

Access to Fisheries Team  
Area 2C Nobel House  
17 Smith Square  
London  
SW1P 3JR

Our ref: DV/1/1

20<sup>th</sup> June 2011

Dear Sir/Madam

## **Consultation on reform of the English fisheries management arrangements**

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the recent Defra consultation on reform of English fisheries management arrangements. Please consider this letter a formal response to the consultation on behalf of Eastern Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority (EIFCA). The Authority welcomes the consultation as it recognizes that there is a pressing need to address the arrangements relating to the administration and management of the English fleet and in particular the inshore <10m sector. Fundamentally the current problem the consultation document is trying to address results from of a disparity between the available quota and the effort (deployed and latent) within the present inshore fleet (Section 4.25).

It was disappointing that EIFCA had not been involved in discussions (Section 3.3) regarding the consultation document prior to it being sent out, particularly as IFCA's are identified within the consultation document as a possible delivery partner (Sections 3.2 and 4.9). These discussions would have been especially useful because EIFCA is currently establishing itself and aligning its resources with its duties against a backdrop of a 25% funding reduction from its constituent County Councils (Norfolk, Lincolnshire and Suffolk) which it is committed to achieving.

This response to the consultation concentrates primarily on how the implementation of Option 2 as set out within the Defra document may impact the Authority.

## ***Impact on Eastern Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority***

It is interesting that the Impact Assessment accompanying the consultation document does not refer to EIFCA or indeed IFCA's in general. It does however recognise that there are increased enforcement costs associated with the introduction of the reform measures but only identifies those as costs for the Marine Management Organisation (MMO). The consultation document does highlight within Section 4.10 that the MMO will focus on monitoring and enforcement, however, there are national discussions ongoing regarding the cross warranting of IFCA/MMO enforcement officers as well as the chartering of IFCA sea going assets by the MMO to conduct enforcement activities. Both of these activities are likely to result in increased enforcement costs to the IFCA. Enforcement and quota

management costs are likely to increase as it becomes apparent to fishermen the actual paucity of available quota that they have been allocated, one possible outcome is that attempts to land species off quota increase. The consultation document can be seen as moving the management problem from Defra to the fishing industry itself, however it will not result in any reduction in the fishing pressure on stocks nor on the pressure to increase quotas that Defra will face.

Sections 3.2 and 4.9 of the consultation document identify a duty for IFCA's to work with the industry to ensure that all stocks, quota and non-quota are not over exploited. Depending on how the reform measures are implemented this could entail significant officer time particularly if a network of Community Quota Schemes (CQS) is established throughout the EIFCA district. If the IFCA were to embrace this role, this would potentially require significant realignment of skills and personnel to fulfill this function – one not explicitly expressed within the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009. It is difficult to comment on the impact that this may have upon the IFCA as neither the document nor associated impact statement identifies either the number of CQSs or Producer Organisations (POs) that Defra envisage being established within the EIFCA district. Of particular concern is the comment that IFCA's will be involved in designing and managing the quotas, the concern arises from the limited funds that the smaller POs/CQSs will have available to fund a PO/CQS manager - particularly as the inshore fleet in some areas is already struggling financially to be viable and there would be associated costs (time and money) with running the quota pools and therefore it is likely that the IFCA's will be seen as a source of funding and support.

I would suggest that a pilot project be set up to investigate the potential for a CQS to be established and implemented prior to the reforms being agreed upon to ensure that this concept is viable within England.

### ***Restricting EIFCA's ability to develop and implement effective inshore fisheries management***

Of concern as a result of the proposals is that CQS may add a further layer of complexity when IFCA's address inshore fisheries management issues - in particular effort controls such as pot limitation etc. Without further information on how a CQS would operate it is not possible to surmise how the IFCA may be affected by these proposals with regard to this matter.

