



Eastern Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority

Annual Report 2022-23



September 2023

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Eastern Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority Annual Report 2022-2023.

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Version	Date	Changes	Officer
First Draft	31/8/2023	Update for the new year	KG
Second Draft	4/9/2023	QA and edits	LG,KG, JG

Abbreviations	
Adaptive Risk Management	ARM
Conservation Alliance for Seafood Solutions	CASS
EU Common Fisheries Policy	CFP
Centre for Environment, Fisheries and Aquaculture Science	Cefas
Chief Executive Officer	CEO
Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs	DEFRA
Eastern Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority	Eastern IFCA
Eastern Sea Fisheries Joint Committee	ESFJC
Environment Agency	EA
European Marine Site	EMS
Fishery Patrol Vessel	FPV
Fisheries Improvement Plan	FIP
Habitats Regulations Assessment	HRA
High Level Objective	HLO
Information Communication and Technology	ICT
Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority	IFCA
Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Officer	IFCO
Landings Per Unit Effort	LPUE
Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009	MaCAA 09
Marine Conservation Zone	MCZ
Marine Management Organisation	MMO
Marine Protected Area	MPA
Marine Strategy Framework Directive	MSFD
Maximum Sustainable Yield	MSY
Memorandum of Understanding	MoU
Monthly Shellfish Activity Reports	MSAR
Natural England	NE

New Burdens Funding	NBF
Royal Yachting Association	RYA
Recreational Sea Angling	RSA
Service Level Agreement	SLA
Site of Special Scientific Interest	SSSI
Size of Maturity	SoM
Special Protection Area	SPA
Special Area of Conservation	SAC
Study of The Wash Embayment Environment and Productivity	SWEET
Technical Advisory Group	TAG
Tactical Co-ordination Group	TCG
Wash Fishery Order 1992	WFO

Foreword

We are pleased to present the twelfth annual report for the Authority. The report provides an overview of the work undertaken by the Authority during the 2021-22 fiscal year (1st April 2021 to 31st March 2023) to meet its statutory duties under the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009 and to address the priorities identified in the Business Plan 2022-2027.

The year was characterised by significant progress on two high priority workstreams; the replacement of the Wash Fishery Order 1992 and management of the Cromer Shoal MCZ.

Management of access to the Wash cockle and mussel fisheries has been a dominant workstream since March 2020 as a reflection of the strength of feeling amongst Wash fishermen. A significant amount of consultation, review and careful consideration culminated in members agreeing to a final set of Eligibility Criteria in September of 2022 (see Case Study 1). The policy will ensure equitable access to the fishery, maintaining the positive elements of the well-established scheme under the WFO whilst addressing what were considered by the fishing industry as its key failings. In order to facilitate the transition from the WFO, the Authority also established two new Sub-Committees; the Wash Fisheries Sub-Committee to consider applications for access under the transition and the Appeals Sub-committee to consider appeals against such decisions.

Whilst Eligibility Policy was agreed, the Byelaw which is intended to replace the WFO was not confirmed prior to its expiry. Therefore the Authority also implemented interim measures, utilising existing byelaws, to enable fisheries to continue in The Wash and protect business continuity and ensure fishing activity within environmental parameters.

An Adaptive Risk Management (ARM) approach is being taken to managing pot-based fishing within the Cromer Shoal MCZ. This requires flexible and adaptive management mechanisms which can cater for the rapidly growing evidence base on the impacts of fishing in the site. To that end, the Authority made the Cromer Shoal Chalk Beds Byelaw 2023 at the end of the financial year. The byelaw was informed by two phases of informal consultation and benefited from the delivery of ARM via a Project Board and Management Task and Finish Group, both of which contributed to the byelaw's development.

This year also saw the start of the development of Fisheries Management Plans; national plans developed by Defra in consultation with stakeholders to deliver the obligations of the

Fisheries Act 2020. The contribution of the IFCAs is seen as crucial to their development, which is reflected in Defra establishing additional funding for IFCAs to enable their input. Of the seven so-called 'front runner' FMPs, the Whelk, crab and lobster, bass and Southern North Sea mixed flatfish FMPs are directly relevant to fishing activity within the Eastern IFCA district. Our role in the development of the FMPs has included providing information, expertise and context to initial drafts and plans and aiding dialogue with the fishing industry.

Membership of the Authority remained stable throughout the year, with Cllr FitzPatrick as Chair of the Authority and Cllr Vigo di Gallidoro as Vice-Chair.

The Authority is majority funded through a levy on the County Councils of Suffolk, Norfolk, and Lincolnshire, which is supplemented by New Burdens Funding (NBF) provided by Defra via a grant in aid to the constituent councils. NBF represents approximately 25% of the Authority's core funding and is central to the delivery of its mandated outputs. 2021 was due to be the last year that NBF was paid in its existing form, and Defra and the IFCAs worked on the 'co-design' of a replacement. A single year funding settlement for 2021-22 was put in place as a consequence of the Covid-19 pandemic and for 2022-23 the existing funding grant was paid with the addition of funding for three specific functions. These include contribution to the development of FMPs (as above) and two further functions, the details of which are to be finalised at the time of writing.

2022-23 has been another busy year for the Authority as we continued to show resilience, adaptability, and drive in meeting our vision to support healthy seas, sustainable fisheries and a viable inshore fishing industry across our district.



Cllr Tom Fitzpatrick
Chair



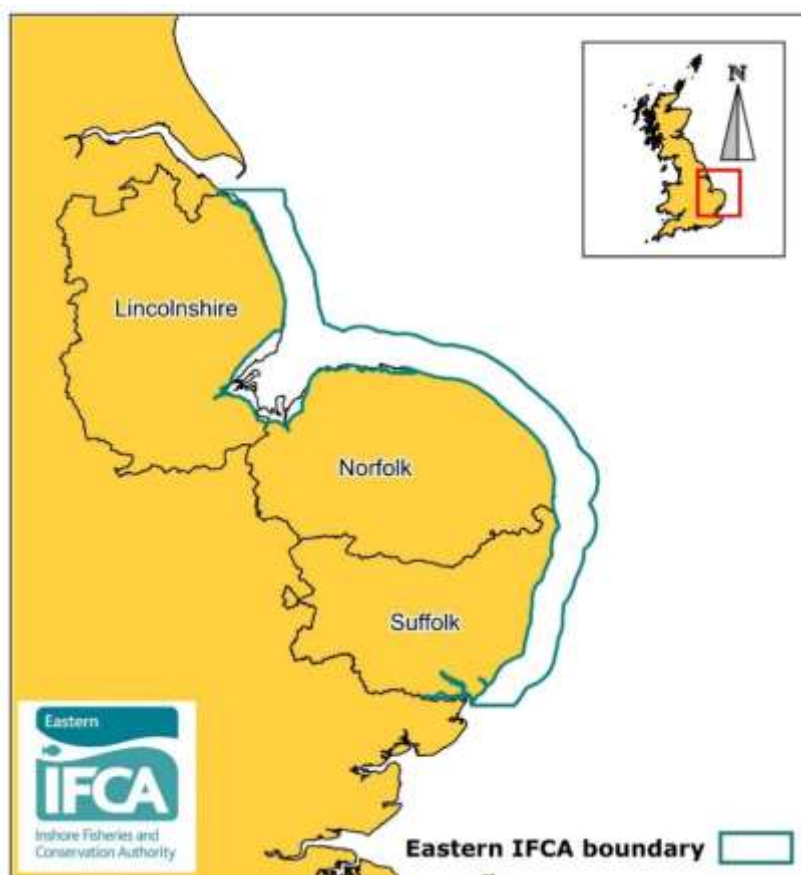
Julian Gregory
Chief Executive Officer

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Introduction

Eastern IFCA is a statutory fisheries and conservation regulator responsible for ensuring the sustainable management of fisheries resources and marine conservation in our district, seeking to balance the social and economic benefits of exploiting such resources with the need to protect the marine environment from, or promote its recovery from, the effects of exploitation.



Our district encompasses the counties of Lincolnshire, Norfolk and Suffolk, stretching from Haile Sand Fort in the North to Felixstowe in the South, and extending 6 nautical miles out to sea. The area includes The Wash embayment and various river estuaries including the Stour and Orwell in Suffolk. Almost all of the Eastern IFCA district (96%) is afforded protection through one or more Marine Protected Area (MPA) designations. This includes Special Protection Areas (SPA), Special Conservation Areas (SACs), Ramsar sites, Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSI) and Marine Conservation Zones (MCZ).

Being a publicly funded authority, accountability and transparency are at the core of how we function and publishing an Annual Report is a legislative requirement under the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009. The Annual Report is intended to provide a comprehensive overview to funding authorities (the constituent County Councils and Defra), partner organisations, and our stakeholders of our annual progress towards achieving our statutory duties.

This is Eastern IFCA's twelfth Annual Report. The report is divided into six Parts.

- Part 1 'Who We Are' provides an overview of the Authority and its membership and attendance of meetings during the 2022-23 financial year.
- Part 2 'How We Work' highlights our core duties, vision statement and wider legislative and policy drivers that guide our work.
- Part 3 'Delivery of Eastern IFCA Duties in 2022-23 contains a breakdown of progress made against our annual priorities as outlined in our Business Plan 2022-2027.

- Part 4 ‘Delivery against the IFCA Success Criteria’ contains five case studies which showcase some notable examples of work undertaken during 2022-23 in pursuit of each of the five overarching IFCA Success Criteria.
- Part 5 ‘Risk Management Strategy’ describes how Eastern IFCA manages organisational risk and includes a breakdown of risks and mitigation for 2022-23.
- Part 6 ‘Resources, Expenditure, Remuneration, Staffing and Carbon Footprint’ contains details about our assets, expenses, changes in staffing, details about the remuneration of the CEO, Chair and Vice-Chair of the Authority, as well as a breakdown of our organisational carbon footprint.



1. Who We Are

This Section provides an overview of the Authority, including its membership and attendance for 2022-23.

1.1 The Authority

Eastern IFCA is a statutory committee which meets quarterly to receive reports from the Authority's officers, make decisions and to direct officers to conduct work on its behalf to discharge its duties. It is funded by its three constituent County Councils – Lincolnshire, Norfolk and Suffolk – and receives additional 'New Burden' funding from Defra. The Authority's 21 members comprise 7 County Councillors, 3 representatives from the MMO, Natural England and the Environment Agency respectively and 11 individuals appointed by the MMO for their expertise and knowledge of various marine related sectors. The Authority's members and their attendance at Authority Meetings and Sub-Committee meetings are detailed below.

The Authority remains located at its primary base in King's Lynn with offices to accommodate staff and a local storage unit for its portable and transportable assets. A satellite office, co-located with MMO offices in the Cefas building in Lowestoft, was opened during 2016 and IFCOs have also been deploying from Well next the Sea Police Station. Vessels (*RV Three Counties*, *FPV Sebastian Terelinck*, *FPV Sea Spray*) are based at moorings at Sutton Bridge, Lowestoft and Wells next the Sea, being deployed according to operational requirements. A fourth vessel, *FPV John Allen*, was sold during in 2022 due to changing operational requirements and the need for a vessel better suited to pot hauling. The procurement of a replacement has been ongoing during the financial year.

a) Meetings and Attendance in 2022-23

A total of five Authority meetings and four Finance and HR Sub-Committee meetings were held during 2022-23, with members expected to attend a minimum of 50% of meetings. Four quarterly Fisheries and Conservation Management Working Group meetings were also held. These take place 6 weeks prior to Authority meetings as an opportunity to informally involve members in the development of workstreams, particularly seeking the input from those appointed by the MMO for their relevant expertise.

During 2022-23, all Full Authority and Sub-Committee meeting took place in person whilst Fisheries and Conservation Management Working Group (F&CMWG) meetings continued to be held online. The table below outlines Authority Member attendance at Authority and Sub-Committee meetings.

Member Attendance at Authority Meetings and Sub-Committee Meetings 2022-2023			
Name	% of meetings attended	Authority (5 meetings held)	Sub-Committee Finance & HR Sub-Committee (4 meetings held)
Cllr P Coupland	33	2	1
Cllr P Skinner	67	2	4
Cllr T Adams	22	0	2
Cllr M Chenery of Horsbrugh	100	5	4
Cllr T FitzPatrick	89	*5	*3
Cllr E Back	68	4	2
Cllr M Vigo di Gallidoro	56	#3	#2
Dr I Hirst	0	0	
Ms J Love	100	5	
Mr J Rowley	40	2	
Mr S Bagley	80	4	
Mr L Doughty	100	~3 of 3	
Mr I Bowell	40	2	
Mr K Copeland	40	2	
Ms T Davey	0	~0 of 1	
Mr J Davies	100	5	
Mr P Garnett	100	5	
Mr L Mogford	33	~1 of 3	
Mr K Shaul	20	1	
Ms I Smith	78	4	3
Mr S Williamson	67	4	2
Mr T Goldson	80	4	

*	Chair	Suffolk County Council	
~	Did not Complete full term	Lincolnshire County Council	MMO/EA/NE Representative
#	Vice Chair	Norfolk County Council	MMO Appointee

NB F&CMWG meetings are not actual sub-committee meetings and therefore do not fall under the same legislation as above nor are they open to the public therefore they have still been held remotely.

The Authority is committed to operating in a transparent manner and as such all Authority and Sub-Committee meetings are open to the public. This remained the case throughout the year with advance notice of the meetings publicised on the Eastern IFCA website. Agendas continued to be published ten working days ahead of any meeting, with all papers distributed five working days ahead. Agendas, papers and agreed minutes of all Authority meetings are published on the Eastern IFCA website at www.eastern-ifca.gov.uk.

1.2 Our Officers

Delivery of Authority business is undertaken by Eastern IFCA's Officers, operating in five teams - Marine Science (9 Officers), Marine Protection (11 Officers), Projects (3 Officers) Support (2 Officers) and the Executive Team (3 Officers).

