Eastern Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority

Business Plan 2026-2031

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Contact Information:

Chief Executive Officer
Eastern Inshore Fisheries and
Conservation Authority
Unit 6
North Lynn Business Village
Bergen Way
King's Lynn
PE30 2JG

Phone: 01553 775321
Email: mail@eastern-ifca.gov.uk
Website: www.eastern-ifca.gov.uk
Twitter: @eastern_ifca
Facebook:facebook.com/eastern.ifca

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First draft	10/02/2026	Multiple – update for new year	LG
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Abbreviations	
Bass Nursery Area	BNA
Centre for Environment, Fisheries and Aquaculture Science	Cefas
Common Fisheries Policy	CFP
Community Voice Method	CVM
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
European Union	EU
Fisheries Act 2020	FA
Fisheries Improvement Project	FIP
Fisheries Management Plans	FMP
Fish Health Inspectorate	FHI
Geographic Information System	GIS
Habitats Regulations Assessment	HRA
Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Officer	IFCO
Inshore Vessel Monitoring System	IVMS
International Council for the Exploration of the Sea	ICES
Joint Fisheries Statement	JFS
Landing Per Unit Effort	LPUE
Length Converted Catch Curve	LCCC
Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009	MaCAA
Marine Conservation Society	MCS
Marine Conservation Zone	MCZ
Marine Management Organisation	MMO
Marine Protected Area	MPA
Marine Science Officer	MSO
Marine Stewardship Council	MSC
Marine Strategy Framework Directive	MSFD

Maritime and Coastguard Agency	MCA
Maximum Sustainable Yield	MSY
Minimum Conservation Reference Size	MCRS
Minimum Landing Size	MLS
Monitoring and Control Plans	MCPs
Monthly Shellfish Activity Report	MSAR
Natural England	NE
New Burdens Funding	NBF
National Inshore Marine Enforcement Group	NIMEG
Oslo-Paris Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the North-East Atlantic	OSPAR Convention
Recreational Sea Angler	RSA
Relative Fluorescence Unit	RFU
Renaissance of East Anglia Fisheries	REAF
Royal National Lifeboat Institution	RNLI
Royal Yachting Association	RYA
Site of Special Scientific Interest	SSSI
Size of Maturity	SOM
Special Area of Conservation	SAC
Special Protection Area	SPA
Statutory Instrument	SI
Study of the Wash Embayment, Environment and Productivity	SWEEP
Sustainable management of rays and skates	SUMARIS
Tasking and Coordinating Group	TCG
Vessel Monitoring System	VMS
Wash & North Norfolk Marine Partnership	WNNMP
Wash Fishery Order 1992	WFO 1992

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Introduction

The purpose of this Business Plan is to inform funding authorities (County Councils and Defra), local communities, local bodies and key delivery partners of the statutory duties and priorities of Eastern Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority (Eastern IFCA) and how it intends to carry them out on time and within budget. Eastern IFCA is a statutory regulator created under Section 150 of MaCAA as a successor to the Eastern Sea Fisheries Joint Committee (ESFJC). It is responsible for the sustainable management of sea fisheries resources and protection of the marine environment in inshore waters i.e. to six nautical miles from coastal baselines. District boundaries and IFCA membership are set out in SI 2010 no.2189. Eastern IFCA became fully operational on 1 April 2011. The Authority's duties, as set out in MaCAA are enshrined 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 Challenge

The IFCA challenge is fundamentally one of balance, balancing the different needs of stakeholders in the context of sometimes polarised views and operating models, balancing the exploitation of the sea with the need to protect the marine environment and balancing our resources with an extensive remit and workload.

The UK Government has set out ambitious environmental targets and embarked on the development of fisheries management plans for 43 commercial fisheries, which is regarded by some as the most significant shift in fisheries policy in a generation. The IFCAs are uniquely placed to ensure that the economic, social and cultural value of inshore fisheries are recognised and reflected through the evolution of the new legislative and policy landscape and to ensure that it is delivered in a locally relevant way.

The scale of change is as notable and is likely to require significant resource to deliver over the coming five years, particularly in the context of the significant commitments made to deliver business critical research and management of fisheries which have now become 'business as usual'. Accommodating the external changes will require careful consideration of the Authority's capacity for delivery and the potential need to revise the structures which underpin our ability to do so.

The Strategic Landscape

Although Eastern IFCA is not a Defra body, much of its work services Defra policy objectives. In delivering output at the regional level it is essential that those

responsible for the governance and leadership of Eastern IFCA and our stakeholders appreciate and understand the strategic landscape to provide context to reconciling national and international priorities with local actions.

The Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009

MaCAA established a new system for managing the marine environment including a new planning system and new type of Marine Protected Area, the Marine Conservation Zone (MCZ), enshrining the Government's commitment to establishing a coherent network of protected areas around the UK.

IFCAs were established by way of an Order made under the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009 (MaCAA) as a means of modernising fisheries management at a local level including through providing modern byelaw making powers capable of delivering dynamic and adaptive management of fisheries.

The legal duties placed upon IFCAs via MaCAA (*post*) and the new system of marine management created by MaCAA underpin strategic planning.

The Fisheries Act 2020

In 2021, The Fisheries Act 2020 replaced the European Union's Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) at the end of the EU Exit transition period. The Act presents high-level objectives for the management of fisheries, which are as follows[1]:

a) the sustainability objective,
b) the precautionary objective,
c) the ecosystem objective,
d) the scientific evidence objective,
e) the bycatch objective,
f) the equal access objective,
g) the national benefit objective, and
h) the climate change objective.

The Joint Fisheries Statement (a further output from the Fisheries Act 2020) was published in November of 2022[2]. This sets out the policies for achieving the 8 objectives and enables Defra to develop fisheries management plans (FMPs). Together, the Fisheries Act 2020 and the outputs from it establish the strategic direction for the future of UK fisheries, which will influence Eastern IFCA's management of inshore fisheries.

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[1] The Fisheries Act 2020 c.22. Fisheries objectives, accessed at: https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2020/22/section/1/enacted

[2] Joint Fisheries Statement. (2022) Defra, Welsh Government, Scottish Government & DAERA, accessed at: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/joint-fisheries-statement-jfs

FMPs are being developed in tranches, and Eastern IFCA has contributed to the development and implementation of relevant FMPs including whelks, crab and lobster, bass and cockles. Eastern IFCA will continue to contribute to the development and delivery of FMPs collaboratively with its key partner, the MMO, and supported by the Association of IFCAs.

25 Year Environment Plan and Environmental Improvement Plan 2025

HM Government's 25 Year Environment Plan[3] was published in 2018 and sets out a long-term environmental approach towards agriculture, forestry, land use, and fishing that prioritises the improvement of the natural environment. In its first revision to the plan, the 2025 Environmental Improvement Plan[4] (EIP25) builds on the vision set out by the new plan and sets out ambitious targets to deliver progress. The Environment Act 2021 and the 25-Year Environment Plan, alongside the provisions of the Fisheries Act 2020 are a part of the transition for UK fisheries policy and legislation post EU Exit, to an extent replicating the effect of previous EU legislation.
In the initial years of the plan, Defra created four pioneer projects to inform its development and implementation. One of the four pioneers was a Marine Pioneer, which was led by the MMO. Eastern IFCA were instrumental in the pioneer being in the Suffolk Coasts and Heaths Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and remained closely involved through membership of the Steering Group and participation in a Saltmarsh Group. The project concluded during 2020, and an evaluation of all pioneers was undertaken to inform future policy.

There are elements of the 25 Year Environment Plan to which Eastern IFCA will contribute through fulfilling its duties. Chapter 5 of the plan - *Securing clean, healthy, productive and biologically diverse seas and oceans* - relates specifically to the core functions of Eastern IFCA and is therefore reflected in the priorities outlined in this business plan. The Authority's work will also contribute directly to several of the goals and commitments set out in the EIP25 including seeking to ensure that 49% of MPA protected features are in favourable condition by December 2030 (Goal 1 – Restored Nature) and sustainable management of fisheries (Goal 6 – resources).

The Marine Policy Statement and the East Inshore Marine Plan

MaCAA provided for a new planning system for the spatial management of sea use. The Marine Plans, along with the Marine Policy Statement[5], underpin this planning system and support the Government's vision to deliver 'clean, healthy, safe, productive and biologically diverse seas.'

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[3] https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/25-year-environment-plan
[4] https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/environmental-improvement-plan-2025/environmental-improvement-plan-eip-2025
[5] https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-marine-policy-statement

The East Inshore Marine Plan[6] was the first to be published and is now the first to be reviewed and updated. Through contribution to the development of the second generation of Marine Plans, Eastern IFCA can seek to ensure that inshore fisheries, and the communities and culture they support, are fully recognised at a national level.

