



### Agenda Item B13

#### Success criteria 3

By: Assistant Chief IFCO

To: Kent and Essex Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority –  
20 May 2014

Subject: **Harwich Fishermen's Association inspections**

Classification: Unrestricted

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Summary: To discuss the concerns of the Harwich Fishermen's Association with regards to KEIFCA inspections of fixed gear

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In August 2013, a query was received by Eastern IFCA and KEIFCA officers from Mr Trevor Armstrong in his role as Secretary of Harwich Fishermen's Association. Harwich Fishermen's Association have concerns relating to the following:

- The reasons for hauling gear
- The procedures being used to lift gear at sea
- The amount of static gear inspections taking place.
- Gear being inspected when fishermen are not in attendance
- Maintaining a consistent inspection approach to Eastern IFCA.

Over a period of four weeks, 15 emails were exchanged between myself and Harwich Fishermen's Association regarding these issues. Harwich Fishermen's Association then requested a meeting with the Chief Officer. In October 2013 the Chief Officer and myself held a meeting with Mr Armstrong at the Brightlingsea office regarding these issues.

At the meeting the reasons and the approach KEIFCA takes when inspecting fixed gear in the district were discussed and a range of possible options were explored to try and reassure Harwich Fishermen's Association of how IFCA officers lift, inspect and replace gear as well as different ways that we could inspect gear. An invitation was extended to members of the Harwich Fishermen's Association on to our vessel to haul and replace gear and help KEIFCA develop an agreed Standard Operating Procedure (SOP). We also discussed sending an officer to spend the day on a fishing vessel and inspect gear when it was being hauled. Unfortunately neither of these options were seen as workable by Harwich Fishermen's Association. Harwich

Fishermen's Association feels that the enforcement approach being used is disproportionate to the offences detected; that KEIFCA lift their members gear too regularly, without due cause; and that when gear is lifted it is not put back correctly resulting in reduced income. They have requested that officers attempt to contact all of their members before attempting to inspect any of their gear. Harwich Fishermen's Association has also repeatedly requested that all inspections of their members gear ceases until the situation is resolved.

KEIFCA officers regard the ability to inspect gear independently of fishermen being present as an important part of enforcing our marked gear byelaw, our lobster escape gap byelaw as well as our whelk permit byelaw. The logistics of coordinating fishermen being present whilst inspections take place (pots can be at sea for 48 hours and it can take 15-30 minutes for a fishermen to haul and re-bait his gear) is difficult and the element of the unexpected when carrying out an inspection is an important component of any enforcement approach. Harwich Fishermen's Association has been given access to the Risk-based Enforcement Register and the KEIFCA Compliance and Enforcement Strategy, both previously approved by the Authority.

Discussions have also been held between KEIFCA and Eastern IFCA with the result that Eastern IFCA have the option to carry out joint working aboard a KEIFCA vessel to lift fixed gear when required. Eastern IFCA have indicated that they are happy to use our standard operating procedure to lift, inspect and replace gear.

The current KEIFCA approach does not meet the Harwich Fishermen's Association view on how this part of KEIFCA enforcement activity should be carried out therefore this issue is being brought to the attention of the Authority for review. A letter was sent to Harwich Fishermen's Association on 3<sup>rd</sup> April 2014 informing them that their concerns and queries would be raised at this meeting.

The Authority is asked to **REVIEW** the concerns of Harwich Fishermen's Association and provide **GUIDANCE** on how they would like KEIFCA officers to conduct gear inspections at sea.