

By: KEIFCA Chief Fishery Officer

To: Kent & Essex Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority
– 25 May 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 plan to undertake during the frontrunner FMP consultation process.

Recommendations:

Members **APPROVE** holding a workshop on the 11 July, after the Consultation 4 cockle meeting to discuss relevant Fisheries Management Plans and help identify key points in KEIFCA’s replies.

Members **APPROVE** KEIFCA officers working with the AIFCA to develop and deliver a national engagement project for the Whelk FMP and the Crab and Lobster FMP and contributing an estimated £20,000 from the DEFRA FMP income to deliver the project.

Background

The Fisheries Act 2020 provides the framework for the UK to manage its international responsibilities as an independent coastal state. The act requires the UK fisheries policy authorities (in this case Defra) to publish Fisheries Management Plans (FMPs) to help deliver the UK’s ambition for sustainable fisheries.

Sitting alongside the Joint Fisheries Statement (JFS), FMPs will replace the EU Common Fisheries Policy, and are being developed with the goal of helping revitalise our fishing sector and coastal communities. The ambition is that FMPs will set out the polices to deliver a healthy marine environment supporting 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.

Progress made so far

IFCAs, through the Association of IFCAs (AIFCA), have been working with other regulators and DEFRA to help inform and support this process and have been contributing to the Frontrunner FMP Projects (Whelk FMP, Bass FMP, Scallop FMP, Crab & Lobster FMP, Channel Non-Quota Demersal FMP and Southern North Sea & Eastern Channel Mixed Flatfish FMP).

To meet the legal requirements of the JFS, the final version of the frontrunner FMPs are required to be adopted by the end of 2023. Prior to this, each draft FMP will go through a public consultation phase in late spring/early summer. Whilst IFCAs have been engaging throughout the process of developing the plans, the consultation phase provides IFCA Authority members and officers the first tangible outline of how key fisheries in their district could be managed in the future. This is an important opportunity for IFCA members to provide input into the development of the plans.

KEIFCA commenting on draft FMPs

All six of the front runner FMPs apply to fisheries that take place in the KEIFCA district.

Frontrunner Fisheries Management Plans	Relevance to KEIFCA
Bass FMP <i>The Bass FMP is a joint plan between Defra and Welsh Government and will cover stocks in English and Welsh waters.</i>	A very important commercial and recreational species found throughout the district.
Southern North Sea & Eastern Channel Mixed Flatfish FMP <i>The plan will include the following flatfish species (quota and non-quota): sole, dab, plaice, flounder, halibut, lemon sole, witch, turbot, brill and covers the English waters within ICES divisions 4b, 4c and 7d.</i>	Sole is a key local commercial species and stocks in the Thames have been a concern to local fishermen and KEIFCA for some time.
Whelk FMP <i>The plan covers whelk stocks in English waters only.</i>	A crucial non-quota commercial species in the district. KEIFCA issue an annual whelk permit.
Crab & Lobster FMP <i>The FMP covers crab and lobster stocks in English waters only.</i>	Smaller but important fisheries focused primarily around several ports.
King Scallop FMP <i>The FMP will apply to all vessels, of all sizes, and from all nations which operate in English and Welsh waters (UK and non-UK).</i>	An inshore scallop fishery is regularly fished in the south of the district.
Channel Non-Quota Demersal FMP <i>The Channel demersal NQS FMP will include ICES divisions 7d and 7e and will cover demersal species such as red, tub and grey gurnards, cuttlefish, squid, octopus, john dory, red mullet and lesser spotted dogfish.</i>	The area covered by the plan overlaps with the southern part of our district (below Folkestone).

Engaging with the Fisheries Management Plans at both a district level and a national level is vital, and with a deadline of the end of the year, the consultation period is likely to be focused (6-8 weeks) and start in June or July (no date has been confirmed yet).

Within the district, officers want to work with the local fishing communities to ensure they are aware of the consultations and DEFRA's engagement events and as always are happy to offer support and help if required. At an Authority level, officers are suggesting running an afternoon workshop session (after the cockle management – Consultation 4 meeting) on the 11 July, where officers and members can discuss the FMPs in a more informal and interactive way and develop the key points that will form KEIFCA's consultation responses.

Developing a national response for national FMPs

Working with the AIFCA, KEIFCA are proposing a project that uses some of the same methods as used in the KEIFCA cockle review to capture the views and knowledge of IFCA members around the English coast. Potting is a key sector across all IFCA districts and as such the project will primarily focus on the Crab and Lobster FMP and the Whelk FMP. In addition, many IFCAs already have some kind of management system or management measures in place for these species.

The project's main objective is to engage IFCA members across all the IFCA districts, tapping into the extensive experience, local knowledge and expertise of the IFCA membership including their experience of implementing fisheries management measures. Overall, we wish to highlight the strength of the IFCA model.

The project will be split into 2 phases, the first phase will collect and collate the views of IFCA members, whilst the second phase will involve running a workshop where two members from each IFCA will review the evidence collected in the first phase and summarise feedback and draw together a national response. All of the information collected throughout the project would be collated and stored on a bespoke website that would link to the AIFCA site (see <https://cocklereview.kentandessex-ifca.gov.uk>).

The detail – Collecting and collating the views of IFCA members.

Views of IFCA members on relevant FMPs (Crab and Lobster FMP and the Whelk FMP) will be collected in two ways, the first will be through a simple 'tick-box' type survey which all members could complete, the second will be a series of online recorded interviews. Potentially 10-15 IFCA members could be interviewed in this way per FMP. Both methods would use the same basic format of asking members what they thought was good about a specific FMP, what they thought could be improved and one specific thing they would change.

Individual survey responses would be anonymised, collated per IFCA and kept on the project website. A simple summary document could then compile and summarise the replies. Again, this could be kept on the website and would be used as a key reference document in the second phase workshop. The online recorded interviews would also be kept in full on the website (if any member was

uncomfortable or unhappy with their video, we would take it down immediately and the member would be given the option of either removing the video completely or the project team submitting the video on a memory stick to DEFRA). A summary video would then be made compiling the key points made by members.

The detail – Reviewing feedback and summarising a response.

Building on the feedback from IFCA members across the country, a 2-day workshop would be held on the 26 and 27 September in Poole (RNLI training centre) to pull together the key themes and observations on the proposed FMPs. There would be space for each IFCA to send two of their members to the meeting, as well as relevant IFCA officers. The workshop would review the project website and the members evidence as well as the detail of the management plans, and if possible, prioritise or identify key actions. A summary of the meeting would form part of the AIFCA consultation submission.

Funding of the project

As part of the government's spending review settlement, DEFRA agreed to fund IFCA's an additional £50K a year over the length of the Parliament to address and further the FMP workstreams. KEIFCA received the first instalment in March 2023 and intend to use this 'earmarked' money to fund this project (meaning that the project is not funded by the IFCA levy on our councils). The AIFCA has also indicated that it wants to support the project, with both parties agreeing to split the £40K estimated cost of the project evenly (i.e AIFCA would contribute £20K).

KEIFCA would take the lead in delivering the project as we have already run many of the components of the project, and costs have been kept down by directly replicating websites etc. that were developed in the cockle review. Based on meetings and discussions other IFCA's are also using their £50K to run research projects, gather data and help engagement that will contribute to relevant FMPs both at a regional level at a national level.

Recommendations:

Members **APPROVE** holding a workshop on the 11 July, after the Consultation 4 cockle meeting to discuss relevant Fisheries Management Plans and help identify key points in KEIFCA's replies.

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