This is of particular importance within the Eastern region given the significant scale of licensable activities and developments with which inshore fisheries compete for space, including wind farm development, aggregate extraction and cabling and piping making landfall within the district.

IFCA quadrennial review and delivery of main duties

The Secretary of State must lay before parliament a report about the conduct and operations of IFCAs every four years. The quadrennial report for the period 2018-2022 was published in February of 2025[7] and includes insights into the conduct and operations of IFCAs based primarily on the perceptions of stakeholders during the relevant period and recommendations from Government based on the report's findings.

A Conduct and Operations Report Recommendations Implementation Steering Group (CORRIS) has been established to deliver on the recommendations of the report. The Authority is contributing to this by the CEO chairing the group and leading and contributing to several associated workstreams including in relation to stakeholder engagement and the byelaw making process.

Our District

The Eastern IFCA District was established by Order[8] under Section 149 of MaCAA and extends seawards six nautical miles from Haile Sand Fort in Lincolnshire to Felixstowe in Suffolk, encompassing the counties of Lincolnshire, Norfolk and Suffolk.

The area includes The Wash embayment and various river estuaries including the Stour and Orwell in Suffolk. The full breadth of UK Marine Protected Area (MPA) designations are encompassed within the district, including Sites of Special Scientific Interest, National Nature Reserves, Special Protected Areas, Special Areas of Conservation, as well as Ramsar sites, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, and a Marine Conservation Zone. Around 96% of the district is covered by at least one MPA designation.

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[6] https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/312496/east-plan.pdf

[7] Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authorities: conduct and operations 2018 to 2022 - GOV.UK

[8] The Eastern Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Order 2010 (SI:2010/2189)

The commercial fisheries within the Eastern IFCA district are socially, culturally, and economically important locally and nationally, with some serving continental European and Asian markets. There are many active fishing communities and fishermen along the district's coastline that have existed for generations, and their environment and activity is key to their sense of place and experience.

From an economic perspective, key fisheries in the district include crustacean (crab and lobster), shrimps, cockle, whelk and 'key finfish' fisheries. The combined first sale value of catch from the five key fisheries in the district was more than £7.5m in 2025[9] which is considered to be an underestimate because some economic reporting does not capture smaller scale fisheries.

The economic value of the local fisheries is not fully represented by its first-sale value without also considering the wider contribution to the coastal economy. The sale of shellfish, particularly crabs, mussels and lobsters, sold directly to the public from independent fish shops, cottages and cafes is a historic and celebrated practice along the North Norfolk Coast and forms much of the local identity and heritage of the area as well as contributing to tourism.

Further north around the coastline, the brown shrimp fishery in The Wash was awarded an MSC accreditation in January 2020 and consistently accounts for circa 95% of total UK landings of shrimp. Cockle and whelk fisheries in The Wash are prosecuted by up to 63 vessels, supporting a wide range of employment including three separate port-side processing factories that export to the EU and provide a wider range of employment including factory staff and delivery drivers.

The Eastern IFCA's district is also a popular destination for recreational fishing. In particular, the Suffolk coast is renowned amongst sea anglers, and both Norfolk and Suffolk coasts are popular destinations for bird watchers. The 'Participation, Effort and Catches of Sea Anglers Resident in the UK in 2018 and 2019' report published by Cefas in 2021[10] highlights that recreational sea anglers fished for over 6 million days each year in 2018 and 2019, contributing to the economic and mental health and wellbeing of the individual anglers and the communities that their activity supports. Eastern IFCA fully recognises both the value and potential of recreational sea angling.

However, the recent 'cost of living crisis' has compounded the impacts of COVID-19 leading to further uncertainty and volatility for many businesses and operations. In

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[9] Based on first sale value data provided by the Marine Management Organisation and IFCA cockle and mussel data, the average first sale value of catch for the main five fisheries during 2025.

[10] Hyder, K.; Brown, A.; Armstrong, M.; Bell, B.; Hook, S.A.; Kroese, J. Radford, Z.; 2021, Participation, effort and catches of sea anglers resident in the UK in 2018 & 2019, Cefas.

addition, realising the opportunities of EU Exit, further focus on climate change (including both limiting its extent and the longer-term impacts of it) and new ambitious environmental and fisheries sustainability targets and goals (set out within the EIP25 and FMPs) are likely to mean that the next five years will continue to be a period of change for inshore fisheries and the industry as it comes to terms with a different economic and legislative landscape.

Our Function and Duties

Eastern IFCA's primary duties are set out within MaCAA 2009 and are:

1. To manage the exploitation of sea fisheries resources in its district, in doing so it must:
    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 and that none of the above duties are to affect the IFCA in performing this duty.

Eastern IFCA is deemed a Relevant Authority and a Competent Authority regarding the protection of Special Areas of Conservation and Special Protection Areas under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017. In comparison to the ESFJC, the duties and obligations set out in MaCAA require Eastern IFCA to collect and analyse greater quantities of data (s.175 MaCAA) and exercise management for the protection of some marine plants and animals, not just for commercially exploited fish species.

In effectively discharging its duties, a key part of Eastern IFCA's operation is the responsibility to protect MPAs from damage through development of appropriate fisheries management measures up to and including byelaws. Any activity that Eastern IFCA undertakes or authorises within an MPA must be assessed to ensure that it will not hinder the site's conservation objectives. This requires significant resources to gather and scrutinise the evidence to deliver rigorous fisheries assessments, and subsequently to support the development of management measures and ensuring compliance.

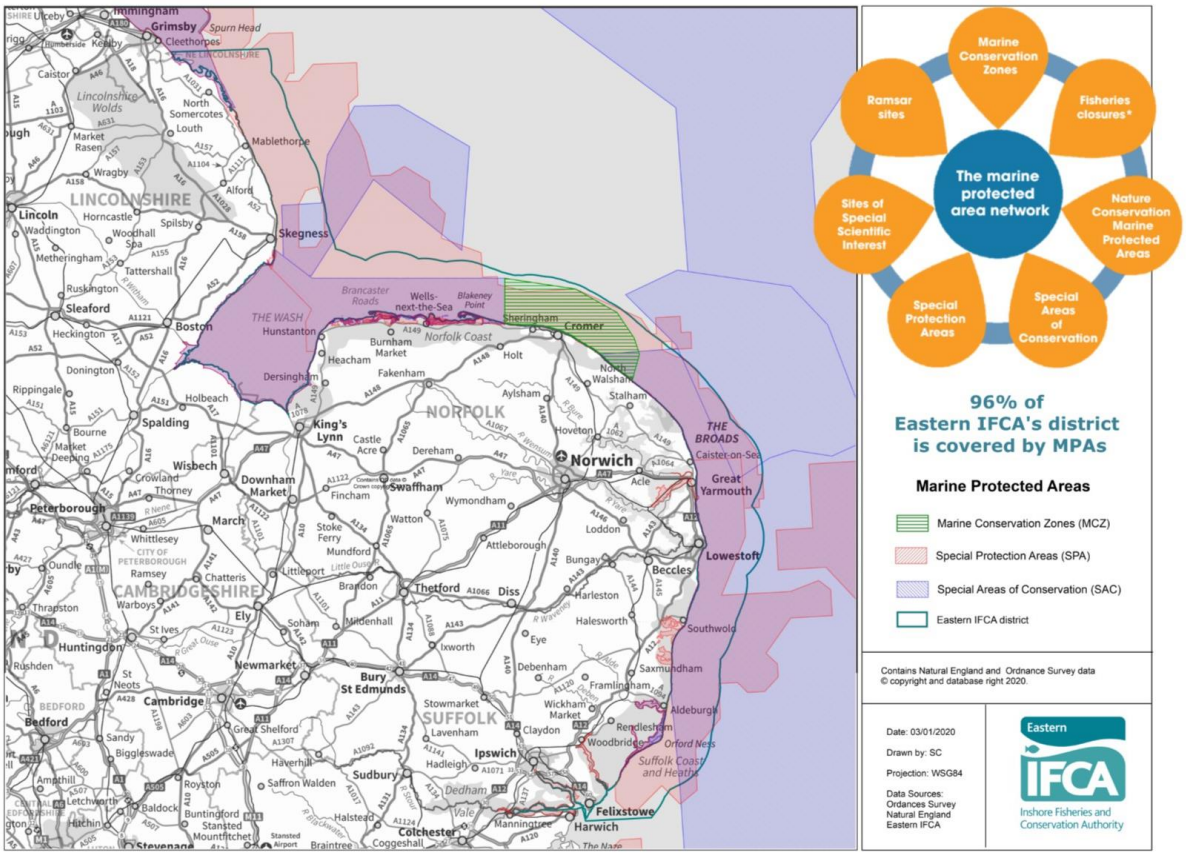


Figure 1. A map of the Eastern IFCA District showing the 96% coverage of Marine Protected Areas

As a reflection of its broader duties, Eastern IFCA's byelaw making powers are also comparatively broader and more flexible than those of its predecessor and include additional powers for managing fishing activity within MPAs in what is a dynamic environment.

