



From: Assistant Chief IFCO

To: Kent and Essex Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority – Technical Panel – 3 November 2023

Subject: Vessel Management – New Build Cabin RIB to replace Vigilant

Classification: **Unrestricted**

**Summary:** Members are asked to discuss whether they wish to start a new vessel build tender process in order to utilise UK Government funds for a 9.5m cabin RIB.

#### *Current KEIFCA assets*

The KEIFCA fleet is currently comprised of four vessels. Vigilant, a 7.8m Ribcraft RIB came into service in 2020 and is the newest vessel in the fleet. The vessel has proven extremely efficient both in terms of the budget required for the operation of the vessel, especially fuel burn, as well as staff resource required to operate the vessel at its full capability.

Nerissa is a 17m Blyth catamaran built to a bespoke design to allow the deployment and retrieval of a stand-alone daughter craft, Nereus (5.4m Avon RIB), in a variety of sea states. Both vessels came into service in 2017 and provides KEIFCA with a large, stable, multi-purpose platform to carry out boarding of fishing vessels and survey work across the District and out to the 12m limit when conducting joint work with the MMO. She is also fitted with a hauler to facilitate the inspection of static gear located at sea.

Tamesis is a 12m South Boats catamaran which came into service in 2011 and was KEIFCA's first bespoke survey vessel. The vessel primarily carries out survey work for the cockle fisheries and oyster fisheries as well as conducting static gear inspections with the fitted hauler.

Vessel	In service date	Maintenance budget	Fuel budget	Insurance	Crewing requirements
Tamesis	May 2011	£21,782	£8,850	£5,696	3
Nerissa (Nereus)	Jan 2017	£33,324	£45,890	£9,299	4
Vigilant	May 2020	£12,982	£4,620	£2,202	3 (2)

*Table 1. Current assets, date into service and budgets*

Hours at sea	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
Tamesis	172:25	217:05	209:00	94:15	116:00	187:30
Nerissa	515:20	473:25	404:25	137:25	352:20	351:40
Vigilant				279:36	288:55	121:55

*Table 2. Current assets hours at sea 2017 – 2023*

#### *New Build funding availability*

IFCAs are created by the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009, the impact assessment which accompanied MaCAA identified a requirement for funding for capital asset replacement. Prior to the UK leaving the EU, the European Marine and Fisheries Fund (EMFF) provided this under an enforcement provision, which enabled bids to the fund for the purposes of enforcement. A component of that enforcement provision was for replacement and maintenance of fixed assets, specifically related to the surface patrol fleet (patrol vessels).

Following the repatriation of funding after Brexit, the Association of IFCAs approached Defra regarding the requirement for funding for the capital replacement of vessels across IFCA's. Following negotiations between the AIFCA and Defra funding was made available by Defra to IFCAs as a domestic funding stream for the duration of the SR21 period for capital replacement of vessels. This takes place through the National Shipbuilding Strategy which oversees the government spend on new vessels.

As part of the AIFCA negotiations all IFCAs put forward, at extremely short notice, indicative costings and types of vessels which may be required in the future. Kent and Essex IFCA submitted a proposal for a £300,000 contribution towards the purchase of a 9m cabin RIB.

#### *Replacing Vigilant in Essex*

The purpose of the vessel would be to replace Vigilant which is based in Brightlingsea. Vigilant is a 7.8m Ribcraft RIB came into service in 2020 and has proven extremely efficient both in terms of the budget required for the operation of the vessel, especially fuel burn, as well as staff resource required to operate the vessel at its full capability. The vessel acts as the primary enforcement vessel on the Essex coastline, whilst also providing fast response enforcement capability across the Thames Estuary, having been used in the Medway and on the Margate Sands this summer alone.

However the vessel does have its limitations, which are especially noticeable as the vessel is the only asset capable of conducting boardings within Essex, and so has to be used for all of those patrols. Being an open decked vessel means that the officers are exposed to the elements at all times during a patrol, where both extremes of heat and cold can have a significant restrictive effect on the capabilities of the officers at sea. The vessel also has very few facilities, with no means to heat food or water and no toilet facilities for officers. This restricts the length of patrols that the vessel can undertake and the amount of time the vessel can spend at sea. Therefore officers have explored options to replace Vigilant with a cabin RIB. Whilst a cabin is available on the 7.8m hull upon which Vigilant is based, it significantly compromises the ability of the vessel, whilst only providing extremely cramped accommodation within the wheelhouse.

#### *Option 1 – 9.5m cabin RIB*

This vessel would be very similar to the Northumberland IFCA vessel 'Robert Arkless MBE', which is a 9.5m Ribcraft RIB, shown in the pictures below. The feedback from the officers at Northumberland IFCA is that the vessel enables them to carry out long distance patrols over a number of hours when necessary without the significant staff fatigue issues which come with operating an open RIB. The vessel has seating for three officers but can also be operated by two officers for boarding operations. It has toilet facilities on board as well as hot water provision.