During 2021-22 officers transitioned from remote homeworking necessitated by the COVID-19 pandemic to a flexible hybrid working model which includes, at minimum, two rostered days in the office. This has continued during 2022-23 and proportionate precautions continued to be taken throughout the year to minimise the risk to staff and operational safety as we learned to live with COVID-19.



2. How We Work:

As a fisheries regulator, Eastern IFCA operates within a complex legislative and policy environment which shapes and influences our organisational priorities, day-to-day operations and how we go about carrying these out. This section outlines how we work and includes information on our statutory duties, our vision, and wider legislative and policy drivers which influence our work, with a focus on recent changes to the legislative/policy context in which we operate following the United Kingdom's withdrawal from the European Union.

2.1 Our Core Duties under the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009

Eastern IFCA was created under Section 150 of the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009 (MaCAA) as a successor to the Eastern Sea Fisheries Joint Committee (ESFJC) and was fully vested on 1st April 2011 via Statutory Instrument 2010 No 2189. Our core duties, functions and powers are contained within the provisions of MaCAA. These include:

1. To manage the exploitation of sea fisheries resources in its district and in doing so to:¹
 - a) seek to ensure that the exploitation of sea fisheries resources is carried out in a sustainable way,
 - b) seek to balance the social and economic benefits of exploiting the 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,
 - c) take any other steps which in the Authority's opinion, are necessary or expedient for the purpose of making a contribution to the achievement of sustainable development, and
 - d) seek to balance the different needs of persons engaged in the exploitation of sea fisheries resources in the district.
2. To seek to ensure that the conservation objectives of any Marine Conservation Zone in the district are furthered.²

MaCAA also requires us to publish an Annual Report to demonstrate progress made towards delivering the statutory duties above.³ This is the twelfth annual report of the Authority.

¹ [Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009, Section 153.](#)

² [Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009, Section 154.](#)

³ [Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009, Section 178.](#)

2.2 Our Vision and the IFCA High Level Objectives and Success Criteria

The Authority's core duties, as set out in MaCAA and summarised above, are captured in the IFCA Vision Statement which is to:

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.

The Vision Statement guides the Authority and its officers in their day-to-day activities. In undertaking our duties pursuant to the Vision Statement, we are also guided by the IFCA High Level Objectives and the Success Criteria and their Indicators which set out how we will achieve the Vision Statement. These were refreshed by the Association of IFCAs and Defra in 2018 to reflect the developing programme of work delivered by IFCAs and to demonstrate our contribution to the delivery of the UK Marine Policy Statement and the 25-year Environment Plan.

High Level Objectives		Success Criteria	
HL01	Achieving a sustainable marine economy	SC1	IFCAs are recognised and heard, balancing the economic needs of the fishery whilst working in partnership and engaging with stakeholders
HL02	Ensuring a strong, healthy and just society	SC2	IFCAs implement a fair, effective and proportionate enforcement regime
HL03	Living within environmental limits	SC3	IFCAs use evidence based and appropriate measures to manage sustainable exploitation of sea fisheries resources and deliver environmental protection within their districts
HL04	Promoting good governance	SC4	IFCAs have appropriate governance in place and staff are trained and professional
HL05	Using sound science responsibly	SC5	IFCAs make the best use of evidence to deliver their objectives

Part 4 of the Annual Report highlights five case studies which illustrate how Eastern IFCA delivered against each of the five Success Criteria during 2022-23. Appendix 1 contains a more detailed breakdown of the Indicators for each Success Criterion.

2.3 Wider Legislative and Policy Drivers:

Eastern IFCA's duties are contained within and influenced by various legislative instruments, the primary of these being the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009, as outlined above. However, as a key delivery body in the marine area, the Authority is also influenced by a variety of other drivers including HM Government's Marine Policy Statement, the 25 Year Environment Plan, Defra's Policy Objectives, East Inshore Marine Plan, the IFCA High Level Objectives, the Fisheries Act 2020, and the Environment Act 2021.

a) Post-Brexit Developments

The Fisheries Act 2020 is the UK's first major domestic fisheries legislation in nearly 40 years and will underpin the national framework for fisheries management going forward. The Environment Act 2021 meanwhile sets the benchmark for environmental protection and enhancement. Together, these instruments establish the new legislative and policy landscape for fisheries and conservation management in the United Kingdom. An overview of the key implications of these instruments for the work of the Authority is given below.

i) The Fisheries Act 2020

The Fisheries Act 2020 replaced the European Union's Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) following the end of the EU Exit transition period. The Act presents high-level management objectives for the marine sector,⁴ which largely mirror those of the CFP.

Under the Act, the UK's fisheries policy authorities (Defra, and the devolved administrations in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales) are required to publish a Joint Fisheries Statement (JFS) which sets the direction for UK fisheries management and outlines how the high-level management objectives set out in the Act will be achieved. The JFS was published in November 2022⁵ following a public consultation and includes a list of planned Fisheries Management Plans (FMPs) – evidence-based action plans – which will provide a new tool to manage stocks across UK waters to help deliver the UK's ambition for sustainable fisheries.

The implementation of the Act, particularly the development of Fisheries Management Plans (FMPs) has a direct impact on the Authority's work and priorities. At the time of writing (August 2023), six 'frontrunner' FMPs are being consulted on⁶ – four of which are likely to impact on management within

⁴ These objectives, found in [Section 1](#) of the Act, are the sustainability objective, the precautionary objective, the ecosystem objective, the scientific evidence objective, the bycatch objective, the equal access objective, the national benefit objective, and the climate change objectives. They largely reflect the customary principles of fisheries management under the international law of the sea. Subsequent sections of the act provide specific definitions of each objective.

⁵ Joint Fisheries Statement (November 2022). Available at:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1119399/Joint_Fisheries_Statement_JFS_2022_Final.pdf

⁶ Fisheries Management Plans (July 2023). Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/fisheries-management-plans/fisheries-management-plans>

The development of Fisheries Management Plans will provide a new tool for stock management which will influence the development of advice for a particular fishery. This will be of importance to the IFCA's with the involvement of our own local fisheries research to feed into the plans' development.

ii) The Environment Act 2021

Like the Fisheries Act, the Environment Act replaces previously applicable EU legislation. The Act enshrines five environmental principles into law which will underpin future government policy.⁷ An Environmental Principles Policy Statement which sets out how policy makers are to apply the environmental principles to support environmental protection and enhancement in the UK was published in January 2023.⁸ Like the JFS, this statement is likely to influence the Authority's work moving forward.

There is a legal duty applicable to Ministers when making policy to have due regard to the policy statement. This extends to when ministers are scrutinising documents, strategies and frameworks prepared by public bodies that they are required by statute to approve and would include for example, the scrutiny of Eastern IFCA byelaws.

The Act also requires the government to set at least one long-term target in each of the following areas: air quality, water; biodiversity and resource efficiency and waste reduction. A consultation on the government's targets was launched on 16th March 2022 and ran until 27th June 2022 and included a specific target proposal for biodiversity in the sea.

This proposal seeks to introduce a deadline by which the designated features of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) need to be in favourable condition. The proposed target is for "70% of the designated features in the MPA network to be in favourable condition by 2042, with the remainder in recovering condition, and additional reporting on changes in individual feature condition".⁹ The MPA network included in this target will cover English inshore and offshore Marine Conservation Zones, Special Areas of Conservation and Special Protection Areas, so far as they are below mean high water and so includes those MPAs found within Eastern IFCA's district. Such a target would be a key driver in our approach to MPA management going forward. Moreover, it is likely to directly influence Natural England's advice to Eastern IFCA in relation to the achievement of conservation objectives.

⁷ These principles, contained in [Section 17](#) of the Act, are the principle that environmental protection should be integrated into the making of policies, the principle of preventative action to avert environmental damage, the precautionary principle, so far as relating to the environment, the principle that environmental damage should as a priority be rectified at source, and the polluter pays principle. As with the high-level objectives under the Fisheries Act, these principles are established and customary principles of international environmental law.

⁸ Environmental Principles Policy Statement (May 2022). Available at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/environmental-principles-policy-statement>

⁹ Defra (May 2022), [Consultation on Environmental Targets](#), p. 14.

The Act also introduces a biodiversity duty on public authorities who are required to consider what they can do to conserve and enhance biodiversity,¹⁰ agree policies and specific objectives based on that consideration and, act to deliver those policies and achieve those objectives.¹¹



¹⁰ By the 1st of January 2024.

¹¹ Guidance: Complying with the biodiversity duty (May 2023). Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/complying-with-the-biodiversity-duty>

3. Delivery of Eastern IFCA Duties in 2022-23

Eastern IFCA's annual workstreams are organised into three categories reflecting their priority level – high priority, business critical and future workstreams. Workstreams are allocated a priority based on an annual Strategic Assessment which uses best available evidence to identify the highest risk elements of all the fisheries in the district, including risks to fisheries (stock) sustainability, ecosystems and industry viability. At every level, workstreams are undertaken in pursuit of and with regard to achieving our core duties and vision statement (see Section 3 above).

During 2022-23, priorities continued to be dominated by work relating to developing and refining the management frameworks of key fisheries in our district. Following extensive stakeholder consultation, the Authority approved the Eligibility Policy under the new Wash Cockle and Mussel Byelaw 2021 which will guide how permits will be allocated and access to the fisheries managed following the expiry of the 30-year Wash Fishery Order 1992 in January 2023 (see IFCA Success Criteria Case Study 1 below). The Authority also made the Cromer Shoal Chalk Beds Byelaw 2023, designed to facilitate the continued deliver of an Adaptive Risk Management (ARM) approach to managing crab and lobster potting fisheries in Cromer Shoal Chalk Beds MCZ.

Progress against these workstreams and other priorities for 2022-23 is set out in the next section.



3.1 Focus and priorities for 2022-23

The priorities for Eastern IFCA 2022-23 were identified by the Strategic Assessment 2022, which used best available evidence to identify the highest risk elements of all the fisheries in the district, including risks to fisheries (stock) sustainability, ecosystems and industry viability. Workstreams which are classed as organisational priorities are those which have been identified as crucial to ensuring that Eastern IFCA is able to fulfil its statutory duties and maintain an effective regulatory framework capable of ensuring sustainable fisheries, healthy seas and a viable industry.

The outputs of the Strategic Assessment 2022 were used to inform Eastern IFCA's focus and priorities for 2022-2023 and our rolling 5-year Business Plan. Together, the Strategic Assessment and 5-year Business Plan are the main tools used by Eastern IFCA to ensure effective and robust long-term organisational planning and as such they reflect priorities that will span multiple years.

The table below reports on progress made in relation to each of our focus areas as reported in our Business Plan 2022-2027 which is available on our website.¹² Due to the complex nature of these focus areas from a science, regulatory and stakeholder engagement perspective, it is expected that some priorities will roll into following financial years.



¹² Eastern IFCA Business Plan 2021-2026: https://www.eastern-ifca.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/2021_01_13_Business_Plan_Final_draft.pdf

Category	Work	Priority	Progress	Comment
1. To ensure that the conservation objectives of Marine Protected Areas in the district are furthered	A) Implementation of management measures for 'red-risk' gear/feature interactions.	High	Ongoing	<p>The Closed Areas Byelaw (CAB) 2021 is the most recent iteration in the ongoing development of management to protect sensitive habitats located within our district, including measures for 'red-risk' gear/feature interactions. It consolidates measures previously implemented under our Marine Protected Areas Byelaw 2018, measures agreed in 2019 and 2021 but not yet implemented and introduces new restricted areas within some parts of five MPAs where bottom towed fishing, and in one new area crab tiling and hand-working, will not be permitted.</p> <p>During the formal consultation on the byelaw, stakeholders identified changes to habitats to be protected by the byelaw which warranted further consideration and investigation. As a consequence, work was undertaken during the year to gather and assess new data and as such, the byelaw is yet to be submitted to the Marine Management Organisation for formal QA.</p>
	B) Continued implementation of the Adaptive Risk Management approach for the Cromer Shoal Chalk Beds MCZ	High	Ongoing	<p><u>Potting fisheries:</u></p> <p>Significant progress has been made in relation to Adaptive Risk Management (ARM) of the historic crab and lobster potting fisheries that take place in Cromer Shoal Chalk Beds MCZ.¹³ Most notably, following two rounds of informal consultation, the Authority made the Cromer Shoal Chalk Beds Byelaw 2023 at its 51st statutory meeting on the 8 March 2023. The byelaw is designed to provide a framework</p>

¹³ The Authority began implementing this approach when advice was received from Natural England that the fishery may be causing a risk to the site's conservation objectives (see our [MCZ page](#) for more information). ARM is an iterative approach where management and research are informing each other in a constant feedback loop. The approach requires management that is proportionate to the level of risk caused by the fishery and adequately precautionary in the face of uncertainty (see: JNCC, [Review of the Current Context of Adaptive Risk Management](#) (July 2019)).