Our Funding

The overall Authority revenue budget estimation for 2026-27 is £1,957,557 with funding being primarily by way of levy on the three funding authorities (Lincolnshire, Norfolk, and Suffolk County Councils).

In recognition of the revised and additional duties the Authority assumed in transition from ESFJC to Eastern IFCA, New Burdens Funding (NBF), was allocated from Defra for an initial 4-year period from 2011, initially equating to c.25% of the overall budget. This funding has been 'rolling' over annually unchanged since then with the effect that the NBF represents proportionally much less of the overall budget than was the case on IFCA inception. In recent years Defra have also allocated additional annual workstream funding equating to between £130,000 to £150,000 during the last four years, however it is not yet confirmed that Eastern IFCA will receive this

funding for the financial year 2026/27 and there is uncertainty regarding if and what, if any, funding may be provided instead.

Additional revenue is generated from fees charged for permits, shellfish sampling and contracted research work on behalf of both public and private bodies. Additionally, a small amount of revenue is generated from bank interest on general reserves, which are accrued over several years to fund replacement of Fisheries Patrol Vessels and Research Vessels. Recovered court costs awarded from successful prosecutions also appear as revenue. Overall however, this represents a small proportion of total income annually.

Whilst the annual budget, supported by the status of reserves, will provide the resource needed to deliver the Authority's duties during 2026-27 it is relevant to note that increasing costs have contributed to a projected shortfall of circa £117k against the revenue income for the year. The projected shortfall was reduced through increases in levies to the county councils equating to a 12% increase on 2025-26.

A shortfall of £96k was projected during the last financial year, however this appears to have been mostly offset through additional income generation (through contracted research work), cost saving through gapping vacancies (one of which was deleted for 2026/27) and prudent spending decisions. In the longer-term, projected shortfalls will necessitate further consideration of the budget and resourcing.

Our Governance

The Authority comprises 21 members from a variety of backgrounds, which is intended to bring a range of skills and experience to debate and decision making. The break-down of membership is as follows:

- 7 councillors appointed by the respective constituent Authorities namely, Lincolnshire, Norfolk, and Suffolk County Councils.
- 1 officer each from Natural England, Environment Agency, and Marine Management Organisation.
- 11 general members who are volunteer members of the public appointed for their experience and/or expertise in marine related subject, such as the following categories:

Commercial fishing	• Mobile gear finfish (e.g. trawling, netting). • Mobile gear shellfish (e.g. dredging). • Static gear finfish (e.g. lines and nets). • Static gear shellfish (e.g. traps and pots). • Seafood development. • Other (e.g. aquaculture, bait diggers).
Recreational activities	• Recreational sea fish angling.

	• Interests in designated conservation sites (e.g. MCZs, SACs, SPAs, SSSIs). • Special wildlife interests (e.g. bird or sea mammal groups). • Underwater archaeological and historic environment interests.
Marine environment	• Coastal process (e.g. flood and coastal erosion risk); • Independent local marine science (e.g. conservation, fisheries, social science). • Access to the coast. • Estuarine interests. • Maritime-related organisations (e.g. Harbour Masters, RNLI, Maritime and Coastguard Agency). • Leisure and yachting interests. • Sub-aqua or commercial diving interests. • Other marine industries (e.g. offshore).

Our People

The CEO and Clerk to the Authority is a former senior Police Officer with 26 years' experience in a variety of disciplines. He has significant senior leadership experience including partnership working, stakeholder engagement and strategic change management as well as operational delivery. In addition to this he also has maritime experience gained from service in the Royal Navy and through personal interests. He has been with Eastern IFCA since 2012 and in the role of CEO since September 2015.

The Authority has a complement of 24 staff. All staff are given appropriate training for their role and receive regular supervision relevant to their roles, which includes performance management, personal development, and wellbeing.

Since becoming an IFCA the Authority has sought to review and revise, as necessary, the structure of its team to ensure resources are aligned with our deliverables. During the previous financial year, the Authority operated with two vacancies gapped pending review, the outputs of which resulted in the deletion of one Marine Science post. Further staff turnover during the year, including the vacation of the Senior Skipper, has given cause to review the structure of the Marine Protection Team. It is anticipated that the review will be concluded by the first part of the 2026/27 financial year with recruitment taking place shortly afterwards.

Marine Science Officers (MSOs) have at least one degree-level qualification in marine biology or associated marine sciences and include officers with over 20 years' experience as well as relatively recent graduates. The Marine Protection team also comprises of a mixture of very experienced IFCOs (more than 20 years' experience) and newer members of the team with varying backgrounds including from fishing industry and those with university degrees.

Within the Marine Science team, two Project Officers (POs) provide additional resource for development of management measures, acting as a conduit between the Marine Science team and Marine Protection Team under the supervision of a Senior MSO. POs typically lead on engagement (including consultation for byelaw development), development of fishery-related policy and management measures as well as other regulatory and legislative matters (e.g. Data Protection).

Members of the Marine Protection team undertake formal training as enforcement officers through attendance at IFCA Competent Officer courses. Additional training is delivered by the MMO and the IFCAs via a suite of courses which are tailored to meet the needs of Eastern IFCA. Officers are warranted once they have attended a formal training course and/or have been assessed as competent operationally. Refresher training is ongoing, focusing on various areas as identified through the management and executive teams as well as the IFCA training lead.

Formal training is provided for officers required to undertake the role of vessel Skipper or crew. This is undertaken at an RYA approved training centre and officers are required to achieve the RYA qualification relevant to their role up to and including Yachtmaster (Offshore). In addition, all seagoing officers are required to successfully complete the STCW95 suite of courses (First Aid, Fire Fighting, Personal Survival and Personal Safety & Social Responsibility) to ensure that they can operate safely at sea. They are also required to hold an ML5 medical certificate to ensure that they are fit to work at sea.

Key Personnel

The Executive team comprises the CEO and two Assistant Chief Officers (ACOs) one of whom is Designated Deputy (ACO(DD)) to the CEO. All of the Executive team work full time. The ACO(DD) leads the Marine Protection and Support teams and has responsibility for all operational outputs and service delivery as well as holding the HR portfolio at executive level. The ACO leads the Marine Science and Policy and Projects Teams and has responsibility for business planning, delivery of priority workstreams, Regulation and is the organisation's Data Officer. The CEO is also the Clerk to the Authority and the Responsible Financial Officer and provides overall command and strategic direction, senior stakeholder engagement throughout the district and operational quality assurance.

Chief Executive Officer
Julian Gregory

As CEO Julian leads the Authority's officers and is responsible for the delivery of all Eastern IFCA outputs. He is the Responsible Financial Officer and Clerk to the Authority. He is a Chartered Fellow of the Chartered Management Institute, holds a first-class honours degree in a law related discipline and has extensive senior management and law enforcement experience in both the Police Service and Eastern IFCA. He is a warranted IFCO and an RYA Yachtmaster (Offshore).

Assistant Chief Officer
(Designated Deputy)
Jonathan Butler

Jon has an extensive management background having previously work for a Local Authority in several different roles. He is a graduate of the University of East Anglia where he gained an honours degree. He holds a post graduate qualification in management and has extensive management experience. He is a warranted IFCO, a volunteer crew member of the RNLI, and an RYA Yachtmaster (Offshore).

Assistant Chief Officer
Luke Godwin

Holding degrees in Marine Biology (BSc) and Environmental Sciences (MSc) Luke joined Eastern IFCA in 2012 as an Environment Officer, becoming Project Officer in 2014, Senior IFCO (Regulation) in 2018 and ACO in 2024. His roles have included enforcement and compliance duties, producing HRAs and drafting byelaws. He played a key role in the development of the annual Strategic Assessment and the replacement of the Wash Fishery Order 1992. He is a warranted IFCO.

