



Communication & Engagement Report

Financial year 2014-15



Eastern IFCA's mobile aquarium at the Cromer & Sheringham Crab & Lobster Festival © Eastern IFCA 2015

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Foreword

The annual communications and engagement report provides an overview of the key actions that the Eastern Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority carried out to achieve stakeholder engagement objectives during financial year 2014-15.

The creation of the Authority on 1 April 2011 provided a real opportunity to engage with and encourage the involvement of local people in the management of the marine environment within its district. This change was a unique opportunity to establish a centre of excellence, recognised locally, nationally and internationally for the development and implementation of best practice in relation to the local management of the marine environment.

Now in its fourth year, Eastern IFCA has built upon the successes of 2013 to maintain engagement across the breadth of those who use the marine environment. A specific focus in 2014 was to seek out and engage with 'hard to reach' stakeholders who do not choose to attend formal community engagement meetings. Driven by the need to close the gaps in understanding highlighted by the bench marking survey of 2012, the Authority continues to take strides forward in fulfilling the requirements to be engaged with stakeholders; to promote the sustainable use of the marine environment and to be recognised and heard.

The Authority is majority funded through a levy on the County Councils of Suffolk, Norfolk, and Lincolnshire. The establishment of the Authority at the most significant period of fiscal austerity for a generation has provided significant challenges but Eastern IFCA has succeeded in delivering the Communication & Engagement Plan on time and on budget.

This is the Authority's second Communication and Engagement report. We welcome feedback on this document from individuals and organisations interested in our work so that we can meet your needs in the future.



Phil Haslam
Chief Executive Officer



Councillor Hilary Cox
Chairman

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Overview

The Eastern Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority was created under Section 150 of the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009 (MaCAA 2009) and was fully vested on 1st April 2011. The IFCA District was created under Section 149 of the Act.

The Authority district extends seawards six nautical miles from the Haile Sand Fort off the coast of Lincolnshire to Felixstowe in Suffolk. This includes The Wash embayment and river estuaries including the Stour and Orwell in Suffolk, totalling almost 3,800 km². The district encompasses the full suite of both UK and EU Marine Protected Areas including Sites of Special Scientific Interest, Special Protected Areas, Special Areas of Conservation, as well as Ramsar and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

There were seven key communication and engagement priorities for the Authority during 2014-15:

- Meaningful community engagement
- Engage harder to reach stakeholder groups
- Attend relevant public events
- Information signs placed around the district
- Signing of MoUs and SLAs and partnership working encouraged
- Feedback is routinely sought from stakeholders
- Website content

These priorities have been established to effectively work towards the relevant Defra success criteria and their associated high level objectives (HLOs). These provide the guiding principles for continued development over the coming years.

Delivery of priorities for the year

The following tables set out progress made against each of the communication and engagement activities that the Authority planned to conduct during the 2014-15 financial year.

Project	Progress in 2014-15
E Newsletters	Following the departure of the Communities and Development officer (CDO) in January 2014, a review of the IFCA staff highlighted the need for officer resource to be deployed to support statutory output requirements. The review recommended that the CDO role was not replaced but that some of the functionality was re-distributed amongst existing staff. As part of this process the cost and utility of the E newsletter was reviewed and it was judged that key stakeholder information can be routinely passed using both social media and the website. The requirement for a regular E newsletter will be held under review and will be used when a significant amount of coincident information needs to be distributed.
Stakeholder database	The stakeholder data base has been established and is reviewed and updated at least bi-annually to assure accuracy.
Social media	Social media outlets are used to alert stakeholders to our news and other pertinent information. This means tends to service the younger sector of the stakeholder base and also Non Government Organisations who track the output. Tweets and other posts routinely achieve feedback from stakeholders so can be judged to be having a distinct communications effect.
Meaningful community engagement	Noting that most Community engagement meetings are dominated by commercial fishermen with a relatively narrow agenda and a tendency to seek to dominate a meeting. It was judged necessary to expand the public communications mechanism to ensure that all opinions, considerations and viewpoints are captured and factored into Authority decision making. To this end the Authority procured a second hand display trailer from the EA to enable officers to move community engagement from set piece Town Hall style events to more bespoke, clinic style engagement. The trailer has proved a very cost effective means of targeting groups of stakeholders to draw their opinions in an atmosphere more conducive to meaningful engagement. During 2014-15 the trailer was used at RSPB Titchwell, Lowestoft, Aldeburgh, Felixstowe Ferry

