

Guidance to Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authorities on Annual Planning and Reporting

This guidance is given in accordance with section 177 and section 178 of the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009

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Introduction

This guidance is addressed to the Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authorities (IFCAs). It sets out best practice for how IFCAs should prepare annual plans and reports, in accordance with sections 177 and 178 of the Marine and Coastal Access (MCA) Act 2009.

This guidance has been developed after taking into consideration IFCAs' functions and resources. IFCAs must have regard to this guidance in carrying out their functions.

This is one of several documents¹ that offer best practice guidance to IFCAs. These documents will be reviewed regularly and, if necessary, reissued in the light of any changes in marine management and Government policy.

Background

Under the MCA Act, IFCAs are responsible for the sustainable management of inshore sea fisheries resources out to six nautical miles and their duties include:

- Seeking to ensure that the exploitation of sea fisheries resources is carried out in a sustainable way;
- Seeking to balance the social and economic benefits of exploiting sea fisheries resources of the district with the need to protect the marine environment from, or promote its recovery from, the effects of such exploitation;
- Taking any other steps which, in the IFCA's opinion are necessary or expedient for the purpose of making a contribution to the achievement of sustainable development;
- Seeking to balance the different needs of persons engaged in the exploitation of sea fisheries resources in the district, and
- Seeking to further the conservation objectives of Marine Conservation Zones.

The MCA Act places a legal duty on IFCAs to prepare and publish Annual Plans and Annual Reports on their activities and also submit these documents to the Secretary of State (see Box 1).

¹Best practice guidance to IFCAs can be found at: <http://ww2.defra.gov.uk/environment/marine/ww/ifca/>

Box 1: Legal requirements for IFCA annual plans and reports under the Marine and Coastal Access 2009

S177 Annual Plan

1. Before the beginning of each financial year every IFC authority must make and publish a plan setting out the authority's main objectives and priorities for the year.
2. The IFC authority must send a copy of its plan to the Secretary of State.

S178 Annual Report

1. As soon as is reasonably practicable after the end of each financial year, every IFCA authority must prepare a report on its activities in that year.
2. A report under this section must be in such form and contain such information as the Secretary of State may require.
3. A report under this section must be published in such manner as the Secretary of State may require.
4. The IFC authority must send a copy of the report to the Secretary of State.

Why are annual plans and reports important?

Annual planning is a key part of the evidence-based marine management cycle² (see Figure 1). In their annual plans, IFCA's will define the issues that they are facing in the coming year, set out how they intend to implement any interventions to tackle those issues and how they will evaluate whether those interventions have worked, or not. Annual reports then give an account of that evaluation – i.e., setting out what went well and what might need further adaptation or improvement – which then informs the next year's annual planning.

² Guidance to IFCA's on evidence-based marine management is at: <http://ww2.defra.gov.uk/environment/marine/ww/ifca/>