Senior Marine Science Officer (Research)
Ron Jessop

After graduating from Newcastle University with a Zoology degree Ron worked in the local fishing industry for 14 years fishing for cockles, mussels, shrimps, and sprats from the port of Boston. He joined ESFJC in 2000 as a fishery officer and has been in his current role of Senior Marine Science Officer since 2003. In this role, he is responsible for a small team of officers, whose task is to provide the scientific evidence used to support the Authority's management decisions.

Senior Marine Science Officer (Policy and Projects)
Samantha Hormbrey

Samantha joined Eastern IFCA as a MSO in 2017 following completion on her BSc in Zoology and a MSc in Marine Environmental Protection for which she was awarded a high distinction. In 2017, Samantha was promoted to the role of Grade 6 MSO and led work on the Adaptive Risk Management Project in the Cromer Shoal Chalk Beds Marine Conservation Zone as project manager. Samantha became a Senior MSO in 2024 and is responsible for the assessment of fishing activities in MPAs and identifying mitigation to ensure compliance with Environmental legislation.

Senior IFCO (Compliance)
Simon Lee

Simon joined ESFJC in 2000 and is an experienced enforcement officer and seafarer. He is responsible for planned and intelligence led enforcement and vessel operations to meet the objectives set out in the Annual Enforcement Plan. He has played a key role in the development and implementation risk-based enforcement and the TCG process as well as the introduction of smaller, faster, and more reactive patrol vessels. He is a warranted IFCO and an RYA Yachtmaster (Offshore).

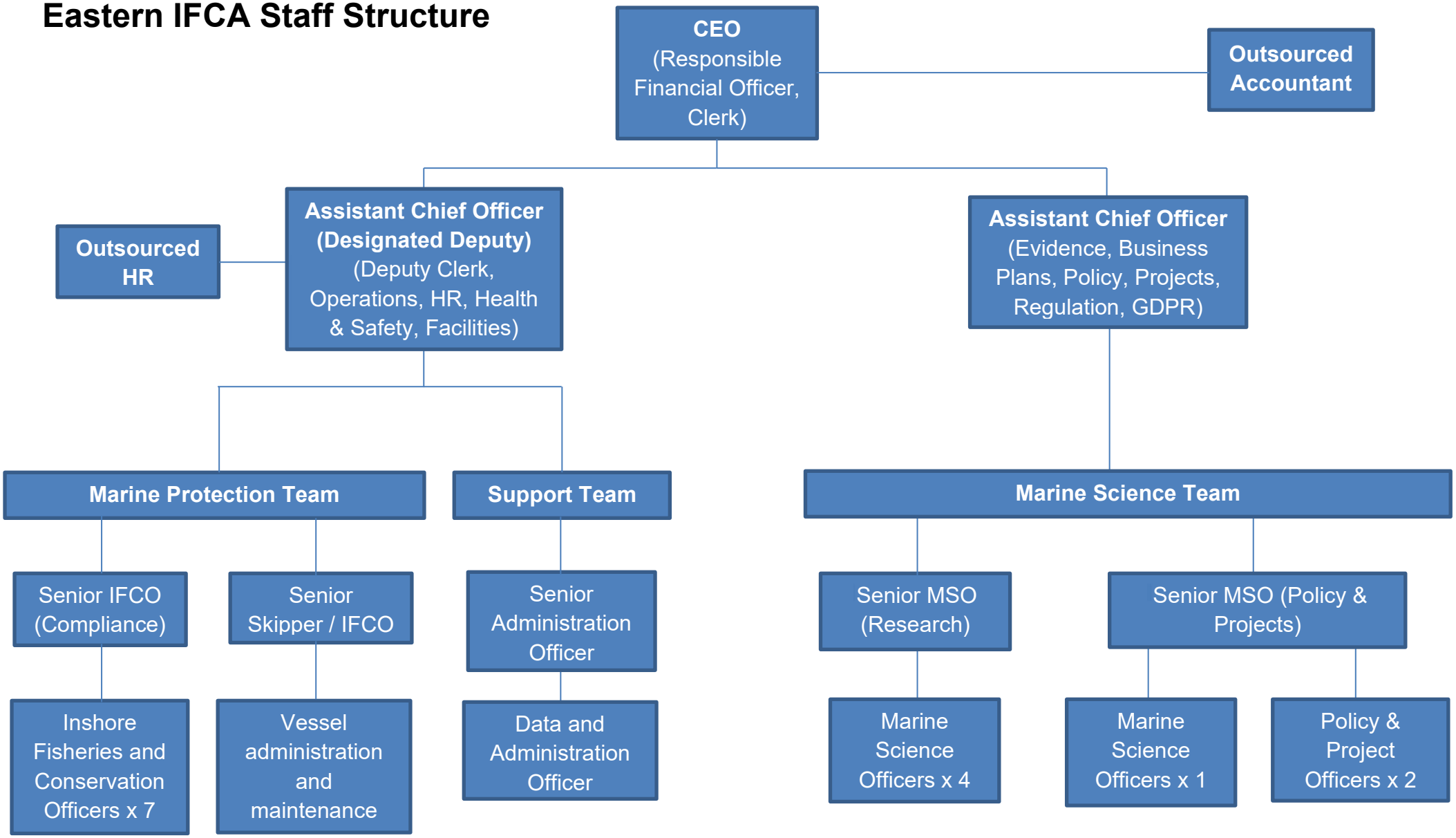
Together, the leadership team brings a wide range of skills and experience including those gained from the more specialised environment of Eastern IFCA. This blend of experience facilitates free thinking and the capacity to question the way in which the organisation operates, balanced with strong levels of skill, experience and knowledge provided by long-standing members of the team.

Our management team are pivotal to the overall success of the organisation; they are required to deliver the Authority's strategic intent through operational plans, ensuring that their teams deliver to the required standard, budget and timescales. As such, we have invested in our management capability through formal training and ongoing coaching. The key focus is to help first line managers to develop as leaders

and to take ownership of delivery within their area of responsibility. This has been a key focus and will continue to be so moving forward, with all Senior Officers having achieved or working towards formal qualifications with the Institute of Leadership and Management.

All the Eastern IFCA team are remunerated by an established salary structure with a set number of annual increments based upon length of service. The majority of the Marine Protection and Marine Science Team members are additionally rewarded with a 7.5% supplement to account for their seagoing role, which involves unsociable hours, including weekend and overnight working. Annual leave is based upon length of service, and all qualifying staff are auto enrolled in the Local Government Pension Scheme.

Eastern IFCA Staff Structure



Operations

The Authority is currently 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 officers in the Cefas building in Lowestoft, was opened during 2016.

Three new sea going assets were delivered during the 2024/25 financial year. *FPV Protector IV* is a 16m GRP catamaran supported by a daughter craft, *C-Runner* as a replacement for *RV Three Counties.* Both vessels were built to specification to enable sea-borne platforms for both research and compliance activity and are based at Sutton Bridge (Lincolnshire). *FPV Thunderstruck* is a refitted fishing catamaran built in 2021 for pot-based fishing activity, and which replaces *FPV John Allen*. Presently based in Lowestoft but intended to be deployable throughout the district, *FPV Thunderstruck* is intended to enhance the Authority's pot-hauling capabilities, particularly in the context of whelk, crab and lobster compliance and to assist in research operations including use of the sidescan sonar.

These new vessels compliment the existing vessels *FPV Sebastian Terelinck* which is a 12m cabin RIB also based in Lowestoft and *FPV Seaspray* which is an open RIB and is a mobile asset intentionally built for deployment from a trailer at smaller slipways throughout the district.

During 2020 all officers transitioned to home working as necessitated by the COVID-19 pandemic. Recognising that there are some benefits to working from home, a hybrid-model is now in place which seeks to strike the right balance, noting that working from the office lends itself to a cohesive team environment and sharing of ideas whilst working from home is beneficial to work-life balance.

Costing and control of the Authority is maintained by a rigidly sequenced ordering and approval system for all expenditure which is also analysed in detail to establish costs by department as an aid to decision making, budgeting, and forecasting future funding requirements.

The Authority procures its supplies from approved suppliers including ESPO and the Local Government Purchasing Scheme according to established procedures and Financial Regulations. To support its operations the Authority currently employs owned capital assets (set out below and valued at original cost).