	and Kings Lynn all to beneficial effect.
Good news stories	In the absence of a dedicated PR officer, a limited number of stories have been distributed to media outlets. The cost/benefit analysis of generating press articles suggests that alternative means such as social media and website based articles achieve the same effect for less input.
Engage harder to reach stakeholder groups	The display trailer has been used to great effect and has proved to be a cost effective, agile and efficient means to conduct stakeholder engagement.
Attend relevant public events	The following events were attended in 2014-15 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cromer & Sheringham crab and lobster festival • Ipswich Maritime Festival • Great Yarmouth Maritime Festival • Frampton Marsh RSPB open day • Kings Lynn Heritage Open Day • Wild about Norfolk
Information signs placed around the district	All information board signs have been erected throughout the district.
Signing of MoUs and SLAs and partnership working encouraged	Partnership working has been conducted with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MMO • SeaSearch East divers • RSPB Titchwell • Defra • Environment Agency • Natural England • University of East Anglia • Cefas
Communication and Engagement Strategy	The strategy has been written and published.

Communication & Engagement Plan 2015-16	The plan has been written and will be presented to the Planning and Communication sub-committee on 25 Feb 15.
Communication & Engagement Report 2014-15	Complete.
Feedback is routinely sought from stakeholders	Feedback is routinely sought through informal and formal means. In the first instance the presence of Area Officers throughout the district gives a conduit through which stakeholder views can be relayed. Formal meeting are convened to discuss and de-brief major business outputs such as the annual cockle fishery. Consultations are used when there is a requirement to draw the opinions of stakeholders such as to agree management measures for the annual cockle fishery and to debate measures to protect marine protected areas.
Website content	The website format and content has been reviewed and is in the process of being updated and upgraded to make it as user friendly and appealing as possible.
Create photo library	An image library has been created as part of the re-organisation of data holdings.

Case Study 1 – Cromer and Sheringham Crab and lobster festival

The 4th annual Crab & Lobster Festival was held in May 2014 to celebrate the fishing heritage of two coastal towns in our district, Cromer and Sheringham.

Historically great rivals, the two towns now join together each year to raise money for local charities and to benefit the local economy by attracting more visitors to the area. The festival is a mix of food, arts, heritage and entertainment intended to be both enjoyable and educational. It is organised by a diverse group of volunteers all with a vested interest in the local community.

As the local inshore fisheries and conservation manager, the event provided Eastern IFCA a very useful opportunity to engage with stakeholders from across the spectrum of marine users. An invitation was accepted by Defra to exploit the opportunity to receive feedback on the proposed Cromer chalk bed Marine Conservation Zone.

In fine weather the IFCA stand drew a good deal of attention throughout the day with the draw of live marine creatures proving irresistible to the younger generation in particular. The stand provides an ideal catalyst to enable local marine users to discuss a variety of issues of concerns with focus upon sustainability of the local fisheries, the impact of offshore renewable energy infrastructure, the effect caused by large scale aggregate dredging and the management of invasive species.

Once again this vibrant local event, which is a firm fixture in the IFCA diary, delivered a valuable stakeholder engagement opportunity.



Financial Implications

The budget for financial year 2014-15 was set at £16,320. This represents a reduction of a little over 20% on the 2013-14 budget which was itself greatly reduced from financial year 2012-13 budget which was set at £50,000. The reduced budget was judged appropriate to fund attendance at the forecast activities and provide for sufficient support in terms of display infrastructure and promotional materials.

The single biggest expenditure for FY 2014-15 was the procurement of a display trailer from the Environment Agency which cost £1200 with a further £400 being spent on rebranding. Overall, the outturn on the budget for 2014-15 was £4,777 which is a substantial reduction of that expended in 2013-14 and reflects a drive to maintain well developed linkages with regional stakeholders whilst assuring value for money for the public purse.

Infrastructure

The procurement of the display trailer this year completes the capital investment in outreach infrastructure to ensure that Eastern IFCA is able to attend events in a professional manner with an engaging, interactive stand. The infrastructure routinely receives positive feedback and actively encourages media attention.