				<p>for the delivery of a flexible and responsive management in line with the requirements of ARM.</p> <p>A potting assessment was completed in 2022 which concluded that although potting is not currently hindering the site's conservation objectives, impacts in the long-term cannot be ruled out. We received Natural England's updated advice on our assessment in January 2023 and agreed a Joint Statement outlining our shared position on this advice.¹⁴</p> <p>Research priorities have included habitat mapping using our BlueROV 2 and towards the end of 2022, officers completed a review of the extent of the rugged chalk (the feature most vulnerable to potting interactions) in the MCZ, incorporating all new available data.¹⁵ We have also been developing – together with Blue Marine Foundation, Natural England, the University of Essex and fishing industry – a study to assess the natural disturbance within the MCZ. The intention of this work is to enable us to contextualise and more accurately assess the significance of potting damage in relation to the site's conservation objectives. The study is planned to launch in September 2023.</p> <p><u>Non-potting fisheries:</u></p> <p>Management of bottom-towed fisheries within the MCZ was</p>
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¹⁴ Eastern IFCA-Natural England Joint Position Statement: Management of the Potting Fishery in the Cromer Shoal Chalk Beds MCZ (March 2023). Available at: <https://www.eastern-ifca.gov.uk/eastern-ifca-natural-england-joint-position-statement-march-2023-management-of-the-potting-fishery-in-the-cromer-shoal-chalk-beds-mcz/>

¹⁵ Eastern IFCA, Cromer Shoal Chalk Beds MCZ Rugged Chalk Review (2022). Available at: https://www.eastern-ifca.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/2023_04_Rugged_chalk_extent_review_FINAL.pdf

				<p>agreed in 2019 under the MPA byelaw 2019 and in 2021 under the Closed Areas Byelaw (CAB) 2021 (see above).</p> <p>During 2020-21 officers undertook further assessment to identify whether artisanal shrimp fishing can continue in the site without hindering its conservation objectives. The assessment concluded that artisanal shrimp fishing at the current level of activity is not hindering the MCZ's conservation objectives but that this fishing activity must be monitored and managed to ensure that it does not change in such a way that the conservation objectives will be hindered. This resulted in the development of the Artisanal Shrimp Management Policy under CAB 2021¹⁶ which sets out how Eastern IFCA will manage this small-scale, hand-hauled fishery in line with the MCZ's conservation objectives.</p>
	C) Development of priority Monitoring and Control plans as identified by the strategic assessment (shrimp, pot and trap fisheries)	High (for bivalve molluscs, shrimp and prawns)	Ongoing	<p>The creation of bespoke Monitoring and Control plans has not been progressed, because of lack of capacity in the Marine Science team and the requirement to focus on MCZ work. However, the Authority has prioritised improving its monitoring of effort in the priority fisheries. Developments have included roll-out of the shrimp returns system and monthly effort reviews, increased distribution of trackers for vessels participating in the Cromer crab (potting) fishery, and continued monitoring / monthly review of whelk fishing effort through the EIFCA bespoke whelk returns system. Close monitoring of effort and landings in the bivalve mollusc</p>

¹⁶ Artisanal Shrimp Management Policy (Draft), available at: https://www.eastern-ifca.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/2021_11_23_Artisanal_Shrimp_Management_policy_ver3_as_notified.pdf.

				fisheries has been continued as a matter of course.
	D) Completion of amber/green gear/feature interactions and development of management measures where required.	High	Ongoing	<p>The Authority's MPA work has focused primarily on updating the assessment of the potting fishery (completed April 2022) and developing management in Cromer Shoal Chalk Beds Marine Conservation Zone (MCZ) – see 1B above. Amber/green assessments remain to be completed for more recently designated MPAs – including the Greater Wash Special Protection Area that extends beyond the EIFCA district and will be jointly assessed by EIFCA, North-Eastern IFCA and MMO – and management developed if needed. The original suite of amber/green assessments (undertaken between 2014-17) is to be reviewed over time; this work was due to commence in 2022-23 but has been delayed as a result of team churn, including loss of two long-standing Marine Science Officers during the year. The work was re-launched in March 2023 with a view to completing assessments and identifying any new MPA management needs by the end of the calendar year.</p>
	e) Effort Monitoring within the Wash & North Norfolk Coast SAC including implementation of new catch returns system	High	Complete	<p>Building on the new catch return form system which was introduced during the previous year and enhanced compliance with the mandatory requirement to provide data to the Authority, 2022-23 saw the development of a monitoring programme to ensure fishing activity remained within agreed thresholds in accordance with the Shrimp Effort Scheme.</p> <p>Monthly meetings were established to consider real-time fishing activity data against thresholds and the system, including a new database and analysis tool, were tested and found to be effective.</p>

2. To develop management of the fisheries regulated under the WFO 1992 (regulated and several fishery)	A) Replacement of Several Order with the Wash Cockle and Mussel Byelaw 2021 and the Wash Several Order 2022	High	Delayed	<p>The WFO was a hybrid Order which enabled the management of a public fishery and private fisheries.</p> <p>Public fisheries are to be managed under the Wash Cockle and Mussel Byelaw 2021 and associated Eligibility Policy to manage access. During the financial year, significant progress was made to the byelaw via the formal QA process however, the byelaw was not confirmed in time to enable a direct transition on the expiry of the Order in January of 2023. Instead, interim measures have been introduced which enable management on a temporary basis analogous with that under the WFO. These measures have ensured business continuity and the implementation of management measures to ensure the fishery operates within environmental parameters.</p> <p>To manage private fisheries in The Wash, the Authority applied for a new Several Order. The application is supported by a Fisheries Management Plan which was consulted on extensively during the financial year, but which received some strong objections from industry, including potential for a significant legal challenge. The resource directed to this workstream was almost entirely absorbed with addressing this issue during the financial year which has delayed the application process. However, legal advice has been sought which enables the Authority to continue its application for a Several Order which is ongoing.</p>
	B) Finalise and implement policy on access to the fisheries	High	Ongoing	<p>The management of access to the Wash cockle and mussel fisheries was the central issue in establishing a replacement to the WFO. The importance of this to the Wash fishing</p>

				<p>industry was reflected in the development of Eligibility Policy, which will manage access, through a significant amount of consultation and stakeholder dialogue including with the legal representatives of industry and the provision of the Authority's own independent legal advice.</p> <p>2022-23 saw the finalisation of the Policy and agreement by members to adopt the policy and the beginning of implementing the transition to the new system.</p>
3. Obtaining better fisheries data	A) Implementation of Inshore-Vessel Monitoring Systems (I-VMS) for all fisheries, prioritising the Wash Shrimp fishery.	High	Ongoing	<p>The national roll-out of I-VMS was undertaken during 2022-23 which saw the installation of a device on almost all vessels via a grant scheme. During this time, the Authority had access to I-VMS data for the first time and began familiarising itself with the new systems and how to obtain and analyse the data.</p> <p>Unfortunately, issues have arisen with some of the I-VMS devices and type-approval was removed after installation (albeit after the reporting period). As a consequence the SI which will require I-VMS has been delayed.</p> <p>As a result of the issues with the national roll-out, there was no opportunity for early adoption of I-VMS requirements within the shrimp fishery in 2022-23.</p>

3.2 Business Critical Workstreams

In addition to identifying high priority workstreams, the Strategic Assessment also sets out 'business critical workstreams'. These are established workstreams which have over time become 'business as usual' for Eastern IFCA and the cessation of which has the potential to significantly increase the risk associated with the fisheries and/or areas to which they relate.

One example is the annual cockle stock surveys in The Wash without which the cockle fishery would represent a much greater risk to stock sustainability, industry viability and the protection of designated overwintering birds. An outline of the business-critical work that the Authority undertook as a necessity during 2022-2023 is given below.

Work	Comment
Study of the Wash Embayment, Environment and Productivity (SWEEP)	Following high levels of unexplained cockle mortalities in The Wash in 2008, there were concerns that the mussels present on the Several fishery lays could be having an adverse impact on the food availability for wild stocks. The SWEEP project was instigated in 2010 to monitor the level of Chlorophyll in the water and meat yields of mussels as two proxies for food availability. Initially, the project also had an ambitious objective of evaluating the food carrying capacity of The Wash, but the complexity of this was soon recognised as being beyond EIFCA's available resources and capability to achieve. The project has continued to monitor the chlorophyll and meat yields, however, using an in-situ sonde deployed on a buoy to collect data continuously and a mobile sonde to take monthly samples from various other sites. Should chlorophyll and meat yields fall below minimum thresholds described in the associated Habitat Regulation Assessment (HRA) for the mussel lays, indicating available food levels were too low to support the wild and farmed shellfish populations, mussels may need to be removed from the lays.
Wash Fishery Order Surveys and Management	The Wash inter-tidal cockle surveys usually involve sampling approximately 1,100 sample stations. Covid-19 restrictions, however, had limited the 2020 annual cockle survey to a short stock assessment based on 74 sample stations, and the 2021 survey to 960 stations. With Covid-19 posing less of a risk by 2022, this year's surveys were able to sample a more thorough 1,043 stations. The 2021 survey had shown a decline in cockle stocks from the previous year, and the stock composition at the time of that survey had indicated they would decline further due to the proportion of vulnerable sized cockles in the population. Anecdotal reports from fishermen struggling to achieve daily quotas during the 2021 fishery supported this prediction. It was no surprise, therefore, when the 2022 survey

	<p>found the total stocks had declined from 20,153 tonnes to 13,711 tonnes and the adult component of the stock had declined from 15,848 tonnes to 8,226 tonnes. While the prospects for the 2022 fishery were poor, there had been a reasonable settlement of juveniles in 2021, however, that provided optimism for the 2023 fishery if they survived to a harvestable size.</p> <p>When considering management measures for the 2022 fishery, bird food calculations identified that the site could not support a fishery as well as provide required levels of food for overwintering bird species. However, it was agreed that careful management could limit impacts on stocks to acceptable levels. Furthermore, the Authority were latterly notified that a mistake in a bird count (upon which conservation advice is based) had artificially raised the bird food requirement threshold. Once the corrected bird count figure was supplied to the Authority, officers were able to calculate that the site could support a limited fishery and still meet the bird food threshold. However, there was still concern about the vulnerability of the juvenile cockles should the fishery open. Prior to the fishery opening, the Authority conducted further surveys and worked closely with industry representatives through a series of workshops to agree on a suite of spatial closures that would protect the juvenile stocks.</p> <p>Inter-tidal mussel surveys are conducted in The Wash each autumn. Since 2010, these surveys have found an overall pattern of decline due to high mortalities combined with poor recruitment. This has left the majority of the beds in poor condition and limited opportunities for fisheries. The inclusion of two relatively new beds into the survey programme in 2021 boosted stock levels sufficiently to open a relaying fishery in spring 2022. Despite this fishery, when surveyed again in autumn 2022, the beds were found to support similar stock levels to the previous survey. This enabled another relaying fishery to be proposed in 2023.</p> <p><u>Habitats Regulation Assessments of WFO fisheries:</u></p> <p>Eastern IFCA's WFO cockle and mussel survey data help inform annual assessments of the impacts of proposed WFO cockle and mussel fisheries on designated conservation sites. These Habitats Regulations Assessments (HRA) consider the impact of the fisheries on protected habitats and species and the overall integrity of the designated site, alone and in combination with other licensed activities. In consultation with Natural England (statutory nature conservation adviser) and with fishery stakeholder input, the Authority agrees updated management measures prior to these fisheries being</p>
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	<p>opened each year, to ensure that the fishing activities do not prevent the conservation targets from being achieved.</p> <p>This work is dependent on evidence relating to fishing activity, site condition (e.g. population status of protected species and extent of protected habitats), and fishing impacts. Within designated sites, regulators are required to apply precautionary management where evidence of activity, condition or fishery impact is poor or inconclusive. The continuation of commercial cockle and mussel fisheries in a conservation site as highly protected as The Wash reflects the good availability of data and the shared understanding of activities and impacts in the site achieved through continual monitoring and dialogue.</p> <p>The HRA for the 2022 WFO cockle fishery was completed in July 2022, following extended consideration of stock sustainability and conservation matters. Officers' initial recommendation was that the fishery should not proceed because the large number and wide distribution of juvenile cockles in the site made them vulnerable to high losses from fisheries disturbance, which would jeopardise future fisheries and because there was insufficient mussel and cockle biomass to satisfy the Bird Food Model (ante). The latter issue was ultimately resolved and Natural England agreed with the HRA conclusion that, with agreed mitigation, the fishery would not have an adverse effect on site integrity.</p> <p>Officers prepared an HRA for a Spring 2023 mussel relaying fishery. This was not finalised during 2022/23 because consultation with stakeholders showed there was no demand for seed mussels during this period. However, the HRA would be used subsequently, should demand arise later in Spring 2023.</p> <p>Officers have also started to develop a long-term cockle fishery HRA. The intention is to reduce the burden of annual HRAs as far as possible, although it will still be necessary to consider stock condition, bird numbers and seal distribution data on an annual basis.</p>
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<p>Development of measures to address the sustainability of whelk stocks.</p>	<p>Management measures implemented in the whelk fishery due to sustainability concerns include the introduction of permit conditions, a 500-pot limit and a minimum landing size of 55mm. A continuous stock assessment is being carried out using monthly catch returns data, specifically focussing on landings per unit effort (LPUE) and research in relation to size of maturity focusing on areas where there has been a lack of sampling is ongoing. The focus of the size of maturity project is to broaden the scope of the research and obtain voluntary whelk samples.</p> <p>The risk associated with the Whelk fisheries was identified as being high by the 2015 Strategic Assessment. Subsequent development of management measures has significantly reduced the risk associated with the fishery. Management measures include the establishment of a permit system and new data collection regime which has required a significant resource to administer.</p> <p>Minimum Landing Sizes (MLS) of 55mm was introduced to ensure species can reach maturity and have a chance to spawn prior to being harvested. Nationwide, whelks are known to mature at different sizes around the country, and these can differ between localised stocklets. Consequently, a project was instigated to study the Size of Maturity (SoM) of whelks from our district to ensure the newly introduced 55mm MLS was appropriate for the district. This has involved measuring and dissecting thousands of whelks, voluntarily provided by fishers from four areas within the district. Research is currently focussing on obtaining and analysing samples from areas in the district that were not sampled during the first phase of the project.</p> <p>SoM is crucially important in informing an appropriate minimum size and data were analysed from The Wash, Sea Palling, Lowestoft and Southwold areas in phase 1. The results indicated that the minimum size currently in place is less than the size of maturity. The 2020 Whelk Technical Summary Report concluded that whilst there is sufficient data to draw robust conclusions in The Wash, Lowestoft and Sea Palling areas, this is not the case for Southwold, and recommended further sampling is needed in this area to improve the available dataset spatially and temporally. The study was initially due to conclude within the 2019-20 financial year but is continuing until more robust conclusions can be drawn for the Southwold area.</p> <p>In addition to studying the size of maturity, the whelk stock assessment is investigating whether the fishery is being targeted sustainably. This is being done via the analysis of returns data to look at trends in landings, effort and Landings Per Unit Effort (LPUE). For stocks that are difficult to</p>
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	<p>physically survey, LPUE can be used as a proxy for stock density. Trends showing declining LPUE values indicate a fishery is being fished unsustainably. However, an issue with how catch caught outside of the district was being recorded in the returns forms was identified in February 2020, invalidating sections of the data. Work is ongoing to fully understand the impact of this will have on the overall results and analyse 2015 – 2023 data knowing these caveats. The same methods will be also implemented going forward to continuously monitor LPUE and keep track of current trends in stock.</p>
Shrimp Fishery Management (Effort monitoring and MSC Accreditation)	<p>The Shrimp Permit Byelaw 2021 was confirmed by the SoS during the reporting period however, it was not fully implemented (as a permit scheme) do to conflicting priorities and specifically, the continued development and engagement on the replacement of the WFO.</p> <p>In lieu of implementing the permit requirement, monitoring of effort to ensure it is within the thresholds agreed under the Shrimp Permit Scheme Policy has been ongoing. Having established a more robust catch return system which saw a dramatic increase in compliance with the requirement, the monitoring scheme for shrimp fishing is a robust system for ensuring that shrimp fishing will not damage the Wash MPAs.</p> <p>During the reporting period, shrimp fishing effort was markedly below average as a reflection of poor fisheries productivity albeit within the normal annual variation of the shrimp fishery. The year provided an ideal opportunity therefore to pressure test the newly developed databases and analysis tools for monitoring effort in future years when effort is higher.</p> <p>Our contribution to the MCS accreditation, the industry led initiative to manage the shrimp fishery within the criteria of the Marien Stewardship Council's accredited fishery scheme, was ongoing. In particular, IFCOs continued to carry out voluntary gear checks to ensure compliance with the scheme and quarterly meetings were attended by IFCA officers.</p>
Risk of conflicts with other marine users and engagement in marine planning	<p>The East Marine Plans were published in 2014 and set out objectives and policies for sustainable development in the southern North Sea. The Marine Management Organisation is the main regulator responsible for licensed activity at sea. Large (infrastructure-scale) developments, such as offshore and onshore energy projects, are permitted through the Planning Inspectorate. Eastern IFCA plays a role in influencing development decisions by providing expert advice on inshore fishery and</p>