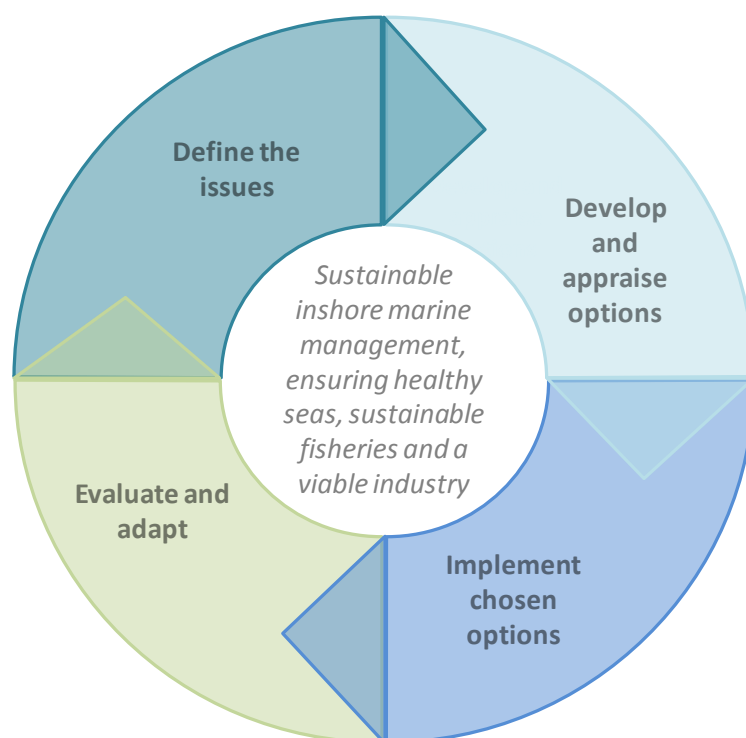


Figure 1. Evidence-based marine management cycle

Annual planning and reporting are key ways in which IFCA's will be held publicly accountable; they provide the opportunity for local communities, local bodies and key delivery partners to look at how IFCA's are performing. The IFCA's have an agreed national vision, which sets out their overall aim in sustainably managing the inshore marine environment to achieve the intentions of the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009 and wider UK and EU marine legislation. They also have success criteria that, along with the corresponding high-level objectives for achieving them, outline what will be expected of IFCA's in reaching that vision³. The vision, success criteria and high-level objectives help to create a shared understanding of the aims and objectives of IFCA's, among themselves and those interested in the work that they do.

Vision for Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authorities

“Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authorities will 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”

³ Guidance to IFCA's on evaluation and monitoring and measuring performance is at: <http://ww2.defra.gov.uk/environment/marine/ww0/ifca/>



In order to meet these overarching objectives, and depending on how they might be measured, IFCA's will have to develop working level objectives to manage the work more easily. It is these working level objectives that should form the basis of IFCA annual plans and should inform the work of individual IFCA staff. This makes monitoring staff performance much easier and the staff also see clearly how they are contributing to the overall success of IFCA's.

The information contained within annual plans and reports will also help inform the report on the conduct and operation of IFCA's that the Secretary of State is required to put to Parliament every four years (s.183 of the MCA Act). Defra has provided separate, more detailed guidance on how IFCA's can monitor and evaluate their own performance⁴.

IFCA's annual plans and reports are public documents and should be produced with a view to being understood and utilised by the IFCA members and employees as well as partner organisations, members of the public and Government.

Key requirements of annual plans and annual reports

The next sections of the guidance document explain what areas Government would like to see IFCA's to cover in their annual plans and annual reports. These sections list the headings, give a brief overview of expected content and,

⁴ Guidance to IFCA's on evaluation and monitoring and measuring performance is at: <http://ww2.defra.gov.uk/environment/marine/ww/ifca/>

where appropriate, provide examples or links to further information to illustrate what the descriptor means.

Annual Plans

Overview/Introduction

The annual plan should provide a brief overview/introduction to the IFCA itself and to the document, i.e., what the role of the IFCA is, what their annual plan covers, explain how their annual plan is linked to any higher level, strategic planning document the IFCA may have developed⁵ or other documentation that the IFCA may follow.

Vision, Success Criteria and High Level Objectives

The annual plan should provide a summary of the IFCA's duties, and the IFCA Vision, Success Criteria and high level objectives. It should also summarise other local targets/priorities that the Authority have developed for delivery by themselves, or in partnership with other organisations. This section should also include the indicators against which these objectives and targets will be measured against, as set out in the detailed guidance on how the performance of IFCA's should be monitored and evaluated⁶.

Focus and priorities for the year

The annual plan should provide a succinct overview of what the focus and priorities of the IFCA will be in that particular financial year.

Delivery of priorities

The annual plan should provide detail of how the IFCA will go about delivering the focus and priorities described in the section above – i.e. action, intention, activity, timetable and budget for each of the high level objectives. We recommend that this is done in a tabular format covering the four quarters of the year. This should help focus discussions at IFCA quarterly statutory meetings and will help the IFCA officers to report on their activities to its members. IFCA's might want to look at how other organisations have produced their annual/business plans (see the 'Useful links' section of this guidance).