Case Study 2 – King’s Lynn Heritage Day

As part of the Outreach activities for the year, King’s Lynn Heritage Day was identified as an opportunity to combine a stakeholder engagement event with a means to recognise and celebrate the significant efforts of the Eastern IFCA officers.

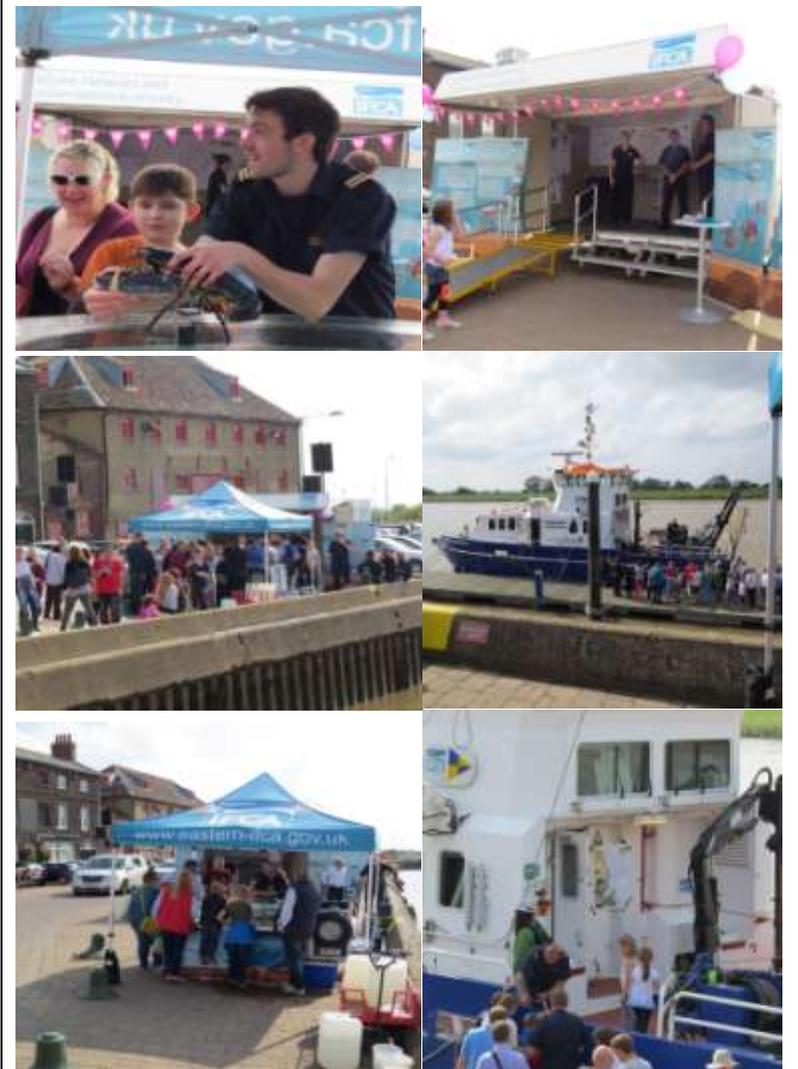
With this in mind it was decided to populate the event with all display infrastructure and both Authority vessels. Research Vessel *Three Counties* berthed alongside the leisure pontoon in Kings Lynn along with Fishery Protection Vessel (FPV) *John Allen*. The former was fully open to members of the public and drew significant interest from event attendees. FPV *John Allen* conducted short acquaint trips in the river Ouse for officers and their families.

All display infrastructure was co-located adjacent to the vessels and provided a very impressive hub to allow our business to be explained to the public. The use of the aquarium as a means to bring local marine flora and fauna to members of the public helps to generate a dialogue which, aside from the general wonderment at the breadth of local marine species, prompted discussion of key topics of concern such as: the sustainability of local fisheries, the impact of renewable energy installations, the timescale for delivery of Marine Protected Areas, the amount and pace of siltation and sand accretion in the Wash.

The Heritage Day intentionally engaged the majority of officers but on the short term basis. This allowed the opportunity for them to be recognised professionally in the IFCA’s home town along and take time to enjoy a family day out.