	<p>conservation matters relevant to an application. Input to these consultations is led by the Marine Science team, drawing on expertise of Marine Protection officers for fishing activity or regulatory considerations.</p> <p>In all engagement with other regulators, Eastern IFCA emphasises the importance of meaningful dialogue between developers/applicants and fishery stakeholders. We engage with the MMO via the established Marine Licensing Group for MMO and IFCAs, which meets quarterly to discuss matters relating to the marine licensing process, including engagement considerations.</p> <p>Examples of marine planning cases that Eastern IFCA have been engaged with in 2022/23 include a proposed large-scale seaweed farm off the Norfolk coast, coast protection works at Bawdsey, Suffolk, various offshore wind energy projects including Norfolk Vanguard, Sheringham Extension Project and Dudgeon Extension Project, and new subsea electricity in Suffolk coastal waters.</p> <p>Eastern IFCA responded to 37 consultations in 2022/23, which is lower than in pre-Covid times. This is partly because fewer consultations have been received, but also because of staff changes in the Marine Science team meant there was a reduced capacity in this period. Where it has been necessary to decide whether to focus resource on either marine planning consultations or marine protected area (MPA) work, Eastern IFCA weighed the relative risks and has generally favoured progressing its own work towards supporting the achievements of conservation objectives in MPAs, in accordance with Business Priorities.</p>
Enforcement	<p>Enforcement activity is primarily driven through the Compliance Risk Register (an annual assessment of risk of non-compliance) and Tasking and Coordination Group meetings (which also considers intelligence and emerging issues). It is also influenced by the outputs of the Strategic Assessment as this identifies the fisheries most at risk of sustainability issues (and by extension, those potentially most vulnerable to negative impacts through non-compliance). Full reporting on Enforcement activity and outcomes is reported on in Appendix 3.</p>
Engagement and education with RSAs	<p>Engagement with Recreational Sea Anglers continued during the reporting period with the annual visiting of shingle beaches resulting in a significant number of engagements with RSA fishers.</p>
Complete HRAs in relation to 'unplanned' fisheries	<p>Mussel fisheries (sub-tidal seed mussel fisheries in particular) have the potential to occur throughout the year. Where such a fishery is detected by fishers, officers have a limited amount of time to develop management measures and a HRA for the fishery (particularly in sub-tidal fisheries which are</p>

	<p>ephemeral). In the event one does occur, the economic benefit of the fishery is relatively high (as mussel is usually used in local aquaculture).</p> <p>No unplanned fisheries took place in 2022-23 so there was no need for such HRAs.</p>								
Monitoring of district wide biosecurity risk	<p>A monitoring plan for biosecurity is in place and officers are briefed regarding reporting biosecurity concerns. Furthermore, officers undertake engagement with stakeholders to increase awareness and understanding as appropriate. It is recognised that the spread and control of invasive non-native species is outside of Eastern IFCA's remit, and whilst we may be engaged in reactionary actions, this is not a primary function. Work in relation to ensuring compliance with WFO lease conditions primarily putting on and removing shellfish and education and engagement work is ongoing in relation to biosecurity and the transfer of invasive non-native species. Officers liaise closely with other IFCAs from where seed mussels are sourced to limit the spread of potential non-native species.</p>								
Partnership working	<p>Eastern IFCA continues to maintain a strong working relationship with the MMO in particular to ensure efficient, effective and consistent enforcement of fisheries legislation. Partnership working extends to other agencies including Border Force, the Environment Agency and the Local District and Borough Council Environment teams. In particular, at an operational level, Eastern IFCA contributes through;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reporting through the national intelligence project • Evidence and information gathering (where appropriate) • Joint patrols and • Sharing of sea-going and research assets. <p>At a national level, Eastern IFCA contributes to the National Inshore Marine Enforcement Group as Chair, the Strategic Operations Group and the Technical Advisory Group through participation.</p>								
Administrative Metrics	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th colspan="2">Administrative metrics 2022-2023</th></tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Byelaw exemptions (and extensions) issued</td><td>98*</td></tr> <tr> <td>Freedom of Information/ Environmental Information Regulation requests</td><td>5</td></tr> <tr> <td>Whelk Permits issued</td><td>29</td></tr> </tbody> </table>	Administrative metrics 2022-2023		Byelaw exemptions (and extensions) issued	98*	Freedom of Information/ Environmental Information Regulation requests	5	Whelk Permits issued	29
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	(*This includes 61 exemptions from a temporary closure in The Wash to enable fishing within Wash cockle and mussel fisheries in accordance with interim measures subsequent to the expiry of the WFO.)
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3.3 Future priorities 2022-23

As a small organisation with a large area to cover, a broad remit and finite resources, Eastern IFCA needs to carefully plan and prioritise annual workstreams and ensure that resources are targeted where they are needed most. As such items that might be worthy of action but are of a lower priority will not be identified for action during a financial year. They may, though, receive attention if resources permit and opportunities or developments present during the year which would enable their undertaking or increase their priority. They could also potentially receive a higher priority rating in subsequent years, subject to the annual Strategic Assessment.

These are referred to as secondary priorities and those identified by the Strategic Assessment 2022 are listed below.

Category	Work	Comment
1. Obtaining better fisheries data	a) Development of relationships with RSA to obtain more fisheries data,	No further developments were made during 2022-23 in relation to RSA data collection. However, engagement with RSAs was, like every year, a key priority for the Marine Protection team. Engagement materials were shared

	including consideration of the added value of developing an RSA strategy	by IFCOs on the ground and through social media platforms to raise awareness about minimum landing sizes and rules applicable to recreational fishing activities.
	b) Investigation into mussel die-off	<p>The cockle stocks in The Wash started suffering unusually high “atypical” mortalities in 2008. These die-offs have continued annually since then, primarily affecting cockles as they reach harvestable size. This has had a significant impact on the fishery, not only in terms of the biomass of the available stock, but also the size at which the fishermen now target cockles. Because the longevity of the cockles has reduced from 5-7 to just 2-3 years, the stocks are now far less resilient than previously, and the fishery is reliant on receiving fresh recruitment at least every second year to offset the losses. High mortalities have also occurred regularly on the mussel beds in The Wash since 2021. Coupled with poor recruitment, these have left the majority of the inter-tidal beds in very poor condition.</p> <p>Initial studies conducted by Cefas on the cockles in 2009 indicated that <i>Haplosporidian</i> parasites might be responsible for the cockle mortalities. Similar studies on the mussels indicated that high incidence rates of <i>Mytilicola intestinalis</i> could be causal in their die-offs. Further studies conducted by the Authority and Hull university in 2018-2019 on the mussels failed to find a correlation between <i>Mytilicola</i> numbers and mortality rates. In 2020, a joint project was proposed with Cefas to study the die-offs in both species. Unfortunately, this study was not able to commence until 2021 due to Covid-19 restrictions. Unlike previous studies which had just involved histology, once samples were collected in 2021, Cefas used a multi-disciplinary approach to the study, combining bio-chemistry techniques with the histology. Initial findings from this study identified a previously unknown <i>haplosporidian</i> species in the mussels that appeared to be reducing their reproductive potential. There was no correlation between the presence of this species and mussel mortalities, however, so it might not be causal in the mortalities. In the case of the cockle samples Cefas identified a new species</p>

		of <i>Marteilia</i> in 2022, whose incidence correlated with mortalities. By isolating its DNA genome, Cefas have been able to demonstrate this species is closely related to another <i>Marteilia</i> species identified in cockles from the Burry Inlet, and more distantly related to another <i>Marteilia</i> species identified in Spain; both places where cockle die-offs are prevalent. Further studies are planned with Cefas in 2023 to better understand this parasite.
	c) Continue dialogue with MMO and other partner organisations to develop 'joined-up' approach to gathering fisheries data from fishers.	<p>No significant progress was made during 2022 in relation to developing a cross-organisational 'joined-up' approach to gathering fisheries data from fishers. The key focus for Eastern IFCA has been to contribute where required with the facilitation of the national roll-out of I-VMS on all vessels under 12m in length.</p> <p>We have also continued to pursue localised voluntary data gathering. As part of the ARM approach to management of potting activity on the Cromer Shoal, voluntary participation in data collection efforts using vessel trackers to monitor activity are under development with plans to drive uptake among stakeholders.</p> <p>Additionally, we have a data sharing agreement between Eastern IFCA and the MMO to facilitate the effective sharing of data where required to inform fisheries management.</p>
	d) Gather information regarding recreational hand gathering.	No progress made in relation to this item
	e) If required re-assess need to deliver 'unregulated netting' in the context of BNA.	No progress made in relation to this item.
	f) Implementation of electronic/app based returns system (to be	No progress made in relation to this item.

	incorporated with MMO under 10's catch returns if possible.	
	g) Investigate requirement/applicability of a netting permit	No progress made in relation to this item.
	h) Develop mechanism to monitor levels of use of Lesser Spotted Dogfish as bait.	No progress made in relation to this item.
	i) Develop mechanism to monitor levels of use of LSD as bait.	No progress made in relation to this item.
2. Delivering fisheries management in relation to fisheries in MPAs	a) Review of the Humber estuary cockle byelaw (inherited from North Eastern Sea Fisheries Committee)	No progress made in relation to this item.
	b) Development of monitoring and control plans	No progress made in relation to this item.
3. To ensure that sea fisheries resources are exploited sustainably	a) Development of management measures in relation to crab and lobster fisheries sustainability	<p>The major crab and lobster fisheries within the District are situated within the North Norfolk coast and specifically within the Cromer Shoal Chalk Bed MCZ for which a byelaw was developed and made by the Authority during the reporting period.</p> <p>This presented an opportunity to consult with stakeholders on existing crab and lobster byelaws inherited from our predecessor, ESFJC, at the same time to determine the need to maintain these byelaws and review as required.</p> <p>The outcome was that the measures should, for the most part be retained, and the Authority made the Crab and Lobster Byelaw 2023 at the 51st Authority meeting to that effect. A notable revision to the existing byelaws was to allow for the use of edible crab as bait is such was cooked offal – a measure consistent with other IFCA byelaws.</p>

		The new byelaw lends itself to ensuring the maintaining the sustainability of crab and lobster fisheries in the district.
	b) Review byelaw 5: prohibition on the use of edible crab (cancer pagarus) as bait	As above
	c) Consider formalising the internal Eastern IFCA position on an aquaculture strategy	During the reporting period, the Authority agreed to a position statement on aquaculture within the district which dealt with, in particular, seaweed aquaculture as a reflection of the growing interest for such within the district.
	d) Explore initiatives to invigorate the herring fishery through participation in promotional campaign/awareness raising	No progress made in relation to this item.

4. Delivery against the IFCA Success Criteria: Case Studies

In undertaking annual priorities, Eastern IFCA is guided by the IFCA Success Criteria and their Indicators, which set out how we will achieve our core duties and Vision Statement.

Five Success Criteria and twenty-seven Success Indicators have been developed for all ten Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authorities (IFCAs) within England. These were refreshed by the Association of IFCAs and Defra in 2018 to reflect the developing programme of work delivered by IFCAs and to demonstrate our contribution to the delivery of the UK Marine Policy Statement and the 25-year Environment Plan.

