED AREAS

European Marine Sites (EMS)

The NEIFCA district contains five European Marine Sites (EMSs); Northumbria Coast, Teesmouth and Cleveland Coast, Flamborough Head, Humber Estuary and the Greater Wash. Flamborough Head and the Humber Estuary are each supported by a management group comprising statutory authorities and other relevant bodies and NEIFCA plays an active role in each. NEIFCA workstreams within the EMSs focus on four main areas; active participation in the EMS management schemes and associated projects; the provision of guidance to developers and input into the licensing conditions of development consent orders within and adjacent to EMSs; stock assessments of commercially important finfish and crustacea; and the appropriate assessment and management of fisheries within EMS boundaries through both voluntary and regulatory measures. Significant progress was made during 2019/2020 in reducing risk to designated Marine Protected Area (MPA) features associated with fishing activity. A seasonal netting prohibition in the waters surrounding Flamborough Head and Filey Brigg came into force to protect the largest mainland UK breeding seabird colony; home to 412,000 seabirds. In addition, a trawling permit management system was introduced for the Humber Estuary. Control of trawl effort will help to protect the valuable habitats and species within the estuary, which also acts as vital spawning and nursery grounds for a range of fish species. Regulations to improve fishery data collection have also been approved. Such regulations remain under continuous review to ensure that they maintain appropriate levels of feature protection across all the MPAs located within the NEIFCA district. During the reporting period two new byelaw regulations were submitted to the MMO for stage 1 quality assurance.

The provisions contained within those regulations included an extension to an MPA within the Humber Estuary to improve protections for seagrass habitat and a new management framework to restrict the number of pots worked by each vessel operating within the NEIFCA district.

Marine Conservation

The NEIFCA district contains two MCZ sites; Runswick Bay and Holderness Inshore. Full assessments have been completed on both sites and appropriate management measures supporting their protection are already in place. Work to establish a new Management Group to encompass both MCZs is supported through the Yorkshire Marine Nature Partnership.

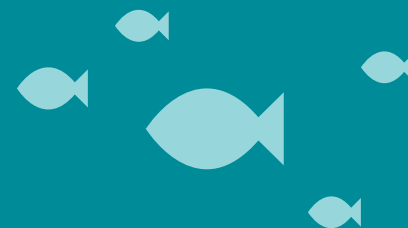
Data Management

All raw data gathered from the NEIFCA district is stored electronically in a format enabling ease of manipulation, import into other programmes and statistical analysis. Spatial data is stored in shape file format for presentation and analysis in the GIS platforms. This is a developing workstream that aims to generate key data layers that present information related to the NEIFCA district, such as management regimes, fishing effort, habitat types and commercial species ranges.

EXTERNALLY FUNDED PROJECTS AND INITIATIVES

European Lobster Larval Settlement Index Project

Funded through the Defra UK Seafood Scheme this is a two-year partnership project with the Holderness Fishing Industry Group which started in February 2022. The project aims to better understand the distribution and abundance of lobster larvae and newly settled post-larval lobster (Early Benthic Phase Lobster) within the NEIFCA district. This information will be key for the development of a more predictive stock assessment in the future. For this project, 40 settlement cages were deployed across the district between May and September in 2022 and 2023. At the end of each survey season all cages were recovered and the first Early Benthic Phase (EBP) lobster was found in one of the cages off Flamborough Head. This is the first time an EBP lobster has been captured in the UK using this method. Additional valuable data was collected on the biodiversity of the benthos and seasonal abundance and stages of planktonic lobster larvae. More data will be collected throughout the 2024 season. A final project report will be published sometime during the 2024/2025 reporting year.



STAFF TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT

A new staffing appraisal system was implemented during November 2021 and has been further developed through 2023/2024. This new system is linked to pay progression and performance and has strengthened the identification of individual training and development needs across all the operational teams. Alongside it, progress against staff training and development needs are now monitored centrally and reviewed on a six-monthly basis. Further ongoing work is also supporting leadership and management development across the Authority's senior management team.



COMMUNICATIONS, PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT AND PARTNERSHIP WORKING

NEIFCA Website

The authority's website and social media, such as Facebook, remains at the forefront of its drive to improve overall communications, accessibility to information and associated services. A new Authority website 'went live' during March 2022. It carries a much clearer, simpler format which is more straightforward to navigate. Authority staff can now edit and update the content directly which means that information can be updated on a much more regular basis. Stakeholders can access a range of services from the website including applications for fishing permits and provision of feedback on a wide range of topical issues.