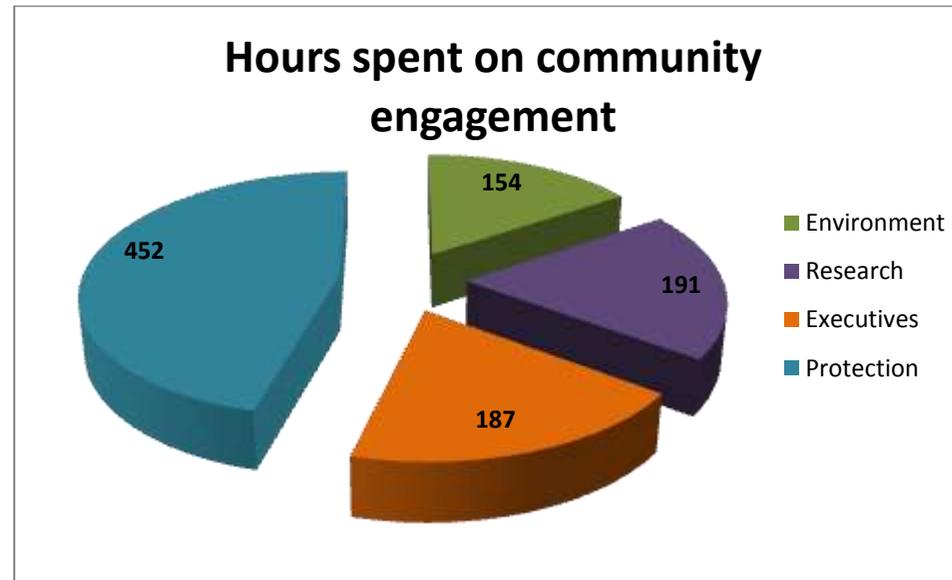
The event provided a very good public relations opportunity to further embed knowledge of the IFCA’s work within the district to deliver Marine and Coastal Access Act mandated outputs. Furthermore, a many stakeholders had the chance to air opinions and observation to inform the Authority of local concerns.

The intention is to contribute again in 2015.



Manpower Resource

The main resource required to carry out the Communication & Engagement Plan for 2014-15 was staff time. A total of 984 hours (approx. 123 officer days) were used attending various events, an increase of 90 hours on 2013-14. The hours spent by each team can be seen on the graph below. Using the experience of 2013-14, community engagement was shaped to avoid the busiest business periods for officers such as the cockle and mussel survey effort and cockle fishery enforcement activity. By managing outreach activity to de-conflict it with other core outputs the key tension surrounding availability of officers has been somewhat alleviated. That said it is a significant draw on manpower resource which does accrue an excess hours burden for the Authority that requires close management. In the final analysis, it is judged that having face to face engagement by individual officers with stakeholders at a frequency of 1 in every 3 days is a significant amount but is able to be accommodated and helps deliver distinct value in terms of understanding and influence throughout the district.



Case Study 3 – Display Trailer

The perceived advantages which supported the option to purchase a second hand display trailer from the Environment Agency are listed below

- Lowest ownership cost option – *the trailer was procured for £1200 with a further £400 being spent on re-branding. This one off cost need to be compared to the £600 pa spent on hiring venues for community meetings.*
- Could be sold for same or higher price should concept not be proven – *still a valid assumption.*
- High visibility and potential to fulfil ‘recognised and heard’ objective – *the trailer has proved a very high visibility asset and which draws stakeholders to it. It is a very useful means to conduct more in depth discussions with the use of supporting charts and information.*
- Could be mobilised at short notice – *The trailer is able to be transported by one person and rigged for presentation by two. Permission to site the trailer has been straightforward.*
- Potential to reach a more stakeholders – *a proven assumption.*
- Potential to reach a greater breadth of stakeholders than current community Engagement meetings – *by utilising local Wildlife Trust and RSPB venues amongst others, officers have been able to reach a greater cross section of stakeholders.*
- Choice of where to site and minimal costs to attend – *officers are developing an expanding list of proven venues across the district*
- Lowest cost option per hour of stakeholder engagement – *reflected in the significantly reduced communication and engagement budget.*
- Ability to visit more locations than CE meetings – *the trailer enables a different type of stakeholder engagement allowing a greater breadth of topics to be debated with a greater cross section of people.*
- Possibility to rent trailer to neighbouring IFCAs to bring cost down – *whilst there has been interest, no other IFCA has, as*



yet, formally applied to borrow the trailer.

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