

By: Chief Fishery Officer

To: Kent & Essex Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority
- 16 September 2020

Subject: **General update paper**

Classification Unrestricted

Summary:

This paper updates members on a wide range of topics and issues that have arisen since the last Authority meeting in January (staff update, an emergency byelaw extension and the publication of the HPMa report). The paper also updates the Authority on current KEIFCA COVID 19 measures.

Recommendations:

This report is for **COMMENT** and **NOTING**.

COVID 19 Update

Following the COVID 19 update at the Members briefing meeting on the 19 June, all officers and staff have been following H&S guidance and the new ways of working have become normal. In August, the members of staff who were shielding returned, we moved Nerissa back to Kent and started developing specific H&S policies for using our larger patrol vessels. In general, things have been working well and most importantly we have not had any members of staff testing positive to COVID 19. As with most companies and organisations we are reviewing the percentage of time people are working at home and working in the office and are looking to strike the right balance in the coming months.

Staff Update

National

With Stephen Bolt stepping down from the role of CEO of the Association of IFCAs in early April a recruitment process then started to find his successor and

in mid- June, Rob Clark the Chief Officer of Southern IFCA was offered and accepted this post. This left a Chief Officer vacancy at Southern IFCA that was then filled by Ian Jones who was running the national IFCA training programme which KEIFCA has been managing since its inception 18 months ago.

With all the changes in people and posts and with a National Lead Training Officer (NLTO) position well established, the AIFCA is now in a position to take on the day to day management of the NLTO, with KEIFCA still continuing to provide strategic, HR and financial invoicing and budget setting support.

KEIFCA

Before lockdown we had just concluded the recruitment process for a Lead Science and Conservation officer and for two 6-month IFC officer posts. Although lockdown resulted in logistical challenges, all of the officers are now in post (Philip Haupt - Lead Science and Conservation Officer, Ellie Wyatt and Ewan Morris - IFCO posts), have settled in well and are helping deliver annual plan objectives.

KEIFCA Fish, Mollusc and Crustacea Minimum Size Emergency Byelaw extension

Although significant progress had been made in the making and ratifying the new KEIFCA Minimum Sizes byelaw, the COVID 19 pandemic has had an impact on the ability of the MMO and DEFRA to finalise their statutory review process. In the light of this, all four East coast IFCA's (KEIFCA, EIFCA, NEIFCA and NIFCA) asked for a 6-month extension to their respective Fish, Mollusc and Crustacea Minimum Size emergency byelaws to ensure that legislation continued to remain in place until the new byelaw could be signed. The extension was granted on the 4 August and we are crossing our fingers for the full byelaw to be signed soon.

Marine Protected Area Update

Updating MPA information on the KEIFCA website

As the national AIFCA MPA project was starting to wind up at the end of March, an opportunity arose to work with Jamie Small (the national MPA project officer) on a six week project to review and update the MPA information on the KEIFCA website. As Jamie already had an in-depth knowledge of the legislation and management of MPAs nationally, she quickly produced very high-quality text and images which help the local community and stakeholders quickly and easily understand the MPAs in the KEIFCA and the role of KEIFCA.

The content created includes a refreshed MPA overview page outlining what an MPA is and specifically the different types of MPA found within our district. An eye-catching infographic has been created to highlight key statistics including percentage of MPA coverage within the district, number of MPAs and number of management measures.

A 'MPA Management' page provides an overview of KEIFCA's role and outlines the MPA assessment and management implementation process in two simple flow charts. Most importantly, management measures introduced by KEIFCA to protect MPA features are highlighted in several case studies alongside wider district byelaws that also provide protection to MPAs.

Eleven new pages have been created to showcase each MCZ within the district providing an overview of the site, its features and related management measures. Additional pages have also been added under the 'Research' tab including finfish surveys and oyster surveys to help improve understanding of the IFCA's active role in gathering evidence to inform management measures.

Outcomes from the Highly Protected Marine Areas report

On the 8 June the Benyon review into 'Highly Protected Marine Areas (HPMA): Final report' was published (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/highly-protected-marine-areas-hpmas-review-2019>). The report includes 25 recommendations that give direction on:

- How should government identify HPMAs?
- How can government make HPMAs work?
- How could government select pilot HPMAs?

The HPMA panel was unable to recommend specific pilot HPMAs to government due to the COVID 19 crisis, however the panel made some clear recommendations about the process for selection of pilot sites:

- Pilot sites should cover a range of different marine environments and be situated in the nearshore, inshore and offshore.
- They should not be in intertidal areas due to the additional complications associated with governing and regulating the marine/terrestrial interface and its users.
- They should be geographically spaced around Secretary of State waters. This geographical spacing could be done through using the biogeographical regional seas or using Marine Plan areas.
- Achieving this spread requires more than the minimum five pilot HPMAs prescribed in the Terms of Reference.

In total forty seven sites were included on a list of sites recommended to the Benyon Review Panel for further investigation, of which five sites are in the KEIFCA district.

- Blackwater, Crouch, Roach and Colne Estuary (South East Inshore)
- Isle of Thanet, including Pegwell Bay and Ramsgate (South East Inshore)
- Goodwin sands MCZ (South East Inshore)
- Shakespeare bay, Dover (South East Inshore)
- Folkestone Pomerania MCZ (South Inshore)

As there are no specific recommendations for the KEIFCA district, KEIFCA officers will continue to work through the AIFCA at a national level to feed in local knowledge and expertise and contribute to national replies and engagement. As soon as any specific details emerge about possible pilot sites in the KEIFCA district officers will bring them to the Authority.

Whelk PhD update

At the September 2019 quarterly meeting the Authority agreed to the development of a KEIFCA work placement ARIES PhD partnering with Essex University. Budgets and programmes of work were developed for the PhD and additional funds to support the PhD were allocated from 2019/20 budget underspend. Unfortunately, our Scientific and Conservation Officer, Annabel Plumeridge, who was due to start the PhD in October has been offered and accepted a PhD in New Zealand starting in January 2021. The University of Essex are still happy to continue with the PhD as planned; however, the PhD student will now be based primarily at the university and the start date will now be October 2021, the title and focus of the PhD will remain the same.

Recommendations:

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