### ***Refocus on non-quota species***

As has clearly been demonstrated in the shellfish sector, the introduction of quotas and licences on white fish has exacerbated pressure on non-quota species such as brown crab and lobster. The use of CQSs is likely to further increase the pressure on non-quota species (brown crab, lobster, velvet crab, whelks, mussels, brown shrimp, pink shrimp, cockles) as a result of latent effort being removed from the quota pools and being redirected to the non-quota fisheries. Therefore it is crucial that mechanisms are put in place to prevent this occurring early on in the introduction of any CQS. Were this to occur this would increase competition within this sector and may drive down prices threatening the financial viability of the smaller inshore vessels. A refocus on non-quota species would also put these stocks under greater threat of over exploitation exacerbating the challenges in managing these

stocks. Section 4.20 (no allocation of Fixed Quota Allocation (FQA) to dormant licences) is key to the proposals within the consultation working, however, in cases where the licence has not been used to catch non-quota species during the reference period referred to, then the licence should be determined dormant/latent in its entirety and removed so that this effort can not be redirected at the non-quota fisheries at a future date.

### ***Discard and quota realignment, redistribution concerns***

The consultation raises concerns if there is additional uptake on currently unused quota that ultimately increased discarding of either non-quota species or other quota species for which the quota has been exhausted. There are also concerns being raised regarding the promotion of quota species that historically have been under-fished (Section 4.21) (the consultation mentions Flounder, Coley and North Sea Dab) as all of these species are important recreational sea angling species that have historically been discarded – although it is acknowledged that the survival rates of these species is not well documented. It should be noted that the Authority recently commissioned research into the Flounder populations within its district and the report (which can be downloaded from [www.eastern-ifca.gov.uk](http://www.eastern-ifca.gov.uk)) highlighted that Flounder populations had experienced significant population decline. The impact assessment accompanying the consultation document does not address the additional environmental impacts that the reallocation of unused quota will have either on the benthic habitat or associated species. This work should be commissioned along with an assessment of the impact that any refocusing of effort on to non-quota species by vessels that do not have FQAs assigned to them will have upon the benthic habitat. This is of particular importance in relation to scalloping and beam trawling.

### ***Providing opportunities for new entrants into fishing***

The Authority and its predecessor Eastern Sea Fisheries Joint Committee is concerned about the lack of opportunities for people - particularly young adults - to enter the fishing industry. It is therefore encouraging that this matter is addressed within Section 4.27 of the consultation document.

### ***Speed of change***

Of the options set out within Section 5.2, Option 2 is the most realistic and it is encouraging that Defra acknowledges this. The timeframe for full implementation of Option 2 will still be challenging to meet. If IFCA's are to aid in the delivery of these recommendations then IFCA's need to be fully involved in the process from this point forward in order that they can adequately plan and ensure that it has the adequate personnel and skills to effectively contribute to the process.

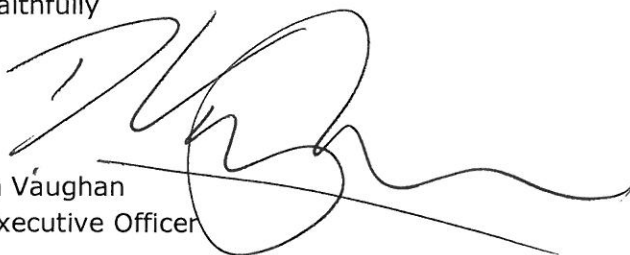
### ***Transparency***

The Authority welcomes a transparent licensing and quota allocation scheme, particularly as the resource being traded is a public one, i.e. the opportunity to fish. A transparent system would aid MMO Appointed Members to the IFCA to demonstrate that they have adequately declared their interests when voting on Authority matters that have implications for quota management.

I hope that the comments provided in response to the consultation document are both clear and helpful. If you would like me to elaborate on any point I would be pleased to do so therefore please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours faithfully

Duncan Vaughan  
Chief Executive Officer

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Duncan Vaughan', written over a horizontal line.