Tyne to Tees, Shores and Seas - SeaScapes Partnership

The SeaScapes project is a partnership of local, regional and national organisations working in the coastal, marine and heritage sectors that have come together to better protect and celebrate the unique coastline between the rivers Tyne and Tees. The first National Lottery Heritage Fund supported Marine Landscape Partnership will deliver around 23 projects over the next four years worth £5 million to the communities of South Tyneside, Sunderland, Durham and Hartlepool.

Yorkshire Marine Nature Partnership

Delivery of a well managed network of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) is a key work area for NEIFCA. With the growing number of MPAs, effective site management requires new ways of working and a collaborative approach. As a member of the Flamborough Head European Marine Site Management Group, National Lottery Heritage Funding was obtained to establish the Yorkshire Marine Nature Partnership. The emerging partnership is focussed on supporting, understanding, managing and caring for Yorkshire's seas, coastline and hinterland, working with cross-sector partners to achieve shared aims and promote holistic action in the marine and coastal environment.

Feedback System

During March 2022 NEIFCA agreed a new service level agreement with East Riding of Yorkshire Council for the provision of enhanced support covering both feedback and information governance. This support was utilised during 2023/2024 to assess and respond to a number of Freedom of Information (FOI) requests and one formal complaint.

Partnership Working

NEIFCA works extensively, collaboratively and proactively with a wide range of partner agencies and organisations, most notably, the MMO, Environment Agency (EA), Defra, the Seafish Industry Authority and the Yorkshire Wildlife Trust. During 2023/2024 much of that associated work involved supporting the national development and implementation of Fisheries Management Plans (FMPS) a new statutory requirement of the 2020 Fisheries Act. With additional grant aid support, provided by Defra, NEIFCA was able to enhance resourcing within its Environmental and Scientific team and strengthen its active involvement in the development of six 'front runner' FMP's including King Scallops, Crab and Lobster, sea bass, whelk and Southern North Sea and English Channel mixed flatfish. This included attending national and local workshops, imputing directly into the development of the draft plans and responding to the associated formal consultation through to publication on 14 December 2023. Going forward from 2023/2024, NEIFCA's involvement in both the implementation of established FMPS and the development of new plans for other species will become an established component of its annual work programme, delivered through active, collaborative partnership working with key agencies, organisations and both commercial and recreational stakeholders.

