

By: KEIFCA Chief Fishery Officer

To: Kent & Essex Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority
– 26 January 2023

Subject: **Update on progress in developing Fisheries Management Plans**

Classification Unrestricted

Summary:

This paper will provide Members with background on the Government’s approach to fisheries management post Common Fisheries Policy by updating members on the progress of DEFRA’s Fisheries Management Plan (FMP) project. The paper also outlines the engagement and actions the Association of IFCAs and KEIFCA have taken in the development of FMPs to date.

Recommendations:

Members are asked to **COMMENT** and **APPROVE** the report.

Background

Sea fish are a public resource and, having left the European Union (EU), the UK Administrations have a responsibility to manage their fisheries to ensure their sustainable stewardship in a way that recognises the specific needs of our diverse seafood industry and marine environment. Fisheries management in the UK is largely devolved, and a new Fisheries Framework has been created that sets out a joint approach to fisheries management across the UK. The Fisheries Framework consists of the Fisheries Act 2020 and associated statutory instruments, relevant retained EU law, the Joint Fisheries Statement (JFS), Fisheries Management Plans (FMPs) and the Fisheries Framework Memorandum of Understanding.

The UK government's ambition for the new framework is:

- To deliver world class, sustainable management of our sea fisheries and aquaculture across the UK, and to play our part in supporting delivery of this globally.
- As part of being an independent coastal State, the fisheries policy authorities will work together to support a vibrant, profitable, and sustainable fishing and aquaculture sector supported by a healthy marine environment that is resilient to climate change.
- To deliver this by protecting and, where necessary, recovering our fish stocks. Reducing the adverse effects of fishing on the marine and coastal environment and supporting a modern, resilient, and environmentally responsible fishing industry.

As the UK starts to forge its own path outside the EU, there is a much greater national focus on UK/English specific fisheries priorities and the development of Fisheries Management Plans are the key policy vehicle as we move away from the Common Fisheries Policy framework. The ambition is that FMPs will set out the policies to deliver a healthy marine environment with productive fish stocks that underpin a vibrant and profitable seafood sector. FMPs will help to inform future management actions, our negotiations with the EU, and drive the reform of retained EU law and create better regulation.

What is a Fisheries Management Plan?

FMPs will set out the policies to secure the long-term sustainability of our fish stocks for current and future generations. They will place binding obligations on the national fisheries authorities which seek to deliver these goals. Each FMP will identify what measures will be used to deliver its policies. Such measures may include both existing or new regulations, statutory instruments, technical measures, or non-statutory routes such as research plans, voluntary agreements or codes of conduct. The precise mechanisms used will depend on the policies set out in the plan and, where appropriate, will be enforced by the relevant national fisheries authority.

National fisheries authorities will work with stakeholders to consider different approaches to preparing FMPs, monitor their effectiveness and use the statutory review cycles to evaluate progress. FMPs may need to look quite different according to the fishery or area covered and could, for example, cover a single species or adopt a defined geographic area.

FMPs are required to specify whether there is sufficient evidence to assess a stock's Maximum Sustainable Yield (MSY). Where there is insufficient evidence, the FMP must specify the steps (if any) that the relevant authority or authorities propose to take to obtain the scientific evidence necessary to enable an assessment of a stock's MSY. If no steps are proposed, the FMP will explain the reasons for that, and how sustainable limits or alternative proxies will be established.

Each FMP must specify the relevant indicator(s) that fisheries managers will use to assess the effectiveness of the plan. These indicators will help to monitor the effectiveness of the FMP and how it is contributing to those fisheries objectives relevant to the plan. Where appropriate, these indicators will be linked to timebound targets that relate to the goals and management targets of the FMP.

How a fisheries policy authority uses FMPs to achieve their ambitions will be reflected in the policies set out in each FMP. The prime focus of all FMPs will be achieving the long-term, sustainable harvesting of our stocks. However, the scope of a FMP may be extended to consider wider fisheries management issues covering environmental, social and economic concerns. Any management intervention would apply to all vessels in that fishery, taking note of the obligations towards other UK vessels under the equal access objective. A fisheries policy authority should include timebound targets to achieve their goals where appropriate.

The Front Runner Fisheries Management Plans

Fisheries Management Plans (FMPs) will be the mechanism that Defra, and its Arm's Length Bodies will use to implement the objectives of the Fisheries Act 2020 and IFCA's will play a key role supporting Defra to drive forward the development of the English FMP programme over the next three years. As a first step Defra is currently developing six 'frontrunner' FMPs. These will pilot different ways of preparing plans in partnership with industry groups and other stakeholders. Lessons learnt from these projects will shape Defra's future FMP work. Each frontrunner FMP has a delivery partner who will work with Defra and stakeholders to draft the FMP.

Seafish have been directly commissioned to deliver two of the frontrunner plans including the Crab & Lobster FMP and Whelk FMP. The Crab and Lobster FMP will cover stocks in English waters only and Seafish is working closely with the Crab and Lobster Management Group, an industry-led advisory group to draft the FMP. The Whelk FMP will also cover stocks in English waters only and Seafish is working closely with the Whelk Management Group, an industry-led advisory group to draft this FMP.

The King Scallop FMP is a joint plan between Defra and the Welsh Government and will cover stocks in English and Welsh waters. The Scallop Industry Consultation Group (SICG) Working Group has been commissioned by DEFRA with Seafish, to draft the king scallop FMP. The SICG Working Group is a collaborative group comprised of UK industry representatives from the wider SICG and officials from all fisheries policy authorities.

Delivery leads for each of these three FMPs, have been directed to deliver the first drafts of the plans to Defra by the end of January 2023 to allow a gateway quality

assurance process to be undertaken. Formal public consultation for this group of FMPs is expected to take place between April and June 2023.