Risk management strategy

The annual plan should give an overview of how the IFCA intends to manage any risks to the delivery of its priorities and demonstrate how it will achieve value for money while delivering its functions. This should take into account Defra's enforcement framework and guidance⁷. For example, identifying threats

⁵ High Level Objective 1.2 for IFCA's requires them to demonstrate a long-term, strategic approach to marine management – for example, through annual plans and/or a longer-term strategy.

⁶ Guidance to IFCA's on evaluation and monitoring and measuring performance is at:

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

⁷ Guidance to IFCA's on risk-based enforcement is at: <http://ww2.defra.gov.uk/environment/marine/ww/ifca/>

inherent in annual plans and the approaches that already exist to manage such threats as well as having explicit understanding of any weaknesses in such approaches.

Resources

The annual plan should describe the resources for the year ahead; it should include a summary of the annual budget, staffing capacity and how IFCA officers will be utilised, in line with the IFCA's priorities.

Ways of Working

The MCA Act places a duty on IFCA's to cooperate with public authorities that regulate or enforce activities in the sea within their districts. The annual plan should illustrate how the IFCA intends to cooperate and work with key partners and how they intend to undertake general stakeholder engagement, communication and consultation.

Staffing

The annual plan should include a summary of the IFCA's staff training and development strategy, how the IFCA intends to build and/or maintain capability, how staff performance is undertaken and the ways in which they demonstrate that their employees are valued.

Performance standards

The annual plan should clearly demonstrate to partners and stakeholders what standards they can expect from the IFCA, for example, how quickly they will respond to queries or correspondence, how quickly they will process permits/licences.

At the discretion of the IFCA, the annual plan could also provide:

- An outline of the IFCA membership and staff structures, including main duties;
- A summary of governance and financial management

Annual report

The Annual Report is effectively a mirror document of the annual plan and should outline how the IFCA has delivered against its published annual plan, i.e., it should summarise IFCA performance against the indicators set out in the annual plan, including a summary of overall achievements and then a more detailed breakdown by high level objectives and other targets. We would expect the annual report to follow the same outline format as the annual plan described above.

The annual report should also:

- Provide a summary of funding for that financial year and how it has been spent (including outturn, renewals, reserves and levy);
- Highlight areas of success including staffing achievements and any new developments for the IFCA;
- Highlight new areas of risk that will be a priority for intervention in next year's annual plan.

At the discretion of the IFCA, the annual report could include an overview of enforcement activity and marine nature conservation functions undertaken, description of the overall state of fisheries and the fishing fleet, research and development activity undertaken in the last year and any publicity and education undertaken in the last year.

General Requirements of Annual Planning and Reporting Documents

Both the annual plan and the annual report need to be accessible to a wide audience both in terms of availability and language: IFCA members, IFCA officers, Government, stakeholders, partner organisations and members of the public should all be able to easily understand these documents. They should demonstrate how IFCA's are accountable and transparent, and what they are achieving with public money, clearly demonstrating value for money. In drafting these documents, IFCA's should be aware of the needs of the wide audience that is likely to read them. As such, IFCA's should avoid the use of 'jargon' and acronyms and be as brief as possible.

Both the annual plan and annual report should, as a minimum, be made available on the IFCA's public website.

We recommend that, when drafting annual plans and reports, IFCA's share best practice with one another, to ensure that the style and standard of the documents continually develops.

This guidance should be viewed as the minimum requirements for producing annual plans and reports. If the IFCA wants to include information over and above that described in this document, it is free to do so.

Timing requirements

An annual plan must be published in the public domain and made available by each IFCA before the beginning of each financial year.

A copy of the IFCA's annual plan must be sent to Defra's Secretary of State by 30 April each financial year.

As soon as is reasonably practicable after the end of each financial year, every IFCA authority must prepare, and publish in the public domain, a report on its activities in that year. A copy of each annual report must also be sent to Defra's Secretary of State by 30 November of the year in which it was published.

Useful Links

Marine Management Organisation: <http://www.marinemanagement.org.uk/index.htm>

Natural England: <http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/>

Environment Agency: <http://www.environment-agency.gov.uk>

Cefas: <http://www.cefas.co.uk/default.aspx>