The five case studies below are based on the five overarching Success Criteria we work towards achieving annually and highlight some notable examples from 2022-23. Appendix 1 of this report contains a more detailed breakdown of our progress against each Success Criterion and its associated Indicators.



Success Criterion 1: IFCAs are recognised and heard, balancing the economic needs of the fishery whilst working in partnership and engaging with stakeholders

Managing Access in Wash Cockle and Mussel Fisheries



The Authority was the grantee of the Wash Fishery Order 1992 (WFO) until its expiry in January of 2023. Under the Order, the Authority managed locally and nationally important public cockle and mussel fisheries for 30 years. In March of 2020, the Authority started work on replacing the Order with a byelaw to manage these public fisheries.

The central issue in developing a new management regime was one of access. After 30 years of the WFO, Wash stakeholders were understandably concerned as to what a new system may entail and had strong views on how access should be managed. As a reflection of the strong sense of feeling on the matter, the Authority committed a significant amount of resource to engagement with industry on the byelaw and the Eligibility Policy which would be used to determine access to the fishery.

A total of six 'structured' consultations were held, two relating to the wording of the byelaw and four regarding the Eligibility Policy in addition to almost continuous informal dialogue on the matter over the course of almost three years.

The dialogue and consultation directly informed the development of the Eligibility Policy and resulted in significant changes to the original draft including:

- Moving from annual to biennial requirement to pay Entitlement fees where no fishery was open,
- Introduction of safeguards to ensure consultation with stakeholders and consideration of specific impacts of changing the Policy;
- Amendments which cater for the full range of business models in The Wash;
- Reductions in fishing activity requirements to maintain eligibility;
- Establishment of an Appeals sub-committee to address appeals against decisions made on access.

Overall, through the contribution of stakeholders and careful consideration of concerns and comments, the resultant Eligibility Policy which was agreed by members at the 49th Eastern IFCA meeting, strike the best balance between maintaining business continuity of those engaged in The Wash and addressing the failures of the system under the WFO. Most notably, the Policy provides equitable management of access which will enable the continuation of family businesses and provides a route for new entrants which prioritises those who do not already have access to the fisheries.



Success Criterion 2: IFCA's implement a fair, effective and proportionate enforcement regime



Compliance and enforcement activity are undertaken in accordance with principles set out in the Regulation and Compliance Strategy, with the emphasis being upon endorsing compliance. Enforcement activity is primarily driven through the Compliance Risk Register and TCG meetings (which considers intelligence, emerging issues, fishing trends and the monthly risk profile). When undertaking its regulatory responsibilities the Authority starts from the position

that the majority of the people, organisations and industries engaged in the inshore fisheries, whether recreationally or commercially, are compliant with the regulations and controls that affect them. The Authority will endeavour to use a proportionate approach, where compliance is achieved through engagement, understanding and advice.

Recreational sea angling is a popular and economically important activity in the Eastern IFCA district, particularly in Suffolk. Eastern IFCA needs to understand the trends of RSA activity, particularly when occurring in MPAs or sensitive areas. IFCA routinely engage with RSAs on minimum sizes, applicable local and national regulation and wider sustainability issues.

MCRS 42CM

The minimum conservation reference size for bass retained is 42cm.



CATCH LIMITS

From 1 January to 31 January 2023 and 1 April to 31 December, not more than TWO bass may be retained per person per day.

From 1 February to 31 March 2023: catch-and-release only.

NO FIXED NETS FOR RECREATIONAL FISHING

No bass can be caught using fixed nets in recreational fishing.

These rules apply if you are fishing from a boat or from the shore.



Eastern
IFCA
Inshore Fisheries and
Conservation Authority

Some examples of how Officers have been endorsing compliance through engagement and education:

- Enhancing Officer knowledge through dialogue with the recreational fishers, tackle shops, and charter vessels, ensuring they are best equipped to contribute to sustainable recreational fisheries. In Suffolk alone there were 94 shore patrols, various vessel patrols covering both the sea and in all Suffolk rivers, 1078 port visits, and over 1772 fishers engaged with.
- Officers providing MCRS stickers.
- Signage placed at various popular locations.
- Website & social media updates on changes such as bass regulations: <https://www.eastern-ifca.gov.uk/2023-bass-regulations/>



Success Criterion 3: IFCA's use evidence based and appropriate measures to manage sustainable exploitation of sea fisheries resources and deliver environmental protection within their districts.

Improved approach to minimise risk of disturbance to seals from hand-worked fisheries

Eastern IFCA are required to ensure that fishing activities do not adversely affect the designated features of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) across our district. To do this we must apply management based on the best available evidence.

The Wash is home to 7% of the total UK population of Harbour seals, and they are a designated feature of The Wash MPA. We annually assess the potential impact of hand-worked cockle and mussel fisheries on the Harbour seal population. Seal haul-out location data are provided by the Sea Mammal Research Unit (SMRU) from annual aerial surveys. Fishing locations are informed by extensive Eastern IFCA cockle and mussel stock surveys. Until 2022, we mapped haul-out sites using point data, and applied a precautionary 600m management buffer that closed these areas to intertidal fishing during the sensitive seal pupping and moulting season. Eastern IFCA had agreed this management approach with SMRU and Natural England (NE) as the most appropriate management based on available evidence.

In 2022 however, it was agreed that it would be more appropriate to map seal haul-out sites based on observed distribution of seals within haul-out areas, rather than point data, and to consider the relative importance of each haul-out site based on seal numbers and patterns of use over time. SMRU provided aerial imagery, seal sightings/count data and specific seal haulout area GIS files for The Wash for three years and will continue to share data for each year in which the aerial surveys take place. These data are crucial as they enable identification of the location and relative importance of individual haul-out areas used by seals during the sensitive season and refinement of management based on this. As a result, a new approach was being developed between SMRU, NE and EIFCA, whereby only seal haul-out areas of high usage (identified as >2% of the total Wash population by SMRU) that overlap with high cockle densities would

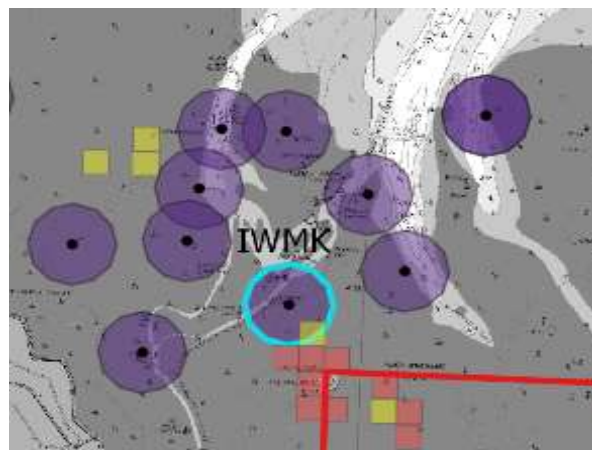


Figure 1. Map showing seal haul-out sites mapped using point data and a 600m buffer (purple). Cockle bed densities are shown as red and yellow squares.

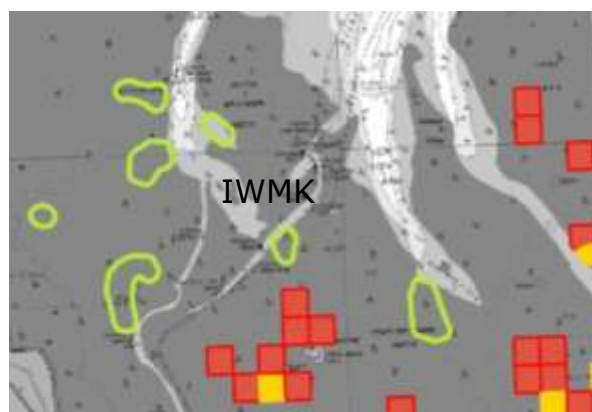


Figure 2. Map showing high-use seal haul-out areas with 100m buffer (green polygons) based on new SMRU data. Cockle bed densities shown as red and yellow squares.

need to be closed to the fishery. Medium-use haul-out areas (areas used by between 0.5% and 2% of the total Wash population) would be assessed on a case-by-case basis considering other factors such as site fidelity, available alternative haul-out areas and local topography, and low usage areas would remain open.

The new data, and the partnership approach to improve the management measures will be crucial in allowing the very precautionary 600m buffer previously used to be reduced to 100m around areas actively used by seals and thus improve confidence that the closed areas protect the total seal haul-out area whilst not unnecessarily restricting fishing opportunity.



Success Criterion 4: IFCA's have appropriate governance in place and staff are trained and professional.

Ensuring that staff have access to the right tools and training and are empowered to carry out Eastern IFCA's duties with confidence, competence and in the most effective manner.



As an organisation Eastern IFCA is committed to supporting the personal and professional development of our staff, ensuring high levels of job satisfaction and professional standards. To achieve this, we have in place a robust and supportive supervision structure which allows employees to reflect on achievements and areas of improvement, and managers to understand the needs of their teams so that they can make sure that each member has the right tools and training to carry out their duties with confidence, competence and in the most effective manner. New officers joining the Authority can expect a detailed and comprehensive induction programme including training during their first 6 months of employment as part of their probationary period.

Equality and diversity training has been provided to all staff in the last year, officers are expected to act and behave in a professional manner showing respect for both stakeholders



and colleagues. The training sought to reinforce the values expected of everyone whilst employed by EIFCA.

Following on from the impacts of COVID 19 and a change in working practices, positive Mental Health for officers is important. Studies have shown that maintaining a culture which supports everyone's Mental Health can reduce levels of sickness and also increase productivity. Training again was provided for all staff provided by the Norfolk and Suffolk wellbeing service.



As part of our ongoing commitment to Health and Safety officer access relevant online training, in addition our Health and Safety partners from Norfolk County Council Health and Safety Team provided bespoke training for all staff and a separate session for managers to help them understand the additional responsibilities they have to create a safe working environment. In addition we have continued with our bespoke 'Mud familiarisation' training to equip officers working in intertidal which are common across our district



Continued development of our staff team is important, may come to us with little or no maritime experience. In addition the suite of STCW 95 qualifications all our staff undertake and refresh every 5 years we also invest in RYA training such as Essential Navigation and

Seamanship, RYA Day skipper, RYA VHF and Diesel engine and MCA Approved engineer qualifications.

Success Criterion 5: *IFCAs make the best use of evidence to deliver their objectives*

Continuation of the ARM approach: habitats surveys and rugged chalk extent

The MCZ supports a variety of seabed features including shallow and deeper rocky seabed, subtidal chalk, coarse, mixed and sandy sediments, and peat and clay exposures. The subtidal chalk feature includes flat bedrock, pebbles, cobbles and boulders, gullies and more prominent raised, rugged structures. In 2020, a study conducted by Natural England identified that some of these features are more susceptible to damage from fishing gear than others and subsequently provided new conservation advice to Eastern IFCA. Considering this new advice as well as other evidence sources Eastern IFCA updated their potting assessment.

Eastern IFCA's updated potting assessment concluded that the risk of the potting fishery hindering the achievement of the MCZ's Conservation Objectives could not be ruled out in the long term, due to the potential for cumulative effects of interactions between active and lost potting gear with **rugged chalk features**. To mitigate this risk, the Authority adopted an Adaptive Risk Management (ARM) approach which requires management that is proportionate to the risks posed by the fishery and adequately precautionary in the face of uncertainty. To achieve this, the extent and location of sensitive features (rugged chalk) must be determined in order to inform any spatial management. This has formed one of the key workstreams for the Research and Development Task and Finish Group.

In 2020 officers completed a desk-based study which identified all available evidence sources that provided information on the extent of rugged chalk features within the MCZ. After analysing available data, officers were able to identify a preliminary and precautionary area to be managed as rugged chalk. These included multibeam surveys completed by Cefas (2012) and the Environment Agency (2011 and 2019) and seabed camera surveys completed by Cefas (2014), Eastern IFCA (2019) and the Environment Agency (2019).

By winter 2022 several additional evidence sources became available which could be used to improve our understanding as to the extent of the rugged chalk features. These included re-gridding and rugosity analysis of existing multibeam datasets by Cefas (2021), Natural England dive surveys (2020), data collected by officers using the recently purchased BlueROV2 and imagery collected by Seasearch divers (2022). At this stage it was considered appropriate to review the preliminary rugged chalk area, considering this new evidence and a review and updated extent was shared in April 2023. Whilst this currently provides our most up to date extent of rugged chalk, it does not provide our final rugged chalk area. The collection of habitat data to inform the rugged chalk extent is ongoing and the rugged chalk extent will be reviewed again at the end of 2023 to incorporate any further sources which arise or are made available during the year. This will include the continued collection of data using the BlueROV2, as well as the side scan sonar, during the summer of 2023 by officers to target current evidence gaps.

