



Inshore Fisheries and
Conservation Authority

Communication Strategy

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Introduction

Communication is simply the act of imparting information or knowledge, and as such affects every aspect of the KEIFCA on a daily basis. Every call taken, meeting attended, or e-mail sent by an employee or member involves communication of information either to or from the Authority. The Communication Strategy by contrast refers to how we identify and engage with key stakeholders and target specific information at them to further our aims and objectives. This plan aims to ensure that people understand how as an organisation we plan to engage with others to help us to make the right decisions for delivering our vision and how we can enhance and develop our IFCA brand.

Communicating effectively with stakeholders, individuals, organisations and associations is an inherently complex and potentially costly process, so it is essential that due consideration is given to factors which may influence or affect the operational aspect of the communications plan. Unplanned activities and events (such as the recent introduction of the emergency whelk byelaw) could utilise and over-exploit resources previously allocated to the communications budget. The strategy must be flexible enough to be reactive and adaptable, whilst still achieving the overarching objectives.

Throughout this communication strategy we refer to stakeholders and communities, and we consider these to be any individual or group who is, or could become, interested in, involved in or affected by, or have an effect on, our policies and activities. This plan therefore also outlines the communities and groups we serve and how we may be able to engage effectively.

Vision

The IFCA's were created under the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009 with a shared national vision to:

"...lead, champion and manage a sustainable marine environment and inshore fisheries, by successfully securing the right balance between social, environmental and economic benefits to ensure healthy seas, sustainable fisheries and a viable industry."

KEIFCA feel that effective communication with and between stakeholders is a key component of helping our organisation fairly and successfully secure the right balance between a wide range of different interests. A good communication strategy is a central pillar upon which KEIFCA can deliver DEFRA's success

criteria and we have made a commitment to complete this in our first year as part of our annual plan for 2011-2012.

Success Criteria

In setting up IFCA's a number of 'success criteria', were developed that helped outline the types of activities which may be expected of IFCA's in their pursuit of their vision. Success criteria are the tangible aspects that underpin the vision. Two of the seven success criteria focus on the importance of KEIFCA to effectively communicate:

IFCA's are recognised and heard

- "Each IFCA, and IFC Authorities as a group, have a vision and plan for future management of inshore fisheries and conservation. This will help them to be a recognised 'brand', managing their public voice so that they are respected and trusted for the expertise they offer."

IFCA's work in partnership and are engaged with their stakeholders

- "IFCA's will work across boundaries, engaging effectively with local and central government, other government bodies, other delivery bodies, industry and other NGOs, recreational users and individuals in the work that they do. Through this partnership approach to working IFCA's will deliver the socio-economic and environmental outcomes they were created under the Marine and Coastal Access Act to deliver."

By developing and delivering aspects of this strategy we recognise the importance of engagement and that it underpins our high level strategies, and that building effective engagement will help us develop and deliver many of our core objectives:

- Review of byelaws
- Implement and review KEIFCA enforcement plan and our risk based approach
- Implement and review KEIFCA research plans
- Run an effective Authority that successfully balances social, environmental and economic needs

Objectives

We consider the objectives of the communication strategy to be:

- Establish guiding principles for KEIFCA engagement with stakeholders that underlines our organisational values (Collaborative, Professional, Knowledgeable, Accountable, and Stewardship) and our commitment to develop an honest, open and transparent culture of engagement.
- To develop a network of vehicles we can utilise to disseminate and collect information from stakeholders, to inform our decision-making, and to publicise those decisions.
- To raise 'brand awareness' and ensure the IFCA is recognized and heard by increasing knowledge among stakeholders and the public about the role and functions of the IFCA, particularly in respect of fisheries management and conservation in accordance with the national vision.
- To identify issues affecting our stakeholders and to seek shared solutions to these issues.
- To develop a dialog with stakeholders and to ensure that a clear and easily accessible framework exists through which stakeholders can contact the IFCA
- Education – To educate the wider community on the marine environment and promote sustainable management

Developing our strategy

Understanding the environment into which we are putting our message and where we fit in our role as messenger were key aspects that influenced the development of our policy. The marine sector is comprised of commercial, recreational, and public interests that often have conflicting needs and requirements. Indeed the diversity in each sector is such that they are often in conflict with others within their sector. KEIFCA will also be looking to work with and influence other governmental organisations and helping to promote the issues and priorities identified by the Authority.

We are a new organisation, unknown to some, a variation on the old SFC to others, but few understand or appreciate the extent of our remit. It is in this climate that we must seek to make ourselves known, to send out our message, and to ensure that the stakeholders not only hear, but listen to our message. To achieve any degree of success we must ensure our message is consistent and we must continuously seek feedback and the involvement of those we are trying to reach.

