

From: Chief IFCO/ Principal Compliance & Enforcement Officer
To: Kent and Essex Inshore Fisheries and Conservation
Authority– 19 May 2026
Subject: Industry workshops and scoping of a bass drift net trial
Classification: **Unrestricted**

Summary: The paper updates the Authority on the outputs from a series of workshops run with local commercial fishermen to review the recommendations from the Bass Authorisation Review and scope out a possible drift net trial, which could be run jointly with Eastern IFCA.

Recommendations

- 1 The Authority is asked to **NOTE** the Bass FMP Authorisations Review: *Inshore fishing industry workshop summary*.
- 2 The Authority is asked to **AGREE** to officers scoping out and taking steps to develop and further a drift net trial with Eastern IFCA.

Introduction

At our last Authority meeting, Hayden Hurst (Principal Compliance & Enforcement Officer) gave a presentation to the Authority on the Bass Authorisation Review report that was published in December last year. Following the presentation, the Authority asked that officers run a workshop with members of the local fishing industry to run through the key parts of the presentation and to get feedback and scope out a possible drift net trial (action 3H in the 2026/27 KEIFCA annual plan).

Industry workshops

KEIFCA officers ran 2 workshops (12 March 2026 - Colchester, Essex and 26 March 2026 - Whitstable, Kent) that both followed the same format and used an interactive survey platform to collate the views of each fisher that attended the workshop. An easy-to-read summary of the workshop was produced in an effort to capture the views and key points made at the meetings (Appendix 1). The

summary document was then emailed to each attendee that submitted their email address and feedback sort.

Working with Eastern IFCA and scoping out a drift net trial

Running in conjunction with the workshops, KEIFCA officers worked closely with their Eastern IFCA counterparts to discuss and scope out a possible drift net trial, building on the drift net trial comments in the Bass Authorisation Review. KEIFCA and Eastern IFCA officers held an initial meeting with subject area lead at CEFAS and used the feedback to start the process of scoping out a drift net trial.

Whilst DEFRA have made it clear that any drift net trial proposals would need to pass through the Bass Management Group, the current plan both IFCAs are trying to work to, is to run a small-scale feasibility trial this autumn, with the main trial hopefully starting in the spring of 2027. The ambition is to apply for industry-science partnership funding for the main trial but to fund the feasibility trial jointly between Eastern and KEIFCA in an effort to get the project moving forward (officers are in the process of costing out this option).

In scoping out the detail of the trial, KEIFCA officers shared the feedback from the industry workshops with Eastern IFCA and many of the key points and issues seem to be the same across both districts. Eastern IFCA have then led on developing a literature review of drift netting (a requirement outlined in the Bass Authorisation Review) and are also taking the lead in pulling the information together for a funding bid. The hope is that we can get all the required information together for the next Bass Management Group meeting. As the project develops and as funding and resource requirements become clearer KEIFCA officers will continue to update the Authority.

Recommendations

- 1 The Authority is asked to **NOTE** the Bass FMP Authorisations Review: *Inshore fishing industry workshop summary*.
- 2 The Authority is asked to **AGREE** to officers scoping out and taking steps to develop and further a drift net trial with Eastern IFCA.