5. Risk Management Strategy

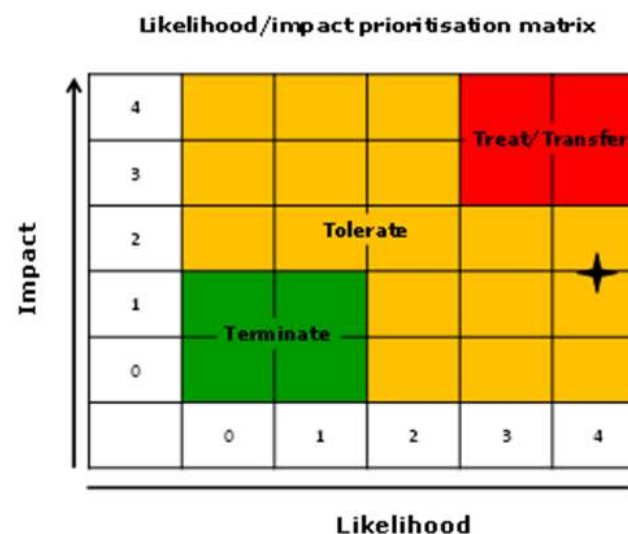
Pages 34-41 of the 2022 – 2027 Business Plan outline the Risk Management Strategy of Eastern IFCA. The risk matrix sets out the magnitude of risks to Eastern IFCA from an organisational viewpoint, incorporating these amongst other reputational and financial risks. The matrix also sets out the likelihood of an identified risk occurring and identifies any mitigation which is in place or to be introduced. Risk is ranked on an arbitrary scale from 0 (low risk - coloured green) to 4 (high risk - coloured red). The average of the combined financial and reputational risk is taken and plotted on to the matrix below, the likelihood of that risk occurring is also plotted and mitigation action is noted. In most cases there are already many actions being undertaken as part of routine working practices to reduce the risks to the Eastern IFCA. In 2020 it was agreed that an update on managing risk would be a standard agenda item at full Authority meetings to ensure that members are fully sighted on progress and any developments.

The four actions that can be applied are:

Treat	Take positive action to mitigate risk.
Tolerate	Acknowledge and actively monitor risk.
Terminate	Risk no longer considered to be material to Eastern IFCA business.
Transfer	Risk is out with Eastern IFCA's ability to treat and is transferred to higher level.

Risk matrix with worked example

Risk A poses a financial threat (2) to the organisation and a reputation threat (1) generating a combined impact level of 1.5. The likelihood of the threat occurring is determined as 4. The resultant risk to Eastern IFCA is therefore plotted using the matrix and is identified as a risk that should be tolerated.



Risk Description	Risk	Action	Mitigation	Update during 2022-23
Eastern IFCA fails to secure funding to replace assets		Tolerate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Current level of reserves provides sufficient funding to cover replacement of <i>RV Three Counties</i> • The open RHIB, FPV Seaspray, was procured using EMFF funding • Seek efficiencies and promote cost effectiveness. • Demonstrate value for money. • Advertise/promote Eastern IFCA output and effectiveness to funding authorities through regular engagement with Council leaders and Financial Directors. • Engage with partner agencies to identify alternative funding sources • Explore asset sharing initiatives • Agreement in place with funding authorities for capital funding contributions each year. Confirmed at the annual meeting with representatives of the Finance Directors on Friday 19th November 2021. 	<p>The risk was maintained throughout the reporting period.</p> <p>Agreement is in place with funding authorities for capital funding contributions each year. Confirmed that this will continue in 2023-24 at the annual meeting with representatives of the Finance Directors on Wednesday 2 November 2022. Whilst it was indicated that anticipated reductions in public sector funding may mean that this will be reviewed next year, this will be mitigated by the fact that major capital projects (vessel replacements) will have been completed with some funding support from Defra.</p>
Impact of EU exit on Eastern IFCA duties and the wider economic environment		Transfer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitor developments in the post-EU exit landscape, particularly fish and shellfish exports • Engage in national forums to help inform and influence developments (e.g. IFCA Chief Officers Group, Association of IFCAs) • Continue “business as usual” • Maintain communication with partners 	<p>The risk was maintained throughout the reporting period.</p> <p>Whilst Eastern IFCA supported the MMO in terms of operational readiness for a ‘no deal’ scenario and in particular was</p>

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eastern IFCA is fully engaged with the MMO in terms of operational readiness, with a MoU in place for the provision of vessels and joint patrols. • Eastern IFCA is engaged with Cefas and the FHI in engaging industry regarding export and and import of shellfish and works with NNDC to facilitate registration of food premises as a result of EU exit related requirements • Officers engaged in future of fisheries management work with Defra and other stakeholders. • The Authority is supportive the REAF initiative. 	<p>prepared to provide sea patrols under a Memorandum of Understanding, planned patrols did not take place as a consequence of weather and a deal with the EU meaning that there was not a strong requirement for them. Officers continued to support Cefas (and the Fish Health Inspectorate) in engaging industry regarding export and import of shellfish and worked with North Norfolk District Council to facilitate registration of food 'premises' as a result of EU exit related changes to the requirements.</p>
Eastern IFCA fails to maintain relevance amongst partners		Tolerate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide a leadership function. • Be proactive and identify issues early. • Engage with all partners routinely. • Use Business Plan to prioritise and communicate outputs, Measure progress/deliver outputs • Represent community issues to higher authorities • Recent revisions undertaken to the ARM project for the MCZ to address wider stakeholders concerns about engagement <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effective business planning process in place. Leading role where appropriate e.g. Op Blake. Proactive approach to raising issues with Defra (e.g. Bass management, proposals for effort management trial). Participation in Parliamentary 	<p>The risk was maintained throughout the reporting period.</p> <p>Effective business planning process are in pace. Leading role taken where appropriate e.g. CEO is one of two IFCA representatives on the IFCA/MMO Strategic Operations Group. Recent revisions to the Adaptive Risk Management project for Cromer Shoal MCZ to</p>

			Review 2019.	address wider stakeholder concerns about engagement with the project.
Negative media comment		Tolerate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Actively and regularly engage with all partners including media outlets. • Utilise full potential of social media and web-based information. • Embed professional standards and practices. • Deliver change efficiently and effectively. • Promote activity • Assure recognition and understanding through community events • Routine updating of news items on website. • Active on social media with demonstrable improvements in 'reach'. • Parliamentary Review (above). • Monitor media presence and engage where appropriate. Letters written in response to adverse articles regarding the WFO replacement in October 2021. 	<p>The risk increased during the reporting period.</p> <p>Since the decision to replace the WFO 1992 with a byelaw there has been negative comment in a fishing industry publication. More recently issues associated with the annual Wash cockle fishery combined with other issues such as the replacement of the WFO led to a demonstration at the 48th Authority meeting and some adverse publicity in local media and the fishing industry publication. The grading was increased to Treat to reflect this as there was a likelihood for continued criticism, which include the views of a minority but vocal group of stakeholders including allegations relating to the professionalism and integrity of officers.</p> <p>Increased risk was identified due to Defra consultation in</p>

				<p>connection with the quadrennial review of IFCAs which may be disproportionately influenced by the more recent increase in negative media comment.</p> <p>The expiry of the WFO 1992 prompted a surge in activity on the part of those opposed to the planned changes, which focussed on seeking political support. Interim measures were put into place to manage cockle and mussel fisheries in the Wash and to safeguard and enable aquaculture. Proactive communications appeared to manage the situation with regard to the media</p>
Degradation of Marine Protected Areas (MPA) due to fishing activity		Tolerate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Proposed fishing activities authorised by Eastern IFCA are assessed per Habitats Regulations Eastern IFCA is fully engaged in national fisheries/MPA project, prioritising management of highest risk fisheries in MPAs and implementing new management measures Effective monitoring of fishing activity and enforcement of measures Adaptive co-management approach to fisheries management – i.e. engagement with fishing and conservation interests in the development of management measures, and appropriate review of measures to respond to changing environmental and socio-economic factors 	<p>The risk was maintained throughout the reporting period.</p> <p>MPA management has been a high priority since 2012 with substantial progress made. Current workstreams (e.g. Cromer Shoal MCZ, remaining 'red risk' sites) are established priorities in the Business Plan and are being progressed.</p>

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ongoing, close liaison with Natural England regarding all conservation matters • Review agreed Wash Cockle & Mussel Policies • Develop the use of I-VMS as a management tool by the Authority, >12m implementation expected in 2022. • Continue to progress research into the impact of fishing activities on MPA features to ensure the Authority has an up-to-date evidence base to inform its management decisions. • MPA management has been a high priority since 2012 with substantial progress made. Current workstreams (e.g. Cromer Shoal MCZ, remaining 'red risk' sites and Closed Areas Byelaw 2021) are a high priority and are being progressed. 	
Shellfish and fish stocks collapse		Treat	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual stock assessments of bivalve stocks in Wash • Annual review of the level of threat via the Strategic Assessment • Ability to allocate sufficient resources to monitoring of landings and effective enforcement • Consultation with industry on possible management measures • Use Project Inshore Phase 4 output to inform MSC pre-assessment review of fisheries and validate management measures • Develop stock conservation measures for crab and lobster fisheries through engagement with Cefas and fishing industry. Continue support for industry led Fisheries Improvement Plan • SWEEP research into primary productivity levels within the Wash • Regular engagement with the industry to discuss specific matters • Continued research into the cockle mortality events • Whelk research is ongoing to identify level of risk posed and potential mitigation for sustainability concerns. 	<p>The risk was maintained throughout the reporting period.</p> <p>The 2022 Wash cockle fishery closed during Q4 to enable the annual stock assessment. Surveys in the Spring of 2023 have identified that the management measures put into place during the fishery in 2022 appear to have had the intended protective effect so as to enable a fishery in Spring / Summer 2023.</p> <p>Cefas also provided the results of a study into mussel and cockle mortality which indicates</p>

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduce shrimp management measures • Consider bass management measures, if necessary, in light of EU/UK measures • Annual surveys of Wash cockle and mussel stocks alongside innovative approach to management of the cockle fishery. Ongoing workstream to identify cause of mussel mortality. Closure of cockle fishery in Nov 2019 due to emerging findings of mussel surveys in order to mitigate impact on 2020 cockle fishery. Innovative surveys enabled the 2020 cockle fishery. • Consideration given to an engagement plan to educate and inform about small cockles, including engagement with processors for officers to better understand the market context 	<p>that a disease is responsible for die-off in cockles but there is less certainty as to whether parasites found in mussels are the cause or a contributory factor to mussel stock declines in The Wash.</p> <p>Monitoring of risk associated with the other key fisheries is ongoing and there does not appear to be any changes to risk at this time.</p>
Failure to secure data		Tolerate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All computers are password protected. Individuals only have access to the server through their own computer. • Secure wireless internet • Remote back up of electronic files • Access to electronic files is restricted • Up to date virus software installed on all computers • Important documents secured in safes • ICT equipment and policies provided by public sector provider – including encrypted laptops/secure governmental email system • All Eastern IFCA personnel undergo DPA training • Electronic backup of all Eastern IFCA documents held by ICT provider offsite • Policies and processes developed to ensure compliance with GDPR. 	<p>The risk was maintained throughout the reporting period.</p> <p>Policies and processes have been developed to ensure compliance with GDPR.</p>
New Burdens Funding discontinued		Tolerate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Association of IFCAs has consistently lobbied for the continuation of funding 	<p>The risk was maintained throughout the reporting period.</p>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Association of IFCA's have engaged with Defra review of New Burdens funding during 2018-19 and submitted a paper in support of an increase nationally from £3m to £6m as part of the planned SR2019 and SR2020 (both on hold due to the Covid-19 pandemic) • Finance Directors representatives briefed and understood that in the event that the funding is discontinued there may be a desire to increase levies in November 2021. • Association of IFCA's submitted their anticipated spending requirements for the next 3 years on behalf of all IFCA's. The outcome of this is awaited. 	<p>Since circa 2019 there has been some doubt about the continuation of New Burdens funding in its current form. Defra and the IFCA's worked on the 'co-design' of a replacement for New Burdens, which ultimately resulted in Defra securing £3 million in New Burdens Funding for 2022/2023 and indicatively for 23/24 and 24/25. Additional funding was also provided for specific functions for 2022/2023 and indicatively for 23/24 and 24/25, including developing Fisheries Management Plans, MPA management and licensing, planning and consents.</p> <p>Funding for 2022-23, which equates to £150k per year to Eastern IFCA, was provided albeit whilst objectives for the FMP workstream have been received objectives and or the remaining two workstreams are still awaited. Capital allocations have been made for Eastern IFCA that should cover the daughter vessel for the new</p>
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				build replacement of RV Three Counties this year and much of the cost of the new 'potting vessel' next year.
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6. Resources, Expenditure, Renumeration, Staffing & Organisational Carbon Footprint:

6.1 Resources

The following resources belonged to Eastern IFCA on the 31 March 2023.

Vessel name	MCA Work Boat Code	Length	Commissioned	Purchase cost
<i>FPV Sebastian Terelinck</i>	Cat. 2 (60 nm offshore)	11.5m	2015	£415,188
<i>RV Three Counties</i>	Cat. 2 (60 nm offshore)	18m	2002	£914,560
<i>FPV Sea Spray</i>	Cat. 4 (up to 20 miles to sea)	6m	2018	£50,546

Vehicle details	Entered service	Replacement date	Replacement cost
Ford Tourneo bus	2016	2022	£18,000
Hyundai Tucson	2021	2026	£18,753
Hyundai Tucson	2021	2026	£18,753
Hyundai Tucson	2021	2026	£18,753
Skoda Yeti 4x4	2014	2021	£18,000
Skoda Yeti 2.0 TDi	2017	2024	£18,000
Skoda Yeti 2.0 TDi	2017	2024	£16,000
Skoda Fabia	2017	2024	£11,000
Skoda Karoq	2020	2027	£23,000
Isuzu DMax Eiger	2015	2022	£20,000
Hyundai Kona	2022	2027	£35,000

Description	Purchased	Purchase cost
Side scan sonar	2013	£53,815
Underwater camera	2013	£28,770
Video ray	2013	£11,108
Sonar software	2013	£15,000
ROVs	2021	£15,918

In addition to the assets identified above, the Authority leases an office in King's Lynn, moorings at Sutton Bridge for its vessels and a storage facility (close to the offices) in King's Lynn. Vessels are also located at Wells next the Sea (Seaspray) and Lowestoft (Sebastian Terelinck).