Assets 2025/26

Vessels	**Value (£) at time of purchase (ex VAT)**
FPV Sebastian Terelinck – Patrol vessel	417,000
FPV Sea Spray – Open RHIB	59,138
FPV Protector IV	1,742,827
FPV Thunderstruck	241,278
FPV C-Runner	62,007
Vehicles	
Nissan Townstar (2025) – general duties	20,569
Dacia Duster 4X4 (2025) – general duties	20,233
1 Skoda Karoq (2020) – general duties	19,184
Isuzu D Max 4x4 (2025) – deploying towable assets	37,251
3 Hyundai Tucsons (2021) – general duties	54,429
1 Hyundai Tucson (2022) – general duties	18,400
1 Hyundai kona ~(2021) – CEO use	35,462
Various items of Marine Science equipment	134,707

2025-2026 Changes
Additions
Dacia Duster 4X4
Nissan Townstar
Isuzu D Max 4X4

Disposals
Isuzu 4x4
Ford Tourneo
1 Skoda Fabia

Collaboration – Marine Management Organisation

During 2015 Defra initiated a workstream to achieve greater collaboration between the MMO and the IFCAs. This was subsequently formalised under the oversight of a joint IFCA and MMO Programme Board with six workstreams including accommodation, training, intelligence, and operational collaboration.

Since 2015 Eastern IFCA has been at the forefront of developing collaborative working both at the local and national levels. Locally officers developed effective working relationships with MMO colleagues through a number of initiatives including shared accommodation at Kings Lynn and Lowestoft, shared Tasking and Coordinating arrangements for operational activity and routine joint patrols and operations. At national level the CEO has been an active proponent of the collaborative working agenda and associated workstreams as (previous) Chair of NIMEG and through membership and current Chair of the IFCA Chief Officers

Group. He played a leading role in developing the joint IFCA and MMO response to the COVID-19 pandemic and sits as part of the IFCA and MMO Strategic Operations Group, which was established in February 2021 as the permanent successor to the Joint National Covid Response Group. In 2025, the CEO was appointed as chair of the Conduct and Operations Recommendations Implementation Steering-group (CORRIS) which seeks to deliver on the recommendations set by Defra following the 2018-2022 Conduct and Operations Report.

Eastern IFCA has, in common with all other IFCA's, developed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) which formalises joint work opportunities and use of IFCA assets such as vessels and officers with the MMO. Vessel deployments are co-ordinated nationally to ensure that opportunities are exploited for Eastern IFCA to contribute to national fisheries management and border security matters where appropriate. In addition, the Authority has a data sharing agreement with the MMO to facilitate efficient sharing of information and put into practice the 'collect once, use many times' ethos of data collection.

Eastern IFCA's Marine Science officers are actively involved in the national MMO/IFCA Marine Licensing liaison group that was established to identify common themes and share best practice in matters relating to IFCA/MMO collaboration on marine licensing. This is particularly relevant to the Eastern IFCA district because of the high number of offshore developments requiring marine licence, including offshore wind, marine aggregates, and seaweed farm developments, in the southern North Sea. MS officers undertake MMO training in the application of Marine Plans and participate in MMO evaluation of marine plan implementation.

Marine Protection Operations

Compliance and enforcement activity are undertaken in accordance with principles set out in the Regulation and Compliance Strategy, with the emphasis being upon endorsing and enabling compliance. This means that the approach is to encourage compliance with regulation through education and advice, but sanctions are also available to deter, punish and remove any benefit from non-compliance in line with the Enforcement Policy. A risk-based approach is taken to ensure that compliance and enforcement activity is proportionate and to make best use of limited resources, this is informed by monthly risk profiles and emerging intelligence.

The Marine Protection Team comprises 9 warranted IFCOs based at Kings Lynn and Lowestoft, who are responsible for ensuring compliance with fisheries regulations in addition to the CEO and ACOs who are all also warranted. Warranted officers have a range of powers provided under UK legislation, primarily MaCCA and the Sea Fishing (Enforcement) Regulations 2018 (SI 849/2018). Officers also have secondary functions such as vessel crew (skipper, mate/crew), completing data analysis and projects. All officers are trained to operate as crew to the Authority's vessels and are therefore able to operate at sea as well as ashore.

Enforcement operations are undertaken both at sea and on land. They include boarding and inspecting fishing vessels, their catch and their fishing gear at sea and inspecting vessels and their catch as they land in harbours, ports and on beaches. Inspections of premises such as fish processors are also undertaken.

The Authority operates a number a vessels. *FPV Protector IV* operates as a research and protection vessel, is a highly capable GRP catamaran capable of pot-hauling, vessel monitoring within closed areas and boardings via a daughter craft, *C-Runner*. *FPV Protector IV* is more capable of traversing the Authority's district than her predecessor, *RV Three Counties*, which was significantly limited in her capability by her speed.

FPV Thunderstruck was delivered during 2024 as a replacement for *FPV John Allen.* As a refitted pot-based fishing vessel, she is ideally suited to carry out enforcement activities within the whelk and crab and lobster fisheries throughout the district, providing an excellent platform for carrying out at sea gear inspections of associated potting gear.

The primary function of *FPV Sebastian Terelinck* is enforcement, but she is also capable of undertaking research activity including deployment of the multibeam and sidescan sonar research equipment on the North Norfolk Coast. The vessel is primarily based at Lowestoft to cover the Norfolk and Suffolk coast but can also operate from Sutton Bridge to cover The Wash as well as the north Lincolnshire and Norfolk coasts as required and in lieu of a second vessel.

FPV *Seaspray* is located at Wells Police Station, which has created joint working opportunities with Norfolk Constabulary and allowed officers to carry out patrols in the smaller harbours along the North Norfolk Coast. She has also been deployed to patrol the Suffolk Rivers based on intelligence received.

Marine Science Operations

Eastern IFCA's Marine Science function has developed from a single Research Officer employed by ESFJC in the 1990s, to today's team of seven dedicated Marine Science Officers (MSOs), including two senior officers. The team is enhanced with oversight from the ACO and support from two Project Officers.

Their work is central to Eastern IFCA obtaining scientific evidence to underpin its management decisions, thus supporting sustainable exploitation of sea fisheries resources and delivering environmental protection[11]. The remit has expanded from its initial main focus on bivalve stock surveys in The Wash, which is still a core requirement that supports management of the cockle and mussel fisheries, to

[11] See IFCA Success Criterion 3, at Appendix 2

include, *inter alia*, habitat surveys in multiple parts of the Eastern IFCA district, stock sustainability monitoring for whelk fisheries, fisheries impact studies (particularly in relation to Marine Protected Area conservation objectives) and environmental monitoring, Further, the Marine Science team leads on Eastern IFCA's provision of advice to partner marine regulators on marine planning and licensing matters. Project Officers carry forward the findings from research activities and associated assessments to develop management measures as required including via consultation with industry. This includes, for example, development of byelaws and permit conditions to ensure that fisheries are sustainable and operate within acceptable environmental parameters.

The Marine Science team is based in the King's Lynn office and can deploy throughout the District.

Research

A core component of the Marine Science Team is research. Evidence is gathered from a variety of sources including literature reviews of scientific papers, fishery landings data and surveys and research at sea. For this latter role, the team utilise all the Authority's vessels from which they can deploy a wide range of scientific equipment that the Authority either owns or shares with other IFCAs.

This equipment includes an Edgetech 4200 dual-pulse side scan sonar, used for broadscale mapping of seabed features; an ARIS 3000 sonar camera, which uses soundwaves rather than light for capturing video images in highly turbid water typical of the East coast; and two BlueROV2 underwater remotely operated vehicles (ROVs) equipped with high-definition video cameras. These ROVs have been used since 2021 to assist in the research directives outlined by the Adaptive Risk Management approach to the management of potting in the Cromer Shoal Chalk Beds MCZ, which is an ongoing priority workstream. In this role, they have not only been able to help map the seabed features, but their flexibility and manoeuvrability has enabled potting gear to be studied in situ, providing evidence of the interaction between the gear and the seabed features. Together, the combined strengths of this research equipment enable the collection of up-to-date and robust evidence to inform management decisions.

The annual research programme is primarily informed by the outputs of the annual strategic assessment. This includes 'business as usual' functions such as annual cockle and mussel stock surveys, as well as more specific research projects including habitat mapping associated with the Cromer Shoal Chalk Beds MCZ. In addition to these projects, the Marine Science team manages the year-round collection of shellfish samples for Local Authority environmental health offices, for water quality monitoring in shellfish harvesting areas.

Research Equipment

The table below lists some of the research equipment that is available to the Marine Science Team.