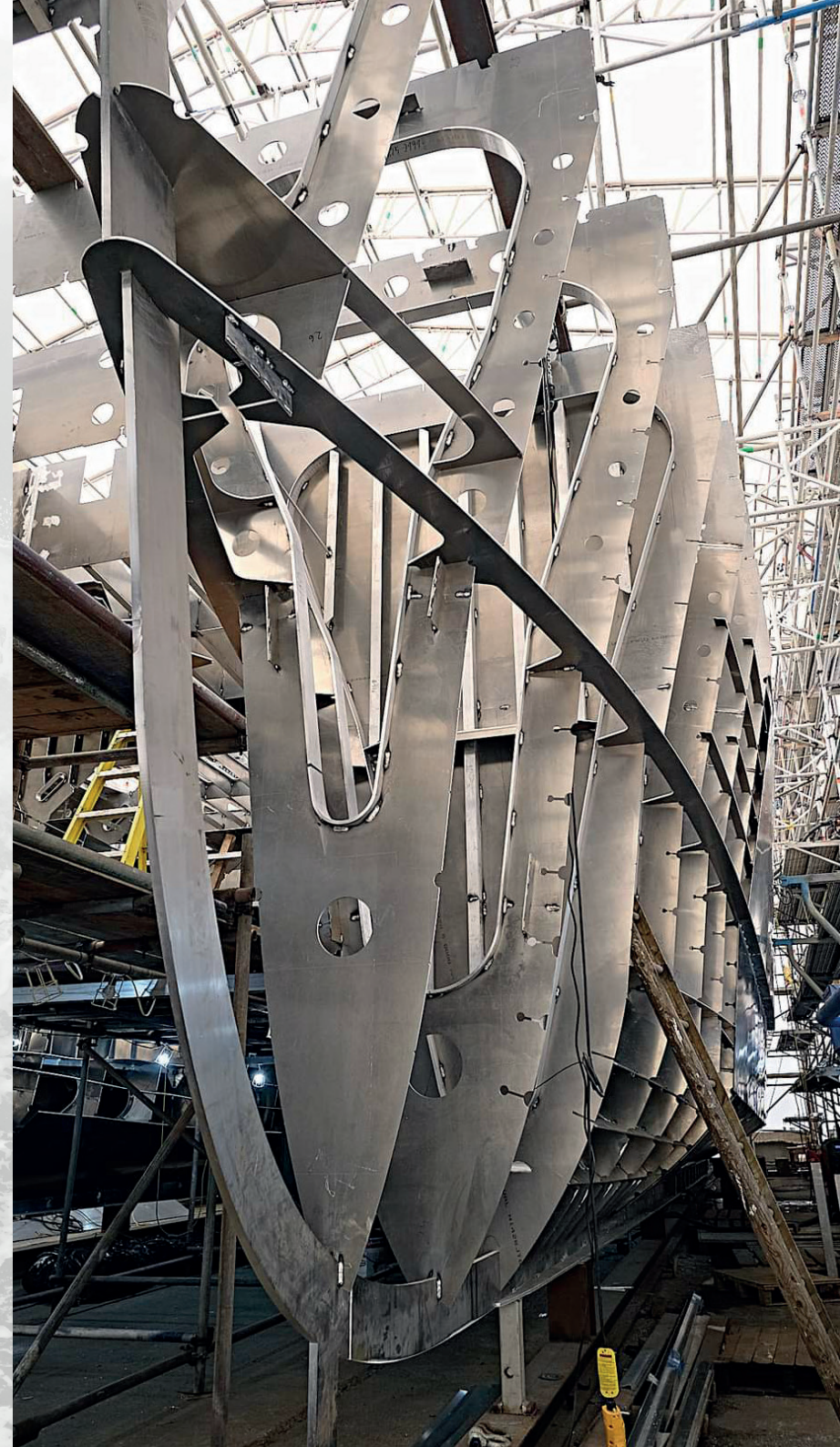
Further collaborative partnership working was fostered at national level through the IFCA Chief Officers Group (COG) and the Defra Marine and Fisheries Chief Officers Group (MAFCO).

From an enforcement and compliance perspective NEIFCA maintained an active and collaborative working relationship with MMO colleagues which included attendance and participation in monthly joint Tasking and Coordination Group (TCG) meetings, the national joint Strategic Operational Group (SOG) and the National Inshore Marine Enforcement Group (NIMEG). The monthly TCG meetings enable the review of shared intelligence and the associated tasking of joint actions to tackle issues as they emerge and develop locally. During 2024 this work was further enhanced through the commissioning of a bespoke joint intelligence database known as 'CLUE'. Since the commissioning of the 'CLUE' system NEIFCA has uploaded over 60 individual fisheries intelligence records covering a wide range of issues. As a result of this collaborative approach several joint enforcement operations were undertaken to target illegal fisheries activities during 2023/2024.

Throughout the reporting period extensive joint working was undertaken by NEIFCA's shore operations team in conjunction with the Gangmasters and Labour Abuse Authority (GLAA), the Borders Agency and local policing and public protection teams in response to the illegal gathering of certain intertidal shellfish species throughout the Authority's district. Officers also worked actively with the Environment Agency (EA), policing intertidal netting activity along the coast.

National IFCA Association

A national association was established on 24 March 2011 to represent and support the work of IFCAs. NEIFCA continues to play an active role in this association through the Chairman and Chief Officer. Throughout 2023/2024 the national Association of IFCAs (AIFCA) played a strong supporting role across the ten IFCAS delivering cohesion and collaboration which included supporting IFCA engagement across a number of national projects including the Coastal Health and Livelihoods project (CHLE), a CEFAS led project which is focused on improving the planning, programming and response to unforeseen events impacting on the health of the marine environment and associated livelihoods such as the Tees and North Yorkshire shellfish mortality event.





North Eastern IFCA staff and BBC presenter Tom Heap courtesy of BBC Countryfile following a film shoot on 18 June 2021 which aired on 4 July 2021.