6.2 Expenditure [section in draft pending final checks]

The Authority had a budget of £1,728,740 for 2022-2023. This figure includes £394,145 from Defra, £1,100,685 from levies, £163,910 asset replacement and £70,000 from other sources. Use of New Burden money is not accounted for separately by the Authority due to the accounting and allocation complexities that this would cause.

Levies are currently subject to an annual 2% inflationary increase. The final projected outturn for 2022-23 showed an operating surplus of £137,660 over budget (8%). Key budget variances were:

1. Savings in salaries due to vacancy management with Eastern IFCA operating below full complement for part of the year amounted to £137,150
2. General expenditure £(2,966) (operational overheads) was fractionally overspent as a result of above budget inflation.
3. Communication and Development, Marine Science and Marine Protection combined overspend amounted to £(1,560) due to Marine Science overspend £(9,460) offset by £7,900 savings in the other areas
4. Asset operations were underspent by £905.
5. Income £53,434 over budget mainly due to £50,000 extra funding from Defra.
6. Asset purchases £(529,304) new Research Vessel stage payment and 2 replacement vehicles along with transfer of IVMS reserves £(130,000) and WFO reserve spend £(3,083) offset by Asset Replacement receipts of £169,310 and asset sales £4,550.

Reserve name	Amount held within reserve @ 31 March 2023
Research	£62,251
IVMS	£30,000
Operational	£150,000
Legal and enforcement	£75,000
ICT	£10,000
Vessel replacement	£1,403,562
Vehicle renewals	£60,000
Fixed Penalty Fine Fund	£22,500
Office Improvements Fund	£10,000
WFO reserve	£85,429
Defra grant	£18,292
Total "IFCA" reserves	£1,927,034

6.3 Remuneration of the Chair, Vice Chair and Chief Executive Officer 2022-2023

The Chair and Vice Chair of the Authority were not remunerated directly by the Authority for their work conducted on behalf of the Authority during 2022-2023. Remuneration of the Chief Executive for the year 2021/22 was in the band £80 – £85,000. Travel, accommodation, and subsistence were reimbursed in accordance with the Authority's policies.

6.4 Staffing

During the year the following changes took place:

- 1 Grade 6 MSO left their post
- 1 Grade 5 Project Officer left their post
- 1 Grade 5 MSO left their post
- 2 Grade 5 IFCO recruited
- 2 MSO Grade 5 recruited
- 1 MSO Grade 6 recruited
- 1 Grade 5 Project Officer recruited
- Outstanding vacancies as at 31st March 2023
- 1 Marine Science Officer post

6.5 Organisational carbon footprint

As a local government organisation with environmental protection and promotion as a core function, the Authority is committed to providing information on its environmental performance. In 2008-2009 the Authority's predecessor conducted a baseline environmental audit and identified its carbon footprint. The results of that baseline assessment are compared to the Authority's subsequent years of operation below.

	Estimated carbon footprint for the Authority in 2022-2023 compared against a baseline of 2008-2009					
Source	2008-2009	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23
Owned road vehicles	24.40 tCO ₂ e	17.07 tCO ₂ e	18.00 tCO ₂ e	20.70 tCO ₂ e	19.16 tCO ₂ e	18.80 tCO ₂ e
Owned ships	197.07 tCO ₂ e	31.16 tCO ₂ e*	34.00 tCO ₂ e*	32.80 tCO ₂ e	27.80 tCO ₂ e	30.50 tCO ₂ e
Electricity	22.59 tCO ₂ e	13.82 tCO ₂ e	14.00 tCO ₂ e	9.80 tCO ₂ e	8.90 tCO ₂ e	11.40 tCO ₂ e
Train travel	-	0.17 tCO ₂ e	0 tCO ₂ e	0.02 tCO ₂ e	0 tCO ₂ e	0.03 tCO ₂ e
Flights	-	- tCO ₂ e	- tCO ₂ e	- tCO ₂ e	- tCO ₂ e	- tCO ₂ e

Total tonnesCO₂e	244.71 tCO₂e	62.22 tCO₂e	66.50 tCO₂e	63.32 tCO₂e	55.86 tCO₂e	60.73 tCO₂e
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Developed using the Carbon Trust online carbon footprint calculator.

References

This report has been developed considering and with reference to the following documents:

Legislation

The Environment Act 2021, c. 30. available at:

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2021/30/contents/enacted>

The Fisheries Act 2020, c.22. available at:

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2020/22/contents/enacted>

Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009, c.23 available at:

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2009/23/contents>

Eastern Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Order (SI 2010/2996). available at:

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2010/2189/contents/made>

Guidance

CASS (2019) Guidelines for supporting Fishery Improvement Projects. Conservation Alliance for Seafood Solutions.

Defra (2010) Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authorities: Vision, Success Criteria and High Level Objectives. Defra. London.

Defra (2011) Guidance to Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authorities on Annual Planning and Reporting Requirements under s.177 and s.178 of the Marine and Coastal Access Act. Defra. London.

Defra (2011) Guidance to Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authorities on the establishment of a common enforcement framework. Defra. London.

Defra(2011) Guidance to Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authorities on evidence-based marine management. Defra. London.

Defra (2011) Guidance to Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authorities on monitoring and evaluation and measuring performance. Defra. London.

Defra (2011) Guidance to Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authorities on their contribution to the achievement of sustainable development

Defra (2013) Revised Approach to The Management of Commercial Fisheries in European Marine Sites – Overarching Policy and Delivery Document, available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/345970/REVISED_APPROACH_Policy_and_Delivery.pdf

Eastern IFCA (2020), Eastern IFCA Business plan 2022-27, available at

https://www.eastern-ifca.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/2021_02_23_Business_Plan_Final.pdf

APPENDIX 1 – SUCCESS INDICATORS

Success Indicator	Progress	
Success Criterion 1: IFCA's are recognised and heard, balancing the economic needs of the fishery whilst working in partnership and engaging with stakeholders		
SC1A: The IFCA will maintain a database of stakeholder contacts that will have been reviewed and updated by 31 st March each year.	Ongoing	Eastern IFCA holds stakeholder databases which are reviewed on an <i>ad hoc</i> basis throughout the year. Privacy policies are in effect and reviews of existing data to remain compliant with General Data Protection Regulations is ongoing. All staff undertake training on data protection and cyber security.
SC1B: The IFCA will have completed a review of its communication strategy and implementation plan by 31 st March each year.	Complete	Communication and Engagement report appended to this report (Appendix 4).
SC1C: The IFCA will have reviewed its website by the last working day of each month.	Complete	'News' Section of the website is regularly updated. Eastern IFCA news and information from partner organisations posted in the news area by request.
SC1D: The IFCA will have reviewed its website and ensured it meets the objectives of its communication strategy, by 31 st March each year.	Ongoing	The website is under continual review and development.
SC1E: The IFCA will have reviewed all of its Memoranda of Understanding (MoU) by 31 st March each year. There will be a clear plan in place to update MoUs where necessary, to an agreed timescale.	Not Complete	As was the case during the last reporting period, no comprehensive review of established MoUs has been undertaken this financial year, but collaborative working arrangements are working well and arrangements are subject to continuous review throughout the year as part of normal organisational planning. Annual reviews of all MoU are considered unnecessary, and they are reviewed on an 'as required' basis. An existing MoU between Norfolk Constabulary and EIFCA was reviewed and formally agreed after the reporting period.
SC1F: By 31 st March each year, the IFCA will have participated appropriately, proportionately	Complete	Head of Operations attended NIMEG meetings during 2022-23 and became chair of the group during the reporting period. Marine Science

and at the right level of delegation, in regional and national fisheries and conservation activity identified in the annual plan.		officers attended TAG and the CEO attended Chief Officers Group and regional fisheries groups in addition to the Strategic Operations Group. Officers participated in a range of other regional and national groups to ensure Eastern IFCA are represented at an appropriate level.
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Success Criterion 2: IFCA's implement a fair, effective and proportionate enforcement regime		
SC2A: The IFCA will ensure its enforcement risk register and strategy are published and available on its website from the 1 st April each year.	Complete	<p>Eastern IFCA's 'Enforcement Policy' and 'Regulation and Compliance Strategy', which cover the organisational approach to risk, compliance, and enforcement respectively, are published on the Eastern IFCA website. These are not updated annually but are reviewed when necessary.</p> <p>A compliance risk register is completed annually but not published online.</p>
SC2B: The IFCA will demonstrate in its Annual Report how it has worked with other regulators to achieve consistent quality, application, and enforcement of management measures.	Complete	Eastern IFCA coordinates activities in collaboration with partner agencies and the MMO through joint TCGs, and continues to strengthen collaboration with Border Force, Environment agency and the Police force through joint meetings and targeted operations/joint patrols. Further detail is provided within the Annual Report.
SC2C: The IFCA will compile records of enforcement activity in a standard format; provide them to the National Inshore Marine Enforcement Group (NIMEG) and publish them on its website.	Complete	<p>Shore-based and seaborne patrol reporting is established and reported to NIMEG in agreed format.</p> <p>Outputs are published within the Annual Report (Appendix 3).</p>
SC2D: The IFCA will adopt the national Code of Conduct for IFCOs, which will be reviewed annually and published on its website by 1 st April.	Complete	IFCOs adopted national code of conducts and policies published by NIMEG.
SC2E: The Code of Conduct for IFCOs is reflected in work objectives and annual appraisals for <u>all</u> Warranted Officers.	Complete	Annual IFCO Objectives and personal development plans incorporate national code of conducts and NIMEG derived policies.

<p>SC2F: Warranted Officers attain accreditation. All undertake Continuing Professional Development.</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<p>Accreditation scheme not fully established due to delays surrounding role changes. New employees (IFCOs) attended accredited training courses, subject to course availability.</p>
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Success Criterion 3: IFCA's use evidence based and appropriate measures to manage the sustainable exploitation of sea fisheries resources and deliver marine environmental protection within their districts		
SC3A: The IFCA will record site-specific management considerations for Marine Protected Areas and report progress to the Authority.	Complete	Site-specific Marine Protected Area fisheries assessments and management considerations are reported at all full Authority meetings.
SC3B: The IFCA will publish data analysis and evidence supporting new management measures, on its website.	Complete	Scientific reports detailing Eastern IFCA research activities are published on the website. These include stock assessment reports from the annual WFO cockle and mussel surveys, crab and lobster stock assessments and results from habitat mapping surveys.
SC3C: Management information (e.g. sampling and/or survey results) will be collected periodically after new management measures have been implemented, to demonstrate the extent of effectiveness of the intervention.	Ongoing	In addition to supporting forthcoming management decisions, the annual cockle and mussel surveys demonstrate the effectiveness of previous management. Moreover, where regulatory management has been implemented, measures are subject to periodic review in line with the provisions of the associated byelaw.
SC3D: The IFCA will have developed a range of criteria-based management options that are explained to stakeholders through the IFCA website and reviewed by 31 st March each year.	Complete	Eastern IFCA undertakes an annual assessment of fisheries within the district to determine where management measures may be required. The Annual Strategic Assessment is published on the website each year in conjunction with the Business Plan.
SC3E: New IFCA management measures selected for development and implementation are delivered within agreed timescales.	Ongoing	The Wash Cockle and Mussel Byelaw 2021 and Closed Areas Byelaw 2021 are yet to come into force and are delayed as a result of elongated byelaw making processes, significant resource allocation to stakeholder engagement on the measures and resource availability.
SC3F: The IFCA will include shared agreed objectives and actions from Fisheries Management Plans in its own Annual Plan, which will be published by 31 st March each year.	Complete	Eastern IFCA undertakes an annual assessment of fisheries within the district to determine where management measures may be required. The Annual Strategic Assessment is published on the website each year in conjunction with the Business Plan. This takes into account any relevant contextual issues, including changes in the national legislative and policy landscape which would affect our priorities and annual planning.
SC3G: Progress made in relevant Fisheries Management Plan areas, including Maximum	Complete	This work is covered in the 'business-as-usual' section of the annual report for key species such as mussels, whelks, crab and lobster.

Sustainable Yield commitments, will be noted in the IFCA's Annual Report.		
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Success Criterion 4: IFCA's have appropriate governance in place and staff are trained and professional.		
SC4A: The IFCA will publish a Plan on its website by 31 st March, setting out the main objectives and priorities for the next financial year. A copy will be sent to the Secretary of State.	Complete	All previous annual plans/business plans have been published on the Eastern IFCA website and provided to Defra within the agreed timescales.
SC4B: After the end of each financial year, the IFCA will publish a Report on its website describing its activities, performance, and a summary of audited financial information in that year, by 30 th November. A copy will be sent to the Secretary of State.	Complete	This information is provided in the annual report. All previous annual reports are available on the Eastern IFCA website.
SC4C: IFCA staff will have annual performance management plans in place. Annual appraisals for <u>all</u> staff will have been completed by 31 st May.	Complete	All Eastern IFCA staff are set annual objectives and personal development plans with mid-year reviews.
SC4D: An efficient secretariat of IFCA staff support IFCA Authority meetings which are held quarterly and are quorate. Meeting documentation will meet Standing Orders.	Complete	Eastern IFCA Meetings and Sub-Committee meetings effectively recorded in minutes. All meetings in 2022/23 have been quorate and minutes are published online once confirmed as per Standing Orders.
SC4E: The IFCA will have demonstrated, in its Annual Report, how marine, land and water management mechanisms in the Inshore	Complete	Eastern IFCA places a strong emphasis on and has maintained collaborative working with stakeholder organisations, Natural England,

Fisheries & Conservation District have worked responsively and effectively together.		and aquatic consultants to gather information, share expertise and deliver effective responses to management.
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Success Criterion 5: IFCA's make the best use of evidence to deliver their objectives		
SC5A: The IFCA will demonstrate progress that has been made towards identifying its evidence needs by publishing a research plan each year.	Complete	The Eastern-IFCA 5-Year Business Plan and an annual Strategic Assessment, which prioritises the highest risk elements of all the fisheries in the district, including fisheries sustainability, viability and environmental impacts, is presented with updates at quarterly Authority meetings to record progress with specific work streams. The business plan incorporates research objectives identified in the strategic assessment to ensure that priorities and workstreams are aligned.
SC5B: The IFCA will publish a research report annually that demonstrates how evidence has supported decision making.	Complete	Scientific reports that support our decision making are published on the website.
SC5C: The IFCA's contribution to TAG and progress that has made towards a national evidence needs programme will be recorded in the IFCA's Annual Report.	Complete	Eastern IFCA has continued to contribute to TAG during the reporting period.