Item	Purpose	Owner
Day grab	Collecting seabed samples during cockle surveys or for sediment analysis during habitat mapping ground-truth surveys	Eastern IFCA
Mini-Hamon grab	Larger than a Day grab, it is used for ground-truthing sites that contain pebbles and cobbles	Eastern IFCA
Van Veen grab	Weighing just 10kg, this small grab can be deployed by hand from a small boat or RHIB, expanding our operational capability	Eastern IFCA
Edgetech side scan sonar	Towed behind the vessel, the side scan sonar emits and receives high-frequency sound waves that it interprets into broadscale geo-referenced visual images of the seabed. These provide an indication of the nature of the seabed, the type of sediment that it is composed of and its texture.	Eastern IFCA jointly with Kent and Essex IFCA, Sussex IFCA
2 x BlueROV2 Remotely Operated Vehicles (ROV's)	Acquired in 2021 to replace our dated VideoRay Remotely Operated Vehicle (ROV), these BlueROV 2 ROVs offer greater performance and manoeuvrability than their predecessor, enabling us to capture high quality video footage of the seabed. These images are used to identify what features are on the seabed, to ground truth broadscale acoustic data and to determine impacts that fishing gear may be having on conservation features.	Eastern IFCA
3 x GoPro cameras & 7x SJ Cams	Small, easy to deploy underwater video cameras. Used for multiple purposes where underwater imagery is required.	Eastern IFCA
ARIS 3000 Sonar Camera and frame	A short range (30m) camera, mounted on a bespoke frame, that captures images using sound waves enabling it to produce imagery in the highly turbid waters that are encountered regularly in The Wash in which usual cameras would not work.	Eastern IFCA
2 x sondes and sonde buoy	Collecting water quality data (temperature, salinity, Chlorophyl and turbidity) to inform primary food availability assessments.	Eastern IFCA
Various mussel and oyster dredges	Collecting shellfish samples from the seabed	Eastern IFCA
Seine and fyke nets	Two different types of net used during fish surveys	Eastern IFCA
Miscellaneous survey equipment	The team has a wide variety of smaller equipment that is used during the course of surveys for collecting and measuring samples. These include precision electronic weighing scales for accurately weighing samples;	

	quadrats for collecting samples; a variety of sieves for separating sediment into a range of particle sizes; microscopes and hand-held GPS's	
Specialist software	A range of specialist software is used to plan and monitor survey progress, analyse data and map survey results. These include Microplot 7 and Hypack Max plotting software for survey operations, Triton Perspective for analysing side scan data and MapInfo and QGIS for charting the results.	Eastern IFCA
Shared Equipment	In addition to the equipment listed above, Eastern IFCA has access to a range of other equipment belonging to the other IFCA's through an agreement with the IFCA Technical Advisory Group (TAG). This equipment includes side scan sonars, underwater drop-down cameras and ROV's.	IFCA's

Marine Protected Area Work

In addition to stock surveys and environmental monitoring, a key function of the Marine Science team is the assessment of impacts of fishing on the marine environment. This involves desk-based research and analysis, and an element of field surveys. Almost all the Eastern IFCA district (96%) lies within MPAs (listed below), requiring fisheries regulators to manage activities in alignment with conservation objectives for these sites.

The designation of so many marine protected areas in the Eastern IFCA district reflects the importance of habitats and species in our local seas. Fifteen of these designated sites are immediately adjacent to the coast, and three are located offshore, partly within the Eastern IFCA district but also extending beyond 6nm. Eighteen are European Marine Sites (Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) and Special Protection Areas (SPA)), recognised for their internationally important habitats and species. One is a Marine Conservation Zone, the Cromer Shoal Chalk Beds on the Norfolk coast, which is designated to protect nationally important marine habitats.

Marine Protected Areas in the Eastern IFCA District

Name	MPA type	Location	Size (km^2)
Humber Estuary[12]	SAC	Lincolnshire (& Yorkshire)	366.6
Humber Estuary[13]	SPA	Lincolnshire (& Yorkshire)	376.3
Inner Dowsing, Race Bank & North Ridge[14]	SAC	Offshore: Lincolnshire & Norfolk	845.1
Gibraltar Point	SPA	Lincolnshire	4.2
The Wash	SPA	Lincolnshire & Norfolk	620.4
The Wash & North Norfolk Coast	SAC	Lincolnshire & Norfolk	1077.2
North Norfolk Coast	SPA	Norfolk	78.6
North Norfolk Coast	SAC	Norfolk	31.5
Cromer Shoal Chalk Beds	MCZ	Norfolk	321
Haisborough, Hammond & Winterton[15]	SAC	Offshore: Norfolk	1467.6
Great Yarmouth & North Denes	SPA	Norfolk	1.60

[12] Majority of this site is in North-Eastern IFCA district
[13] Majority of this site is in North-Eastern IFCA district
[14] Offshore (non-coastal) site, partially within Eastern IFCA district
[15] Offshore (non-coastal) site, partially within Eastern IFCA district

Outer Thames Estuary	SPA	Coastal and offshore: Norfolk & Suffolk (also Kent and Essex)	3924
Breydon Water	SPA	Norfolk	12.0
Alde, Ore & Butley Estuaries	SAC	Suffolk	16.3
Alde-Ore Estuary	SPA	Suffolk	24.0
Orfordness to Shingle Street	SAC	Suffolk	8.9
Deben Estuary	SPA	Suffolk	9.8
Stour & Orwell Estuaries[16]	SPA	Suffolk (& Essex)	36.7
Greater Wash	SPA	Coastal and offshore: Lincolnshire, Norfolk (& Yorkshire)	3,536
Harbour Porpoise (Southern North Sea)	SAC	Coastal and offshore: Norfolk & Suffolk	36,958

Many of these coastal MPAs are also designated as Sites of Special Scientific Interest, and Ramsar Sites (wetlands of international importance). Public bodies have additional duties in relation to these designations and Eastern IFCA addresses these duties in parallel with the SAC and SPA requirements, and through liaison with the statutory nature conservation advisor, Natural England.

Eastern IFCA and its predecessor have undertaken annual Habitats Regulations assessments (HRAs) of the Wash cockle and mussel fisheries for many years to ensure these fisheries are managed in accordance with marine protected area conservation objectives. Under Defra's revised approach to fisheries management in marine protected areas, announced in 2012, this fishery assessment work has been rolled out to cover all commercial fisheries in all MPAs in the Eastern IFCA district. A significant resource has been directed to this work, which remains ongoing, and has required input from the Marine Protection team as well as the science team.

MSOs gather evidence on fishing activity, protected feature distribution and sensitivities, and evaluate fishing/feature interactions across all marine protected areas. This enables Eastern IFCA to identify where management is needed to ensure fishing is conducted within ecological limits. This includes for example, assessment of fishery/habitat interactions and a thorough examination of the extent of sensitive habitats. In some cases this has required habitat survey work conducted utilising the Authority's sea-going and research assets. Where required, this has led to the development of restrictions to towed demersal fishing in five marine protected areas across the Eastern IFCA district for the protection of sensitive seabed habitats,

[16] Majority of this site is in Eastern IFCA district, but part of it falls within Kent & Essex IFCA district.

under Eastern IFCA's Closed Areas Byelaw 2021[17]. In addition to these spatial measures, further mitigation against fisheries impacts on MPA features has been developed in the form of effort management and technical measures, for example in the brown shrimp fishery in The Wash & North Norfolk Coast SAC.

Assessment of fishing activities throughout the MPAs within the District is ongoing to fulfil the targets set out within the EIP25 including having management measures in place by the end of 2026. This highly complex priority workstream involves consideration of thousands of interactions between fishing gear and MPA conservation features and their associated targets.

Marine Planning

In addition to fishing, the southern North Sea and East coast are key locations for oil and gas, offshore renewable energy, aggregate extraction, ports and shipping, cables and pipelines, coastal flood defences, and marine recreation activities. Seaweed aquaculture is a developing sector in the district.

The Marine Science team provides advice on behalf of Eastern IFCA to partner marine regulators, MMO and the Planning Inspectorate, on the potential fisheries and environmental impacts of proposed marine developments. This includes formal advice to the licensing authority (MMO) on marine licence applications and on environmental impact assessments, and to the Planning Inspectorate for major infrastructure developments. This entails consideration of potential impacts of a wide range of developments on fisheries and conservation receptors.

Since 2020, an increasing focus has been collaborative work with developers and regulators on the development of conservation compensation measures to mitigate against the impacts from wind farms on MPAs. In September 2020, the Authority agreed to actively engage in exploring opportunities for exploring environmental compensatory measures, but not to support measures that would have an overall adverse impact upon fishing activities and opportunities. These marine science functions are undertaken in close liaison with partner regulators and advisors, private sector companies, non-government organisations as well as local fishery and conservation stakeholders.

