

Draft Policy statement for EU Exit first day readiness:

Background:

After the triggering of Article 50, and issuing a notice of intention to withdraw from the London Fisheries Convention, the UK government has entered negotiations regarding the UK leaving the EU. Although it is not clear exactly where the negotiations will lead, there is the potential for a significant change in relationship, access and management of seas and fisheries for the UK outside the EU. IFCAs, through the Association of IFCAs (AIFCA), have been working with other regulators and DEFRA to help best inform and support this process and help ensure a smooth and orderly transition as the UK leaves the EU.

Both Defra and the MMO have signalled to the Association of IFCAs the ministerial importance placed on UK's ability for fishery control and enforcement to be robust and appropriate on and following EU exit. The MMO have been specifically charged with developing an operational plan to cover a wide range of scenarios. IFCAs through the Association of IFCAs (AIFCA) have been asked to input into the planning process with a view to possible involvement of IFCA resources primarily in the form of vessels and officers.

IFCAs understand the challenges faced and as a collective want to express their commitment and support to assist in any way possible. IFCAs have extensive knowledge, experience and skills in planning and carrying out sea based fisheries enforcement and are well placed to help meet possible future fishery control and enforcement requirements.

As fishing changes around the English coast so does the marine enforcement requirement, with the result that the IFCA fleet and resource and availability of resource varies between districts. Maintaining and running vessels constitutes a large proportion of most IFCAs budgets and operational capacity; early engagement with IFCAs through the AIFCA will best help develop and ultimately deliver the most cost effective and efficient plan. In developing such a plan clear engagement with Defra and the MMO regarding expectation as well as the development of a formal operational protocol to cover key areas such as communications and engagement are seen as important next steps.

Association Policy:

The Association proposes that the IFCAs agree in principle to assist in developing and implementing an operational plan, potentially utilising IFCA vessels and staff in the UK response to EU exit. The Association asked the Chief Officers Group to work with and assist the MMO in developing the plan from an operational perspective.

However, the IFCAs expect:

- Clear engagement with Defra and the MMO regarding expectations
- Appropriate resources being made available
- The development of a formal operational protocol to cover communications and engagement

Resource implications:

The full resource implications are unknown at present but will need to take the following into account:

- The level of vessel/resource required
- Additional training and additional equipment required
- Any secondary costs incurred if normal IFCA operations are compromised or suspended (both in reputational risk and actual costs)

Conclusion:

The IFCA's recognise that there is a political imperative that as a public service, we will be expected to assist in EU exit control and enforcement. The IFCA's have always made it clear that as a group we would wish to assist and engage in EU exit matters and continue to engage with Defra and Defra group on this and other matters.

Note:

The workstream to deliver first day readiness is separate to the mid to long term initiative set in place by the Marine Review and latterly by the Defra transformation programme to look at joint working between the MMO and the IFCA's. This work remains of high importance but to a longer timescale to that expected for the first day readiness outlined above.