APPENDIX 2 – WAYS OF WORKING

During the year work to progress the following Memorandum of Agreements (MoAs), Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), Partnership Agreement (PA), Informal Agreements (IA), Agreement in Principle (AIP), Service level Agreements (SLA), Information Sharing Agreements (ISAs), contracts (C) and directorships (D) was undertaken. These documents set out agreed ways of working for the Authority to provide clarity for individuals and organisations on their respective roles and responsibilities.

Due to competing priorities, we have not been able to review these documents this reporting period. However, ways of working and collaborative arrangements are subject to continuous review as part of normal organisational planning.

Document	Signatory Organisations	Purpose
MOU	Eastern IFCA and Norfolk Constabulary	Defines the terms for sharing resources and in particular the use of Eastern IFCAs RIB Sea Spray by Norfolk Constabulary's Marine Protection team. *entered into in 2022
MoU	Natural England and IFCAs	Defines roles and responsibilities and ways of working.
MoU	Marine Management Organisation and IFCAs	Defines roles and responsibilities and ways of working.
MoU	Environment Agency and IFCAs	Defines roles and responsibilities and ways of working.
MoU	Kent and Essex IFCA	Defines roles and responsibilities in relation to the Stour and Orwell European Marine Site and the Outer Thames Estuaries Special Protected Area.
MoU	North Eastern IFCA	Defines roles and responsibilities in relation to the Humber European Marine Site.
MoU	CEFAS and IFCAs	Defines roles and responsibilities and ways of working.
MoU	Lincolnshire County Council	Transfer of Defra New Burden money to Eastern IFCA.
MoU	The Shrimp Producers Organisation Limited (SPOL)	To support the MSC accreditation of the Brown Shrimp Fishery in The Wash, with commitment to data sharing, monitoring and inspections.
AIP	Norfolk County Council	Transfer of Defra New Burden money to Eastern IFCA.
PA	North Norfolk Commercial Fisheries Liaison Group	Formally a FLAG, the group enable engagement between the District Council, Eastern IFCA and fishing industry

		representatives.
PA	CEFAS, King's Lynn and West Norfolk Borough Council Environmental Health Office	Defines working relationship between regarding the collection of water, cockle, mussel samples for shellfish waters classification within the Wash.
MoA	Wash and North Norfolk Marine Partnership	Employment of The Wash and North Norfolk Marine Partnership Project coordinator by Eastern IFCA.
MoA	John Lake Shellfish, Lynn Shellfish, Marine Ecological Services	Delivery of a Brown and Pink Shrimp MSC Pre-Assessment project.
MoA	Natural England	Delivery of baseline monitoring survey data relating to <i>Sabellaria spinulosa</i> within the Wash embayment.
D	Chief Officers of all IFCAs	Directorship responsibilities of Eastern IFCA Chief Officer acting as a Director of the Association of Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authorities.
DSA	The Marine Management Organisation	Data sharing agreement to establish criteria and conditions for the cross organisational sharing of management relevant fisheries data to aid efficiency.
C	Norfolk County Council	Provision of Internal Audit services.
C	Norfolk County Council	Provision of Health and Safety support.
C	Kings Lynn and West Norfolk Borough Council	Provision of ICT infrastructure and support.
C	Andrew Jackson Solicitors	Provision of specialist legal advice (call off contract).
C	Sidekick Digital	Hosting Eastern IFCA Website.
IA	IFCA Technical Advisory Group	Provision of technical advice to IFCA COG.
IA	National Inshore Marine Enforcement Group	Development of good practice, partnership working and advice to COG.
C	CEFAS and Natural England	Charter agreement for the study of Cobble and Boulder Communities.





APPENDIX 3 - ENFORCEMENT REPORTING

Overview

Enforcement planning and actions are risk-based and intelligence led. They are also informed by organisational priorities as set out in Part 3 of this report. Reporting against the targets for 2022-23 is set out in the tables below.

Seaborne Compliance Activity			
Objective	Target Quantity	Quantity achieved	Comment
Sea Patrol Days	50 (primary Enforcement) 40 (secondary enforcement)	63 (primary enforcement) 72 (secondary enforcement) 135	A total of 135 seaborne patrol days were achieved, with 63 of these having enforcement as a primary purpose.
Monitor EMS closed areas	All visited within year on a risk-based approach	458	EMS monitoring is undertaken alongside other activities during shore and vessel patrols.

Shore Based Compliance Activity			
Objective	Target Quantity	Quantity achieved	Comment
Port visits	1 per month per port (min)	Primary ports 87% of target All Ports 67% of target	1090 separate port or beach visits were undertaken on a risk-based approach. Staff vacancies and turnover impacted on our coverages as individual IFCOs were left to cover large areas of the district. Primary ports are locations where commercial fishing activity is undertaken however some are very small with only one F/V operating from them, following a risk-based approach means they may not all be visited monthly.
Monitoring EMS closed areas	1 per month (min)	52%	Some EMS sites are not in areas patrolled on a monthly basis such as the North Norfolk Coast and as such are not visited/patrolled. The majority of sites within The Wash and inshore along the North Norfolk Coast are visited monthly.
IFCOs to engage with the owner/skipper of all vessels which have recently entered the district	100%	100%	All 'new' vessels inspected, and skippers / owners engaged to ensure an understanding of Eastern IFCA byelaws.

Partnership Working			
Objective	Target Quantity	Quantity achieved	Comment

Attendance at MMO Area TCG meeting	100%	100%	Senior IFCO Compliance attends MMO TCG when available.
Joint patrols/inspections/operations with the Marine Management Organisation	24 (min)	13	Joint Patrols were limited by MMO staff levels, but have since been increasing.



APPENDIX 4 – REPORTING ON THE COMMUNICATION AND ENGAGEMENT PLAN.

Overview of activity

Eastern IFCA utilises strong ties with stakeholders in all facets of its work. From the development of management measures to the assessment of fishing activities in Marine Protected Areas, the local knowledge and expertise of the community is sought wherever possible.

As per the Business Plan, the focus for the year was to carry out direct engagement with stakeholders based upon business critical workstreams, primarily in relation to developing management measures, and as such the following consultations on the following were undertaken:

- Eligibility Policy (Allocation of Permits) and Limitation on the Number of Permits under the Wash Cackle and Mussel Byelaw 2021: Formal Consultation
- Emergency Vessel Monitoring System (VMS) Byelaw
- Wash Hand-Worked Cackle and Fishery and Mussel Re-Laying Fishery 2022
- Temporary Closure Consultation: The Wash
- Management of Crab and Lobster Potting Fisheries, Phase 1 Informal Consultation
- Management of Crab and Lobster Potting Fisheries, Phase 2 Informal Consultation
- Code of Best Practice for Potting in Cromer Shoal Chalk Beds MCZ 2021-22: Informal Consultation
- Formal Byelaw Consultation: Cromer Shoal Chalk Beds Byelaw 2023 and Crab and Lobster Byelaw 2023

In addition, the Stakeholder Group, an element of the project management structure for delivering Cromer Shoal Chalk bed management, was utilised to gather views on the associated Cromer Shoal Byelaw and to engage stakeholders on progress with the ARM approach generally.

For each of these consultations, to ensure their effectiveness and to maximise responses to the extent possible, the following actions were undertaken:

- Affected stakeholders were sent letters and emails notifying them of the consultation.
- Hard-copy and online questionnaires were produced.
- Relevant information was uploaded on the Eastern IFCA website, accompanied by a news item to signpost wider stakeholders to the consultation.
- Social media was utilised to advertise the consultation.
- Officers were available over the phone to address questions and take feedback.
- Online and in-person meetings were organised, with stakeholder preferences for format, venue and time taken into account.
- Internal briefings and updates were held to ensure consistent messaging.

- IFCOs actively engaged with affected stakeholders about the consultations, during routine inspections as well as through targeted engagement-specific patrols.

The Authority is keenly aware of the potential to ‘overload’ stakeholders with consultations no matter how necessary they are. Attempts to mitigate this and strike the right balance are made wherever possible, such limiting the length of questionnaires and making to process for response straight forward and easily accessible. Important efforts are made to ensure that the timing is considerate around fishing seasons and to therefore improve the likely capacity for response.

Significant opposition to the replacement of the Wash Fishery Order 1992 with a byelaw continued throughout 2022-23, which meant that a substantial amount of resource and effort was committed to stakeholder engagement in this regard. Similarly, a significant amount of resource was dedicated to the consultations on the development of management for Cromer Shoal Chalk Beds MCZ which is a high priority workstream for the Authority that has attracted significant concern from affected stakeholders as well as increasing interest from the wider public and the media.

Website and Social Media

As per the Business Plan, the Community Voice project had identified that stakeholders would value more feedback and information on Eastern IFCA’s work. Accordingly, throughout the year Eastern IFCA uploaded 43 news articles onto the website, in addition to specific pages and updates. Social media was identified as a useful tool for driving communication and, as such, continued to be used where appropriate throughout the year. Below is a summary of the key statistics, with a comparison to the figures from previous years.

	Twitter Impressions* (thousands)	Facebook reach* (thousands)
2017-18	69.9	33.4
2018-19	155.2	92
2019-20	151.1	79
2020-21	89.1	140.6
2021-22	47.5	16.8
2022-23	9.6	8.2

**Impressions/reach: Number of times users saw a social media post.*

Social media figures for 2022-23 reflect a significant decrease from previous years, most likely a reflection on the focus on utilising meetings and written engagement to gather views on specific consultations of which there were a large number this year. An action was taken

during 2021-22 to reevaluate and revise our social media strategy and approach going forward. The resultant proposals are under review. It is noteworthy nevertheless that both our Twitter and Facebook accounts attracted some new following over the year which indicates that we have managed to sufficiently maintain social media engagement.

It should also be noted, particularly regarding Facebook posts, that 'organic' (not paid for) growth can be difficult to achieve, but Eastern IFCA has accomplished this. Eastern IFCA do not pay to promote any social media posts, so all figures represent organic growth.

Engagement Plan Actions

Business plan Action	Update
Partnership working	IFCO's carried out joint patrols with partner agencies including the MMO, Environment Agency, Border Force and Police. Marine Science Officers frequently work with other government bodies including the MMO and Natural England, as well as various coastal management boards (Wash and North Norfolk Marine partnership and Suffolk Coastal Forum).
More even spread of IFCO's across the district	Due to staff vacancies, including in the Marine Protection Team, IFCOs were directed to district-based patrols more local to their immediate area. Vacancies did impact on our ability to consistently maintain a presence throughout the district, but significant effort was made to ensure that the district is reasonably covered with patrol activity (as evidenced by the enforcement reporting in Appendix 3).
Talk to people on their own ground	We are pleased to have resumed pre-Covid levels of in-person engagement with our stakeholders. This has included organising face-to-face meetings with stakeholders on their own ground.
Maintain and improve a professional and up-to-date website. With regularly updated content (2 new news items or other updates per month)	A total of 43 news items were uploaded during the year.
Social media sites to be regularly updated; use social media posts in conjunction with website updates, to deliver key updates to the community	Regular updates were posted on social media, ensuring a good overall reach to Eastern IFCA stakeholders.
Engagement with key stakeholders around consultations	This year a high number of consultations were undertaken once again. We have increasingly placed an emphasis on a multi-channel approach to communications. This has also been

	<p>applied in our approach to consultations where a variety of tools are employed to maximise engaged including letters, website news items, social media posts, targeted phone calls, and a mixture of in-person and online meetings.</p> <p>Attempts were also made to share, within a reasonable timeframe, the summarised responses to consultation work and what changes have been made as a result.</p> <p>Additionally, with all consultations, follow up calls/visits (where possible) were made to individuals who may have not involved themselves with initial consultation but may have a view/opinion they want to express. Particular progress was made through small meetings with stakeholders in-person and online throughout the year, maintaining direct lines of communication and building relationships to ensure productive and transparent communication.</p> <p>Additionally, during 2022-23, we have trialled the use of regional (port based) WhatsApp groups to keep stakeholder informed of key developments of relevance to them, including consultations.</p>
Establish working groups on key fisheries issues.	<p>Success with working groups that were established towards the end of March 2020 was unfortunately stalled due to the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic.</p> <p>This year we built on last year's progress in re-establishing contact with stakeholders across the district through the organisation of in-person meetings with officers.</p>
Maintain the stakeholder database	As is required under SC1A above, databases are maintained on an <i>ad-hoc</i> basis throughout the year.
Key engagement messages reflected in officer duties	Engagement priorities were established through the tactical and coordination group meetings. Guidance documents were produced for IFCOs for each engagement priority, following engagement officers routinely logged comments in 'message forms'.
Review outputs of the Community Voice project to inform and develop how the organisation engages and communicates with stakeholders	A formal review was not carried out during the year; however stakeholder preferences were used to inform engagement at all levels.

Examples of other additional engagement

In addition to maintaining engagement with stakeholders on the workstreams of the Authority, Eastern IFCA also takes every opportunity to make stakeholders aware of wider developments that may be of interest or may have an impact such as MMO consultations, planning consultations (e.g. on seaweed aquaculture applications) and national consultations like the consultations on Highly Protected Areas or Fisheries Management Plans.