

By: Lead Scientific and Conservation Officer

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

Subject: **Strategic Evidence Plan Review**

Classification Unrestricted

Summary:

This paper will discuss the need for the renewal of Strategic Evidence Plan and members are provided with the opportunity to provide feedback.

Recommendations:

1. Members are asked to **DISCUSS** the research priorities for the next 5-year Strategic Evidence Plan and **NOTE** the paper.

Strategic Evidence Plan Review

The existing Strategic Evidence Plan (SEP) covered a 5-year period and is due to expire in September 2023 (Appendix 1). KEIFCA intends to renew the SEP to update and refine a medium (5-year) to long-term (10-year) direction to steer KEIFCA’s research and evidence needs, identify resource requirements and help plan evidence gathering activities. The SEP is an important link for the Annual Work Plan because it provides the background and rationale for much of the work that is carried out on an annual basis. It also provides reference points to assess our strategic direction and evaluate achievement of long-term objectives.

The purpose of this paper to provide Authority members with the opportunity to review our strategic evidence gathering and research plans and input into the development of the next 5-year Strategic Evidence Plan (SEP 2024-2029). Members are therefore asked “*where we want to be in 5 years’ time*”, in terms of the broad direction of the evidence gathering programme and then to consider “*how we get there*”, in terms of resourcing, finance and partnerships.

Future evidence gathering will need to be cognisant of and fit with the needs of Fisheries Management Plans, whilst also bearing in mind the changing marine environment with ever increasing pressures on marine usage in our district and the broader impacts of climate change. The ask is therefore for views on the overarching direction and priorities for strategic evidence gathering, rather than

ideas for individual research projects. We will consult with other IFCA's, Defra, NE, and other partner organisation to align our strategy with the rest of the marine sector and present the updated SEP at the November 2023 Authority meeting.

Strategic Evidence Plan 2024-2029

The list of topics covered draws from the existing SEP 2018-2023 (Appendix 1). The existing structure provides a good framework and guide to stimulate discussion. While there is not a great need for change to the structure, a few updates will be required to bring this in line with the general direction of travel for marine management post 2023, under new legislation (FMPS) and increasing impacts from climate change.

Time frames

We define medium term as five years, and long-term as ten years, with a five-year review cycle. A five-year review appears to be appropriate in terms of the change of KEIFCA's research and evidence need priorities and gives a simple multiple for longer term projects to remain in the SEP, and be evaluated during with the turn of the cycle.

Structure of document

1. Purpose
 - a. Vision statement as guidance for our overarching strategic direction
 - b. KEIFCA's unique position in UK fisheries, how the dynamic nature of the organisation lends itself to responding to local community issues/needs as they arise.
 - c. Aims and objectives
2. Partnership working
3. Resources
 - a. Staff
 - b. Equipment
 - c. Data Management
4. Evidence gathering activities
 - a. Themes & activities

The evidence gathering activities in the Annual Research workplan are broadly categorised under the three themes, namely 1) Sustainable Fisheries, 2) Marine Protected Area, 3) Access to Evidence, and corresponds with the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009 (MACAA 2009 sections 153, and 154), which sets out the IFCA's duties.

Within the three themes we hope to cover the following activities in the new SEP document, namely:

- The changing seascape and future of sustainable fisheries management under climate change (long term) (new, and overarching background)
- Sustainable fisheries management,
 - o Cockles
 - o Whelks
 - o Clams (new)
 - o Native oysters
 - o Finfish fisheries

- Smallfish surveys
 - Skates and rays
 - Marine Protected Areas management (medium term)
 - Fisheries Management Plans (medium term) (new, and overarching background)
5. Project evaluation criteria
 6. Implementation

This paper is accompanied by a slideshow presentation to help promote discussion.

Recommendations:

Members are asked to **DISCUSS** the research priorities for the next 5-year Strategic Evidence Plan and **NOTE** the paper.