NATIONAL IFCA SUCCESS CRITERIA

IFCAs are recognised and heard, whilst working in partnership and engaging with stakeholders; IFCAs implement a fair, effective and proportionate enforcement regime;

IFCAs use evidence based and appropriate measures to manage the sustainable exploitation of sea fisheries resources and deliver marine environmental protection within their districts;

IFCAs have appropriate governance in place and staff are trained and professional;

IFCAs make the best use of evidence to deliver their objectives;

NEIFCA work streams and organisational priorities are geared towards the positive achievement of the national vision: outlined on page 4.

To support the positive delivery of the above national vision, IFCAs have agreed a set of national success criteria matched with corresponding working-level objectives. The vision, success criteria and national working objectives are designed to assist in the creation of a shared understanding of the aims and objectives of IFCAs nationally and focus positive service delivery towards achievement of the national vision. These national IFCA performance criteria also link directly to the UK Marine Policy Statement.

Focus and Priorities for the Year - Annual Plan 2023/2024

Each year authority members agree and set their objectives and priorities for the year ahead which are outlined within the summary work programme contained within the authority's 2023/2024 annual plan. The 2023/2024 plan was adopted by members on 14 March 2023.

NATIONAL IFCA WORKING LEVEL OBJECTIVES

The following tables provide a summary of the authority’s progress towards achieving the Success Criteria and supporting Working Level Objectives (WLO) during the 2023/2024 reporting period.

31 March 2024



Completed



Ongoing



Not started

WORKING LEVEL OBJECTIVE

The IFCA will maintain and implement an effective communication strategy.

OUTCOME(S)

The IFCA will maintain a database of stakeholder contacts that will have been reviewed and updated by 31 March each year.

The IFCA will have completed a review of its communication strategy and implementation plan by 31 March each year.

PERFORMANCE INDICATOR(S) UPDATE 2023/2024

Through its fishing permitting schemes NEIFCA maintains an annual database of some 3,000 individual contacts covering both commercial and recreational fishing.

The authority maintains a formal communication strategy which is reviewed annually.

Copies of annual plans are sent to the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) Secretary of State by 30 April each year.

The IFCA will maintain its website ensuring public access to current fisheries and conservation information for the district, including management requirements and byelaws. non-reserved IFCA Committee papers will be published.

The IFCA will have reviewed its website by the last working day of each month.

A new authority website 'went live' during at the beginning of April 2022 and information is updated on a daily basis which includes information on live projects or events occurring within the NEIFCA district.

Copies of annual reports are sent to Defra's Secretary of State by 30 November in the year in which they are published.

WORKING LEVEL OBJECTIVE

The IFCA will contribute to co-ordinated activity at a national level.

OUTCOME(S)

By 31 March each year the IFCA will have participated appropriately, proportionately and at the right level of delegation, in regional and national fisheries and conservation activity identified within the annual plan.

PERFORMANCE INDICATOR(S) UPDATE 2023/2024

Throughout the reporting year authority officers have engaged extensively in a wide range of nationally coordinated work streams including joint training and joint intelligence gathering through the National Association of IFCAs, the National IFCA Chief Officers Group, the National IFCA Technical Advisory Group and the National Inshore Marine Enforcement Group. In addition, throughout 2023/2024 NEIFCA played a full and active role in newly established Regional Fisheries Groups and maintained active engagement and participation in the national fisheries intelligence gathering programme. During 2024 the MMO, in partnership with IFCA's, commissioned 'Clue' a new joint fisheries intelligence database system. Since commissioning, NEIFCA has inputted over 60 intelligence reports onto the system.

The IFCA and its principle partners will have a clear understanding of the roles and responsibilities. Memoranda of Understanding (MoU) with MMO, Natural England, Environment Agency and Centre for Environment, Fisheries and Aquaculture Services (CEFAS) will be maintained.

The IFCA will have reviewed all of its MoUs by 31 March each year. There will be a clear plan in place to update MoUs where necessary, to an agreed standard.

National MoU's are maintained through the Association of IFCA's but more recently have largely been superseded by joint operational delivery groups such as the IFCA/MMO Strategic Operational Group, NIMEG and TAG.

WORKING LEVEL OBJECTIVE

The IFCA will publish its enforcement risk register and strategy, clearly setting out its approach to achieving regulatory compliance and potential sanctions that may be applied for infringements and/or offences.