In addition, the 2026-27 financial year will see the continuation of the development of the second generation East Marine Plan. Contribution to the development of the plan will provide opportunity to ensure that the inshore fishing sector is well represented.

[17] Byelaw has been made but not yet in effect.

Communications and Engagement

The importance of being ‘recognised and heard’ is recognised under Success Criterion 1 (Appendix 2) and is crucial to achieving the Authority’s main duties.

The Authority’s approach is to achieve clarity and transparency with stakeholders, particularly in relation to consultation on the development of management measures. Box 1 (below) sets out how dialogue with stakeholders will influence the development of management measures.

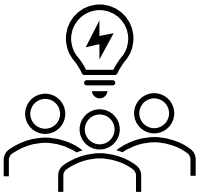
The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020 impacted engagement as a result of social distancing restrictions, several lockdowns and various new regulations. This necessitated a revised engagement approach which, in part, reflects a greater emphasis on remote engagement through video calls and social media, but also an overarching requirement for flexibility and adaptation in our communication. Our stakeholders generally embraced utilising online technologies but have welcomed the return of more in-person dialogue. Overall, our ability to engage with stakeholders have been enhanced as a result of online meeting facilities, which are now more mainstream.

The 2018-2022 IFCA Conduct and Operations Report also set out findings and recommendations relevant to stakeholder engagement which are being considered through CORRIS workstreams.

Both the changes enforced as a result of the COVID pandemic, and the lessons learnt from the 2018-2022 Conduct and operations Report have influenced the Engagement Strategy for the coming year (Appendix 5).

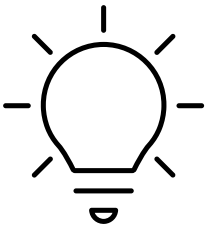
Box 1 – How consultation influences the development of management measures

Informal consultation and evidence gathering



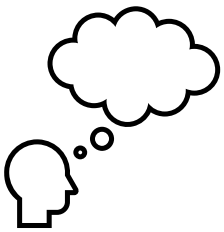
At the earliest stage, before management measures are drafted, stakeholders provide crucial information and insight into what they think is needed from management measures. This is sometimes in the form of fishing activity information (to inform a Habitats Regulations assessment, for example) or to feedback on the general principles which will guide the drafting of

Development of management measures



The information obtained from stakeholders is reviewed and together with other relevant information is used to help inform a first draft of the management measures and a recommendation to the Authority members. The views of respondents are often summarised and presented to members to help inform their decisions at Authority meetings.

Formal consultation

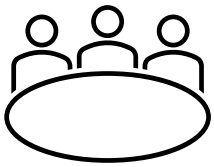


Once drafted, the Authority 'makes' the management measures in a Byelaw. Although this sounds final, this term refers to the Authority's intention to make the measures and is not the point at which they are finalised. After they are 'made', measures are put to formal consultation for stakeholders to review in detail. This will always include the full wording of the measures, charts showing where they apply and an assessment of the impacts on stakeholders.

Finalising the management measures

The feedback received from formal consultation is reviewed and informs the finalisation of the management measures. At this point, if there are any significant changes which need to be made to the draft measures, additional consultation may be required.

Confirmation



The Secretary of State ultimately decides whether or not to confirm a byelaw. Other management measures may be decided by the Authority (e.g. permit conditions). It is at this point that all the views of industry are considered against the proposed management measures to inform a decision as to whether the measures are reasonable.

Financial Plan

The authority has continued to add to reserves and fund various capital projects including replacing vehicles, vessels, and research equipment. The 2025/26 budget however identified a projected shortfall, potentially necessitating the use of reserves. Several cost saving were found in year, including, holding vacancies pending review which have reduced the projected shortfall.

Financial projections produced during the annual budget setting process for 2025-26 indicated that for 2026-27 there would be a shortfall of circa £248k in income over expenditure. This was predicted to rise to £294k by 2029-30. These figures are based upon a 2% inflationary increase on levies each year alongside a 2% inflationary increase on expenditure each year and assumed that Defra workstream funding of circa £130k per annum would not continue.

During 2025-26 officers developed various options for addressing the projected funding shortfall and the Finance & HR sub-committee agreed an approach to budget setting for 2026-27 that would see an above inflation increase in levies that would address around half of the projected shortfall. Under this approach officers would seek to reduce expenditure whilst allowing time for the uncertain situation regarding ongoing funding from Defra to be resolved and with the potential for a similar increase in levies in 2027-28. At the 62nd meeting (December 2025), the Authority approved an above inflationary increase of 12% in levies to mitigate the shortfall.

Forecasts to March 2031

Because the outcome of the bid by AIFCA to the Government's Spending Review is unknown at the time of writing no funding from Defra aside from 'Base Funding' is included in the forecasts. If no additional funding is forthcoming, then it is likely that another above inflation uplift in levies of circa 12% would be required in 2027-28 to address projected shortfalls in funding.

The 5-year forecast below assumes an additional above inflation uplift in the general levies of 12% for 2027-28 followed by 2% increases in subsequent years whilst asset replacement element of the levies assumes the previously agreed 3% uplifts annually for each of the five years in the forecast. Any increase in Defra funding will have a positive impact on the forecast and would be likely to render the above inflation uplift in general levies in 2027-28 unnecessary. Inflationary increases of 2% per annum are shown for all expenditure.

It is likely that 'Other' income will see modest increases as new permit scheme come int effect and annual inflationary increases and a review of fees under the Wash Cockle and Mussel Byelaw 2021 is undertaken. However, as the effect of these are not

currently known and because they are unlikely to be significant in budgetary terms they have not been included in the forecast.

	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30	2030/31
Income	**£**	**£**	**£**	**£**	**£**
Levies	1,334,001	1,494,081	1,523,963	1,554,442	1,585,531
Defra Funding	394,145	394,145	394,145	394,145	394,145
Other	112,506	112,000	112,000	112,000	112,000
Total Income	**1,840,652**	**2,000,226**	**2,030,108**	**2,060,587**	**2,091,676**
Expenditure					
Staff cost	1,395,016	1,422,916	1,451,375	1,480,402	1,510,010
General Expenditure	329,685	336,279	343,004	349,864	356,862
Operations	23,800	24,276	24,762	25,257	25,762
Vessels	166,452	169,781	173,177	176,640	180,173
Vehicles	42,604	43,456	44,325	45,212	46,116
Total	**1,957,557**	**1,996,708**	**2,036,642**	**2,077,375**	**2,118,923**
Surplus/(Shortfall)	**(116,905)**	**3,518**	**(6,535)**	**(16,788)**	**(27,247)**

Forecasted movement in reserves to March 2031

	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30	2030/31
	£	**£**	**£**	**£**	**£**
Opening	2,094,176	2,161,753	2,355,288	2,640,470	2,849,271
Asset rep levy	184,483	190,017	195,718	201,590	207,637
Utilised	0	0	96,000	24,000	0
Revenue budget surplus/(shortfall)	(116,906)	3,517	(6,535)	(16,789)	(27,248)
Balance	**2,161,753**	**2,355,288**	**2,640,470**	**2,849,271**	**3,029,660**

The forecast for reserves is an illustrative estimate as opposed to being a firm projection and is intended only to indicate the likely status of reserves over the next five years.

Estimated expenditure from reserves includes the following:

- ‘Utilised’ includes the following:
  - 2028/29 - £96,000 to replace 4 vehicles

- 2029/30 - £24,000 to replace 1 vehicle
- No vessel replacements or major refits are anticipated during this period but the life extending refit of *FPV Sebastian Terelinck* undertaken early in 2025 means that consideration of a replacement will be due towards the end of the forecast period.
- The Revenue budget surplus/(shortfall) row reflects the movement to and from reserves to address the projected surplus / shortfall from revenue budgets.

The projection does not include revenue from the projected sale of vehicles.

All assets have finite useful lives and periodically need to be replaced. In the case of vessels projected working lives are long and can be extended as a consequence of thorough maintenance, upgrades and major refit if considered viable and appropriate. Vehicles are usually kept for 6+years before being replaced.

The cost of replacement assets has in the recent past been funded from reserves accumulated over several years, sometimes supplemented by grant funding. The table below provides estimated replacement costs for sea-going assets. Estimated costs are on a like-for-like replacement assuming a 2% per annum inflationary[18] rate over the anticipated lifespan of the asset. This is likely be an underestimate given the recent increases in inflation rate and the impact upon costs for boat building materials. It is noteworthy that the nominal cost per annum exceeds the current movement into vessel reserves however, the asset replacement levy is anticipated to increase annually (presently agreed to increase at a rate of 3%) and would exceed the nominal cost per annum by 2028/29.