The strategy has been developed internally by KEIFCA officers after consultation with counterparts in the Sussex and Eastern IFCA's. A technical group was formed to assess the influence and interests of the stakeholder groups, and a series of internal meetings were held in which the findings of technical panel were collated and analysed in order to provide a framework upon which the strategy could be formed.

Once complete and approved, we can work towards achieving the objectives of the strategy by developing a Communication Plan. This will form the operational part of the strategy, but also serves as a useful evaluation tool in its own right.

The stakeholder landscape

The task of analysing the stakeholders and their interest was put to a technical panel in October 2011. They concluded that it was a very complex task due to the high level of interaction between the different stakeholder groups as illustrated in Figure 1. When the principal groups are then further divided into their subgroups such as the local fishermen’s organisation, or local angling clubs, the web of interaction increases immeasurably. To illustrate this complexity one could perhaps consider the commercial fishing interest in a typical port. This would typically include trawlers and netters targeting fin fish, and the potters and cultivators whose primary interest is shellfish. These may share a common interest and speak with a united voice on certain issues, but may be polar opposites on others. Add to the mix other commercial and recreational interests in addition to environmental and public interest groups and the web becomes infinitely complex.

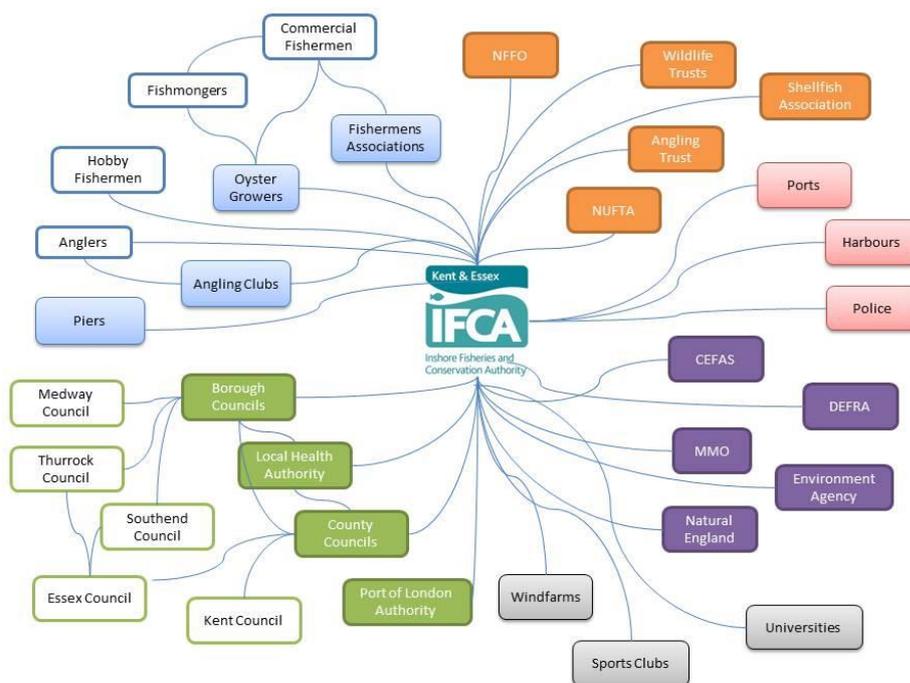


Figure 1. Schematic of relationship between principal stakeholder groups

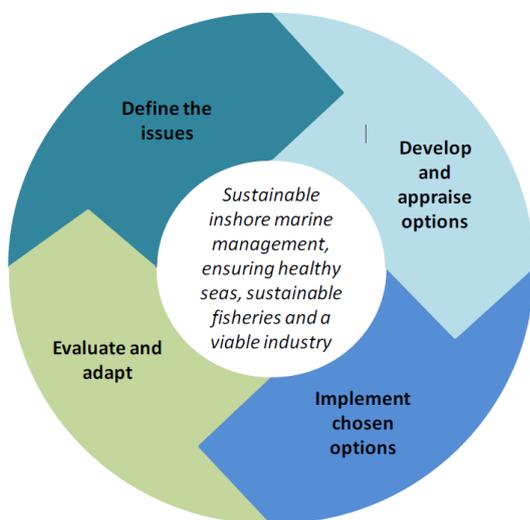
The first step in disentangling the web was to compile a list of the relevant individuals and bodies on both local and national levels. This list of 260 names was then assessed with each stakeholder being classified according to their level of influence and their interest in the work and objectives of KEIFCA.