OUTCOME(S)

The IFCA will ensure its enforcement risk register and strategy are published and available on its website from 1 April each year.

The IFCA will compile records of enforcement activity in a standard format; provide them to AIFCA for collation and publish them on its website.

PERFORMANCE INDICATOR(S) UPDATE 2023/2024

The authority publishes a comprehensive annual risk register which covers all aspects of risk including enforcement. The authority publishes details of its enforcement activity within its annual report and provides statistics to the National Association of IFCAs in a standard format.

The IFCA will manage operational activity and capture, record, evaluate and disseminate intelligence that is compatible with partner organisations. It is engaged in joint working with partner organisations.

Working to the National Intelligence Model (NIM) and participating actively through Tasking and Coordination Groups (TCGs).

Throughout 2023/2024 Officers have been actively engaged in the joint fisheries intelligence gathering programme, collating, assessing and exchanging intelligence in accordance with NIM principles.

This work culminated in the commissioning of the 'Clue' system during 2023/2024. A new bespoke fisheries intelligence database managed by the MMO to enhance joint intelligence gathering with IFCAs.

This involved active participation in the TCG process including joint TCGs with MMO officers.

WORKING LEVEL OBJECTIVE

Warranted Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Officers (IFCOs) will be trained and accredited to nationally agreed standards. They will maintain professionalism and make appropriate interventions to deliver efficient, effective enforcement activity.

OUTCOME(S)

The IFCA will adopt the national code of conduct for IFCOs which will be reviewed annually and published on its website.

Warranted Officers attain accreditation. ALL undertaking continuing professional development.

PERFORMANCE INDICATOR(S) UPDATE 2023/204

Authority Officers undergo a wide range of training supported by a twelve month probationary process. That training incorporates an induction, an IFCA residential course and 'on-the-job' training and evaluation.

A national code of conduct for IFCA enforcement officers was agreed in 2010 and was adopted by the authority. It is reviewed annually.



WORKING LEVEL OBJECTIVE

The IFCA will identify issues likely to affect sustainable management of the marine environment in the IFC District; undertake risk assessment and gap analysis; review appropriateness of existing measures; evaluate management options and develop and implement proportionate marine management solutions.

OUTCOME(S)

The IFCA will record site-specific management considerations for Marine Protected Areas and report progress to the authority.

The IFCA will publish data analysis and evidence supporting new management measures, on its website management information (e.g. sampling and/or survey results) will be collected periodically after new management measures have been implemented, to demonstrate the extent of effectiveness of the intervention.

PERFORMANCE INDICATOR(S) UPDATE 2023/2024

Authority officers have completed extensive site feature/activity interaction risk matrices for all Marine Protected Areas (MPAs), including European Marine Sites (EMSs) and Marine Conservation Zones (MCZs) occurring within the NEIFCA district. A significant supporting management programme commenced during 2013 prioritised towards high risk activities. This work was advanced during 2019/2020 with the confirmation of two regulations protecting features at Flamborough Head, Filey and the Humber Estuary. On the 1 December 2022 the Authority approved the extension of the protected Eelgrass area at Spurn Point in the Humber Estuary Byelaw The IFCA actively supports implementation of a well managed network of marine protected areas by: developing a range of criteria based management options; implementing management measures to ensure that inshore fisheries activities comply with the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009 and the revised approach to managing commercial fisheries in European Marine Sites; and that local management contributes to delivery of targets for the Marine Strategy Framework Directive, Water Framework Directive and Marine Plans.

WORKING LEVEL OBJECTIVE

The IFCA will develop Fisheries Management Plans for priority species where appropriate. Shared objectives will be developed with identified partners; actions identified and best practice reflected so that management makes a contribution to sustainable development.

Proportionate regulation (for example introducing a legal mechanism such as a byelaw) is used as a last resort; The effectiveness of interventions to improve the delivery of beneficial outcomes is continuously monitored; and

There is a clear IFCA Committee process for dealing with agreed interventions quickly, efficiently and effectively, particularly for emergency byelaws.

OUTCOME(S)

The IFCA will include shared agreed objectives and actions from Fisheries Management Plans in its own annual plan, which will be published by 31 March each year.

Progress made in relevant Fisheries Management Plan areas, including maximum sustainable yield commitments, will be noted in the IFCA's annual report.