KEIFCA officers would suggest that the larger size and enclosed cabin of the 9.5m RIB provides an elevated and protected vantage point, enhancing surveillance capabilities over those provided by Vigilant to monitor larger areas of the water and detect potential illegal fishing activities effectively. Whilst the cabin would allow for extended patrols, enabling officers to stay on the water for longer durations, ensuring continuous presence in critical areas.

Since the September Authority meeting, officers have made some initial enquiries with manufacturers with whom we already have a relationship. Indicative costs for a 9.5m vessel are £250,000.

*Option 2 – 10.5m cabin RIB*

This vessel would be a very similar vessel to that currently in build by Southern IFCA, and already in service with Dorset Police (pictured below).



This vessel has all of the same advantages as the 9.5m RIB set out above, with the addition of being a more capable sea boat for running down the channel coast to the southern limits past Dungeness and further offshore. The vessel also has better seating provision for officers, containing four full suspension seats

compared to the two full suspension seats and single suspension jockey seat found in the 9.5m.

It would however sacrifice some manoeuvrability and close quarters capability in the small creeks found within the District requiring additional vigilance from the skippers.

#### *Cabin RIB anticipated benefits*

With a larger fuel capacity, the vessel would be able cover greater distances, allowing officers to reach remote or offshore areas. Extended operational range would reduce response time to incidents and enables timely intervention in cases of suspected illegal fishing or MPA incursions.

The larger size of the cabin RIB would provide a stable platform for boarding operations, ensuring the safety of officers during inspections of fishing vessels. The cabin space could be utilised to process necessary paperwork, store seized items, and carry inspection equipment, streamlining the enforcement process.

The enclosed cabin would protect enforcement officers from adverse weather conditions both in summer and in winter, enabling continuous patrols even during rough seas or inclement weather, ensuring consistent enforcement.

The presence of a larger, more visible enforcement vessel would act as a deterrent to illegal activities and the larger RIB's better capabilities would signal a strong commitment to compliance within the District, encouraging compliance among legitimate fishermen and promoting a level playing field within the industry.

The vessel would ultimately enable KEIFCA asset disposition to be re-configured to address strategic risks, increase the effectiveness of our patrols, and enable efficiency savings by utilising the existing fleet in the most appropriate ways. The MPA protection benefits of this vessel would be notable as boarding capability is a key requirement for addressing infringements into restricted areas. The vessel would also enable KEIFCA to support MMO asset needs in the 6-12nm area, where there is a need for assets to be deployed to non-UK craft, to support non-quota species and Fisheries Management Plan implementation.

#### *Plan for Vigilant*

In placing a more capable enforcement asset in Brightlingsea, Vigilant is then surplus to requirements on a day-to-day basis in Essex. It is suggested that Vigilant be moved to Kent and be moored in Ramsgate. Whilst Nerissa is an extremely capable, multipurpose enforcement vessel, with the ability to work in more extreme weather and over a much greater geographic area than any other vessel in the KEIFCA fleet, this does come with some consequences. In order to provide the performance required of the vessel she is fitted with large engines. As a result, the fuel budget required is significant as can be seen in Table 1 which summarises the current fleet and is far in excess of any of the other vessels. In addition, in order to utilise both the gear hauling and boarding capabilities of the vessel on a patrol, the minimum crewing requirement is 4 officers, which is the whole warranted officer complement in Ramsgate.

As a result, placing Vigilant in Ramsgate, initially on a trial basis, would allow officers to conduct more resource efficient and lower fuel usage patrols, when

staff availability is restricted or when the patrol allows for it, whilst maintaining the overall capability that Nerissa provides.

No other vessel in the current fleet has the capability of Nerissa, but when that full capability is not required, a cheaper, less staff intensive asset such as Vigilant could be used. This would cut costs on fuel budget for Nerissa and also prolong the working life of Nerissa as much as possible which is important given the financial landscape of the renewals reserve given the significant costs to replace that vessel on a like-for-like basis.

#### *Financial Implications*

The servicing requirements for a cabin RIB in Brightlingsea as described are very similar to those for Vigilant. If engines from the same manufacturer were specified, the servicing costs are the same per service. Maintenance costs would be similar, harbour dues and mooring fees would be the same and insurance would be similar. In summary, for the Essex-based enforcement vessel, the costs would be much as currently budgeted.

Additional costs would result from retaining Vigilant and placing it in Kent. The budget for Vigilant is currently approximately £19,000 per annum. The vessel would be expected to undertake less sea time than it does currently so this would be a maximum budget required for the new vessel. This cost would be offset to some degree with an anticipated fuel saving on Nerissa from some reduced days at sea.

A vessel build at this value would be required to go through a tender process and also have a business plan submitted to the funding scheme, both of these things have very similar requirements and so could be undertaken in tandem. The tender process needs to have been completed and awarded to the successful bidder by the end of the 2023/24 financial year in order for KEIFCA to claim against the domestic funds.