What became immediately evident was that there were a significant proportion of the stakeholders have either high influence or high interest (32%) and that although arguments could be made to prioritise these relationships, this type of

analysis was very simplistic and did not account for relationships between organisations and how relationships might change related to different issues. The analysis did show that:

- KEIFCA needs to engage with a diverse range of stakeholders.
- different stakeholder groups communicate in very different ways.
- effective communication within different stakeholder groups and organisations can vary wildly.
- that we need to develop low cost effective communication options so that we can engage with the wide range of stakeholders.
- we need to identify and prioritise key people and decision makers in groups or organisations.
- KESFC did have effective networks but these were based very much on effective individual relationships and networks. We need to build on these but develop long term organisational level relationships.
- need to build on and work with the well established and functioning networks that do exist.

What can be influenced?



The scope of influence of the IFCA is wide and through engagement with the community and our stakeholders we can influence a range of decisions and activities. In the coming months and years the IFCA shall be putting in place a series of strategic plans which will form part of our plan to deliver our vision. Communities and stakeholders have a unique opportunity to shape those plans and in doing so the plans will be most effective.

The role of communication is central to

KEIFCA's evidence-based management cycle. Guidance

on evidence-based marine management is at:

<http://ww2.defra.gov.uk/environment/marine/wwo/ifca/>

Figure 2 The evidence based marine management cycle

marine to IFCAs

What cannot be influenced?

One of the challenges facing inshore managers is that of the trans-boundary nature of many (but not all) of the marine fisheries resources which are only within the District from time to time, thus the IFCA may contribute to, but not have full control, over the management of many stocks.

Regulation by the KEIFCA must be consistent with The Common Fisheries Policy and the Directives of the European Union, but KEIFCA may influence policy through engagement.

Role of Officers and Members and monitoring delivery

To deliver the objectives detailed the KEIFCA members shall oversee actions and progress against which shall be reported at the quarterly meetings, by the Fisheries and Conservation Officer with special responsibilities for communication but the delivery and actions against the engagement plan shall be undertaken by all employees and members of the Authority. Members should also expect to guide officers on the most pressing issues in the District, shaping the plan and monitoring progress against the plan.

Role of National Groups and Associations

The IFCA Chief Officers Group and The IFCA Technical Advisory Group are both important routes to exchange information and engage with other IFCAs, and partner organisations: we will support their development and their role in coordinating national activities.

With IFCA's key partners, Natural England, Environment Agency, CEFAS and Marine Management Organisation we will ensure that we proactively engage, listen and feedback into the regional and national policy development process.

In 2012/13 the Association of IFCAs will be developing a communication plan. The aim of the Association of IFCAs is to assist and promote the ten regional IFCAs to ensure that the authorities develop a leading and effective national role in fisheries and conservation management in line with the IFCA vision. KEIFCA will support that process.

The Message

Effectively communicating our message is the key to our objectives, and our ability to achieve them will be greatly enhanced by clarity and consistency in our message. It is also important that we listen to our stakeholders, and that we provide opportunity for them to respond. These key messages must be consistent in all communications, internal or external, including press releases, letters to stakeholders, display panels, newsletters, website, interpretation boards and informal engagement with stakeholders and communities, however initiated.

These messages need regular review to remain accurate, and care should be taken to target the right messages at the right people. The over-riding message needs to be clear and concise, but increasingly detailed information needs to be available to match specific stakeholder requirements.

From working with members at the technical panel, members felt strongly that our primary message needs to establish who KEIFCA are and what KEIFCA does. Our aim here is to draw attention to our duties under the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009, and how we differ from the Sea Fisheries Committee we are replacing. We need to ensure stakeholders are informed about how we work, and how they can ensure their voice is heard.

Primary message:

- Who are KEIFCA, what are we responsible for, and what do we do?

Other key messages were also identified:

- The legislation KEIFCA enforces and how it is enforced.
- That the Authority is managed in a transparent and responsible way and it is working towards the DEFRA guidance and success criteria.
- Information regarding the district and the activities that take place within it (commercial fishing, recreational fishing, Marine Protected Areas etc)
- Information on fish stocks and fisheries and conservation management within the district (general and current).

Developing a dialog

One of the key aspects of our strategy is to develop a dialog with local communities and stakeholders. Historically Kent and Essex Sea Fisheries Committee had very strong links and networks with the commercial fishing sector at each port. These relationships were built very much on individual officers knowing and working with fishermen and building up personal networks. Information would flow to and from the committee using these networks and would be reported to the committee in shore officer reports. Using this system put officers very much at the centre of these communities and helped frame and describe local issues and develop local policies and solutions.

In moving to KEIFCA the remit and the duties of the organisation have now changed as has the level of expectation. KEIFCA needs to engage the local commercial fishing industry as well as local charter boats and anglers. Our remit has also been increased to engage with a far wider circle of marine stakeholders and interest groups as well as the everyday man and woman in our counties. The Authority is required to produce information needed to secure the right balance between social, environmental and economic factors, and developing a dialog is a key step in gathering this information. It is more than this however, as dialog emphasises two-way communication it allows us to ask our stakeholders what we can do for them.