PERFORMANCE INDICATOR(S) UPDATE 2023/2024

The sustainable management of key lobster and edible crab stocks was further enhanced during 2019/2020 through measures introduced in the revised Crustacea Conservation byelaw. Protection for soft shelled and berried lobsters will help to bolster spawning stock of this species, while the introduction of a maximum pot size and reducing the maximum size of vessel permitted to fish within inshore areas are important effort controls that will help to ensure the continued viability of the regionally significant fishery. A new minimum size byelaw, developed in collaboration with a number of other IFCAs, was also introduced, confirmed during February 2021. As was a catch return byelaw aimed at improving data capture to inform future management decisions.

A new Fisheries Management Plan has been adopted to support the inshore scallop dredging fishery. The plan has been informed by a four year pilot trial which commenced following the introduction of emergency control measures at the beginning of 2015. The plan describes the state of the stocks and the fishery derived from research undertaken by the authority, it outlines current national and local management policy and objectives, and highlights the conservation and fishery management measures in place to ensure a sustainable fishery. The plan will guide development of the dredge fishery, balancing the needs of different stakeholders.

At national level, during 2023/2024, NEIFCA is also fully engaged in the implementation of Fisheries Management Plans (FMPs) across key exploited stocks including King Scallop, crab and lobster, sea bass and whelk.

WORKING LEVEL OBJECTIVE

The IFCA will demonstrate its long-term strategic approach to sustainable marine management by having appropriate plan-making, review, update and amendment procedures in place. The IFCA will record its performance against corporate outcomes and indicators as soon as practically possible following the end of the financial year.

Staff performance management systems will be in place that link to the IFCA success criteria. There will be an induction procedure for new joiners. Staff training and development needs will be identified. Performance will be managed and where necessary, improvement procedures will be followed.

OUTCOME(S)

The IFCA will publish a plan on its website by 31 March, setting out the main objectives and priorities for the next financial year. A copy will be sent to the Secretary of State.

After the end of each financial year, the IFCA will publish a report on its website describing its activities, performance and a summary of audited financial information in that year by 30 November. A copy will be sent to the Secretary of State.

IFCA staff will have annual performance management plans in place. Annual appraisals for all staff will have been completed by 31 May each year.

PERFORMANCE INDICATOR(S) UPDATE 2023/2024

The authority has produced an annual plan and annual report since 2010. The 2023/2024 plan was considered and endorsed by the committee on 14 March 2023 and submitted to the Secretary of State. The annual report covering the 2023/2024 period was submitted to the Secretary of State during November 2024.

A new staffing appraisal system commenced during November 2022 which incorporated performance related pay progression. This system enables a bespoke annual training plan to be set to meet individual staff needs underpinned by personal set of work objectives for the year ahead. All staffing appraisals were completed by 1 April 2024.

Staff performance management systems will be in place that link to the IFCA success criteria. There will be an induction procedure for new joiners. Staff training and development needs will be identified. Performance will be managed and where necessary, improvement procedures will be followed.

IFCA staff will have annual performance management plans in place. Annual appraisals for all staff will have been completed by 31 May each year.

During 2023/2024 the authority maintained a system of 'hybrid' meetings providing for attendance in person combined with virtual engagement to conduct its business. Agendas, supporting papers and minutes were published in accordance with the authority's standing orders and posted on the authority's website.

WORKING LEVEL OBJECTIVE

Standard operating procedures describe how data is captured and shared with principal partners.

OUTCOME(S)

The IFCA's contribution to Technical Advisory Group (TAG) and progress that it has made towards a national evidence needs programme will be recorded in the IFCA's annual report.

PERFORMANCE INDICATOR(S) UPDATE 2023/2024

The authority's environmental and scientific leads are fully engaged with other IFCA colleagues through the national IFCA Technical Advisory Group. Through this group, the authority's officers have developed and implemented standard operating practices across most of its work streams.



Non-confidential meta-data collected through the IFCA research programme should be recorded in a database available to the marine research community.

Non-confidential data is shared reducing the need for duplication of survey effort.

Authority officers share non-confidential meta data through MEDIN and 'one drive' and improving internal data sharing within the authority's membership remains an ongoing work stream.





**North Eastern Inshore Fisheries
and Conservation Authority**

**2023/2024
Annual Report**