The Southern North Sea and Eastern Channel mixed flatfish FMP and Bass FMPs are being developed by Defra directly, although the bass plan has benefited from an engagement process led by Policy Lab during 2022 (part of the Department for Education and specialise in co-designing policy with stakeholders). The Southern North Sea and Eastern Channel mixed flatfish FMP covers the English waters within The Southern North Sea (4b and 4c) and the eastern channel (7d). The plan will include the following flatfish species (quota and non-quota):

sole	dab	plaice
flounder	halibut	lemon sole
witch	turbot	brill

The MMO has been commissioned to develop the Channel Non-Quota Species FMP. The Channel NQS FMP covers 7d (eastern channel) and 7e (western channel). It will include important demersal (bottom living) species without agreed catch limits (quota):

gurnards	cuttlefish	squid
octopus	john dory	surmullet
lesser spotted dogfish		

This group of three FMPs are running approximately 2-3 months behind the first three FMPs and are expected to go to DEFRA for quality assurance in April/May 2023 before a formal public consultation phase that is planned to start in July 2023.

Working with DEFRA to deliver Fisheries Management Plans

As well as coordinating IFCA engagement in the development of FMPs, the Association of IFCAs (AIFCA) has led the engagement with DEFRA outlining the workloads and resource needs of all ten IFCAs to help facilitate and engage in this process. As a direct consequence of this engagement, an additional £500,000 has been made available to IFCAs this year from DEFRA and each IFCA has now received further funding in support of this programme (Appendix 1). There is a commitment to continue this until the end of the SR21 period (2024/25). However, given the current uncertainties over departmental budgets, future funding will be determined over the course of the year.

The work Defra are asking IFCAs to do to includes:

- Supporting the Defra led English FMP programme;
- Helping to coordinate communications and engagement with inshore fishing communities; and,
- Contributing fisheries management experience through technical advice and evidence to support policy development and implementation planning.

The IFCA's will also have an important role in supporting the future implementation of FMPs by contributing to the evaluation of policy and measures in pre-consultation draft and final FMPs.

Engaging with the FMP project

As members experienced first hand at the last Authority meeting, with the presentation from Dr Jon Davies from the DEFRA FMP team, KEIFCA officers have been working to promote engagement with the frontrunner FMPs. At an officer level, a range of meetings have been held with other IFCA's as well as engagement with specific FMP working groups. Overall initial engagement has been very positive however the real test will start when the plans start taking more shape and detail, especially when new management options start being discussed in earnest.

Using the funds from DEFRA, KEIFCA have been working with the AIFCA on a national project to engage IFCA members in the FMP process using techniques KEIFCA has developed during the cockle review process. The project is at an early scoping out phase, but the initial intention is to combine KEIFCA and AIFCA funding to run a national workshop for twenty to thirty IFCA members (two to three per IFCA) to discuss and give feedback on the Crab & Lobster FMP and Whelk FMP. The Crab & Lobster and Whelk FMPs have been selected as these are important inshore fisheries and many IFCA's already have some kind of management system or management measures in place. As well as running a more traditional workshop there is an ambition to film the opinions of members and develop a page on the AIFCA's website to show individuals films as well as a summary film per FMP to capture feedback from IFCA members. Initial costs for this project are being gathered and progress on the project would be reported in quarterly papers.

Working with the Chairman and Vice-Chairman a decision was taken to use £13,500 of the DEFRA funds to help fund the Fish Local project to help gather evidence and develop markets for our local Silver Shore Herring. To get the project up and running for the winter herring fishery time was always against the project, however funding of the project was agreed by the MMO on in late November 2022.

Fish Local - Silver Shore Herring project outline

Project Objectives

- With in-kind support from CEFAS, engage in a citizen lead research project to assess the primary variant of the winter season (spring spawning) herring caught across Kent & Essex.
- Create a test market for Silver Shore herring by connecting fishers with buyers.

- Build data to understand the potential for taking Silver Shore herring forward to a CEFAS lead classification, the desire for Silver Shore herring in the market and the cost reward of securing Silver Shore herring as a local specialty

Proposed Activities

1. Take advice from CEFAS on the type of catch data that will be useful in identifying the potential for a full scientific classification of the herring caught in Kent & Essex
2. Engage with two fishers from each side of the Thames to go out for Silver Shore herring in specific areas to supply samples for testing.
3. Collect relevant data relating to the herring caught as lead by CEFAS
4. Find buyers for the remainder of the catch to get Silver Shore herring to the consumer
5. Find buyers with measurable connections to the end user who are prepared to sell the catch specifically as Silver Shore Herring.
6. Deliver awareness around Silver Shore Herring while showing positive industry connectivity.

Mr Seaward from the project will give a presentation and an update in person at the meeting.

Learning from the six 'frontrunner' FMPs

The IFCAs (working through the AIFCAs) is also feeding into the Fisheries Management Plan evaluation workshops (an external evaluation of the FMP programme). The objective of the evaluation is to support the ongoing implementation of the FMP Programme and to develop an understanding of how the programme is building a foundation for collaborative working as well as generate lessons on what works in which contexts.

The evaluation will capture evidence on the extent to which FMPs are delivering successful outcomes, who is benefiting from these, how FMPs are contributing to the Fisheries Act Objectives, and highlight the main challenges and opportunities of FMP delivery. The first phase of this project will commence in January 2023 and will initially seek to capture learning from the six FMP front runners. Evidence collected over the course of the evaluation project will test and refine both the FMP process and the plans themselves.

Recommendations:

Members are asked to **COMMENT** and **APPROVE** the report.