In developing a dialog with our communities and stakeholders KEIFCA needs to work efficiently with the relatively limited resource it has. It must seek to evolve long standing relationships that were built on respect and trust between individuals, to ones that operate at organisational level. This will ensure that individuals can be re-tasked or move and the relationships still flourish. In developing this dialog KEIFCA need to keep stakeholders regularly updated whilst gathering key information to feed back to the Authority. In developing specific species and habitat management plans KEIFCA will need to capitalise and use the wealth of knowledge that its stakeholders hold about these resources and work with stakeholders to create and deliver the plans. To achieve this KEIFCA will need to set up systems that will help capture and use this information (Informing the Future project).

A further future development which has been identified by KEIFCA officers and members is trying to better capitalise and use the information provided to the Authority at each quarterly meeting. KEIFCA needs the ability to communicate decisions made to people it affects in the shortest possible timeframe. Part of developing a better dialog with stakeholders will be developing low cost and resource methods of achieving this.

Communication methods

There are a wide range of methods KEIFCA can use to communicate our message from face to face meetings, to twitter feeds, from notice boards to national newspaper articles. The different methods all have advantages and disadvantages, and in developing our strategy it is important that we use our time and resources effectively and we prioritise and coordinate key methods rather than go for a scatter gun approach and spread ourselves too thinly.

A list of possible methods was compiled by officers, and they were scored on their likely impact and the effort required in producing or maintaining them. The results of the analysis showed that developing a communication strategy based on effective use of personal emails and letters, capitalising on IFCA members to spread our messages through their networks, maximising the use of our quarterly papers, developing our website and attending and running meetings would help us maximise our resource. Despite the significant increase in use of social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter, their impact was limited by the typical audience profile, and the effort required maintaining a successful campaign.

Different methods of communication were also discussed at the technical panel by members and there was agreement to prioritise maintaining and investing in the website as well as to invest in a series of notice boards (10-15 in the district) that are updated regularly with information that mirrors updates on the website. Members felt that notice boards were an effective way to engage the wider public and that this medium helped provide information to stakeholders that would not use the website as a primary source of information.

The underlying principle, regardless of which medium, is that there would be a simple set of words which would be carried across all platforms.

Timescale

It was announced in the Annual Plan of 2011/2012 that Kent & Essex IFCA would seek to develop a stakeholder engagement and communication strategy by April 2012. The draft annual plan for 2012-2013 builds on this by establishing targets for aspects of the communication plan.

The first phase concentrates on producing the basic information and literature that we need to help stakeholders understand who KEIFCA are, what we are responsible for, and what do we do as an organisation. Once we have produced these information packs and presentations we then need to spread the word and using emails, letters, updating our website, help brief members as to our message and supply a presentation that they can use. Key to delivering the email and letter aspect of our campaign will be to develop our stakeholder

database (which will need to be updated before the campaign is launched). In addition setting up and revamping the notice boards in our district will also need to be completed prior to launch.

The second phase will be to develop a dialog with our stakeholders and develop the Informing the Future project. This will take a lot of organisation especially as we want to build on the ideas provided by the industry.

Evaluation

Our baseline is set at what we currently do, which we established during our stakeholder analysis. A numerical value was calculated for both current and projected communication levels which will serve as the basis for our evaluation mechanism (Figure 5). However, statistical analysis alone will not be sufficient to measure the relative success of our strategy so this is to be combined with verbal and electronic feedback. Verbal feedback will be formally sought at stakeholder meetings and workshops, and informally sought by officers on a day to day basis. Through our IT infrastructure we already have the capability to gather and assess feedback by means of web based surveys and questionnaires.

A number of metrics can be used to assess the merits of a particular course of action but for the purposes of the communications strategy it is important that we utilise quantifiable mechanisms. Electronic communications can be easily monitored and measured using numbers of messages sent, numbers and trends in subscribers and visitors, and click-throughs which record the type of information people are seeking.

To measure our success in relation to our overall objectives we need to monitor trends which are not as easily quantifiable, hence the need for questionnaires and dialog. There are five principle metrics around which these are based:

- Participation – Has there been an increase in participation in stakeholder engagement events?
- Brand awareness – Has there been an increase in brand awareness?
- Brand sentiment – Has brand sentiment becoming more favourable?
- Issue awareness – Has there been an increase in general awareness of issues relevant to the IFCA?
- Time – Has clever use of resources resulted in a saving of time or money?

By examining how we fare under these headings we can assess our performance and adapt our plan accordingly.