Estimated costs for sea-going asset replacement					
Asset	**Cost at time of purchase (ex-vat)**	**Est. life**	**Est. cost of replacement ***	**Nominal capital cost per annum**	**Residual life**
Patrol vessel (*FPV Seaspray)*	£57,000	10 years	£74,968	£7,497	1 Years
Research / Patrol Vessel (*FPV Protector IV*)	£1,742,826	30 Years	£3,094,990	£103,166	28 Years + (Commenced service 2024-25)

[18] the BoE's Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) sets the 'bank rate' or 'base rate', which is the rate at which BoE lends to banks and that higher interest rates reduce spending and so tame inflation. The BoE has been tasked by the Government to reach a 2% inflation target and the MPC has significantly raised base rate to achieve this and expects to reach 2% within a few months (though they expect a slight bounce). Long term, therefore, 2% is the best estimate at this time – although future governments may adopt other fiscal policies and a higher rate of inflation in future is entirely plausible. https://www.bankofengland.co.uk/monetary-policy-report/2024/february-2024

Patrol Vessel *(FPV Thunderstruck)*	£241,278	10 Years	£288,349	£28,835	8 years + (Commenced service 2024-25)
Daughter vessel to *FPV Protector IV (C-Runner)*	£62,007	10 years	£74,104	£7,410	8 years (Commenced service 2024-25)
Total	*£2,518,299*	*n/a*	*£4,028,599*	*£196,527*	
** Cost of replacement estimated as an annual increase with inflation (2%) over the anticipated lifespan for the asset.*					

Priorities

Planning Cycle

A rolling five-year Business Plan brings together all elements of activity undertaken by the organisation. The plan is intended to project five years in advance with annual reviews to update the strategic and financial context and to prioritise and plan for each financial year. Overall priorities for the Authority are established based upon the annual cycle together with specific priorities and plans for enforcement and communications and engagement. These are set out in appendices to the Business Plan. Whilst using the annual cycle for planning, utilising a five-year rolling plan enables priorities to be identified that will span financial years.

The annual cycle is informed in part by a Strategic Assessment, which is a threat-based consideration of fisheries within the district based on a PESTLE analysis (identifying risk in relation to Policitcal, Economic, Social, Technological, Legal and Environmental internal and external factors). The assessment utilises best available evidence and fisheries data in addition to careful consideration of context provided by officers and stakeholders.

Risk Management

In developing the Business Plan potential risks to the delivery of outputs have been identified. The risk register at Appendix 1 illustrates the main risks to the delivery of the priorities of the Authority identified by Officers. The risk matrix is reviewed quarterly at full Authority meetings. The assessment of risk is inevitably a subjective one based on the experience of the individuals assessing the risk. It should also be noted that this risk register only records the main threats to the organisation and is not intended to be definitive.

High Level Objectives

During 2015, Defra led on the development of new High-Level Objectives and Success Criteria, working in conjunction with the IFCA Chief Officers Group and the Association of IFCAs to develop something that is meaningful in the current context. This resulted in a clear link with the UK Marine Policy Statement, which provides:

The UK vision for the marine environment is for 'clean, healthy, safe, productive and biologically diverse oceans and seas'. The UK high level marine objectives published in April 2009 set out the broad outcomes for the marine area in achieving this vision, and reflect the principles for sustainable development[19]

The performance framework incorporates the five High Level Objectives from the UK Marine Policy Statement, from which flow five Success Criteria, each underpinned by intended outcomes and associated indicators.

The Secretary of State decided not to issue the new performance framework as formal guidance and instead it was agreed at the IFCA Chief Officers Group and the Association of IFCAs. It was adopted by Eastern IFCA at a full Authority meeting in October 2015. The performance framework will guide the work of Eastern IFCA, and it can be found at Appendix 2.

Defra are also developing Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) relevant to the IFCAs. IFCAs will be consulted on their development, and they will be included in this plan by way of update.

Annual Priorities

The nature of the dynamic inshore marine environment and the work undertaken by Eastern IFCA inevitably means that work streams do not always sit easily with an annual planning cycle. However, when considered in the context of a rolling five-year Business Plan it is easier to incorporate plans and priorities that span financial year timeframes.

Eastern IFCA Priorities 2026-27

The overall priorities for 2026-27 can be found at Appendix 3.

The plans below have been developed using the strategic assessment to meet the requirements of the Business Plan and to deliver the priorities for 2026-27.

Enforcement Plan 2026-27

The plan for 2026-27 can be found at Appendix 4.

Communication and Engagement Plan 2026-27

The plan for 2026-27 can be found at Appendix 5.

[19] UK Marine Policy Statement, 2011, The Stationary Office, London

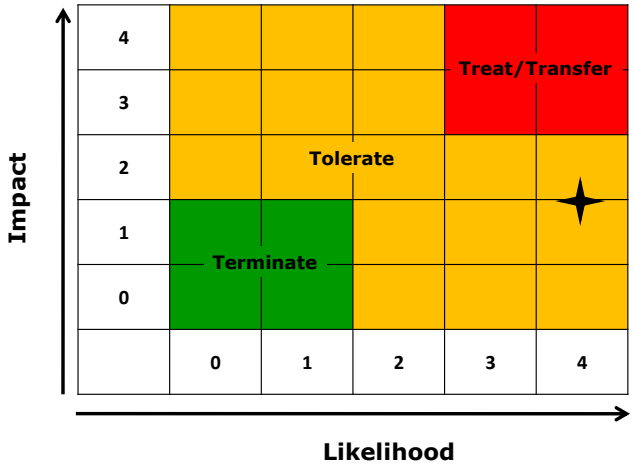
Appendix 1: Risk Management

The risk matrix sets out the magnitude of the risk to Eastern IFCA from an organisational viewpoint incorporating amongst others reputational and financial risks. The matrix also sets out the likelihood of an identified risk occurring. Mitigation which is in place or to be introduced is identified. 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. Mitigation action is noted. It should be noted that in most cases there are already many actions being undertaken as part of routine working practices to reduce the risks to the Eastern IFCA.

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 IFCAs ability to treat and is transferred to higher level.

Likelihood/impact prioritisation matrix



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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 (i.e. acknowledged and actively monitored)

Description	Owner	Implications	Organisational impact (Reputation + Financial/2)		Likelihood	Risk	Mitigation	Action
Eastern IFCA fails to secure funding to replace assets	CEO	Substantial reduction in Eastern IFCA mobility particularly seaborne activities with consequential inability to fulfil full range of duties	**4**		**2**		• During 2024-25 three new / replacement vessels entered service and a fourth underwent a life extending refit. • Alternative sources of funding sought where appropriate e.g. EMFF & Defra CDEL funding supported the purchase of FPV Seaspray, FPV Thunderstruck and C-Runner. • Promote Eastern IFCA output and effectiveness to funding authorities through engagement with Council leaders and Financial Directors. • Agreement in place with funding authorities for capital funding contributions each year. • Assets managed and maintained to reduce the likelihood of early retirement or unexpected depreciation. • Scheduled asset replacement takes into account expected lifespan of assets which is reviewed regularly to account for unexpected depreciation and alignment of capital funding contributions.	**Tolerate**
			Reputation	**Financial**				
			4	**4**	Finance Directors agreed to annual capital contributions from 2019-20 onwards to cater for the cost of asset replacement as an alternative to requests for a lump sum amounts as assets are replaced. No guarantees were given or implied. Eastern IFCA will explore all avenues for funding.			
			Drive for savings may impact County Councils' decisions regarding Eastern IFCA funding. Visible presence reduced, enforcement and survey activities compromised.	Inability to generate sufficient reserves to meet asset replacement schedule would threaten Eastern IFCAs ability to function. Closure costs could result.				

Description	Owner	Implications	Organisational impact (Reputation + Financial/2)		Likelihood	Risk	Mitigation	Action
Eastern IFCA fails to maintain	CEO	If Eastern IFCA fails to maintain relevance	**4**		**2**		• Provide a leadership function. • Be proactive and identify issues early. • Engage with all partners routinely.	**Tolerate**
			Reputation	**Financial**	Possible – Whilst positive relationships			
			4	**4**				

relevance amongst partners.		amongst partners Eastern IFCA's utility will come under scrutiny potentially resulting in re-allocation of duties	Loss of confidence in the organisation Failure of the organisation to perform in accordance with the standards and practices of a statutory public body	Withdrawal of LA and Defra funding for the organisation	have been established the existence of disparate partner aspirations introduces complexities which may drive perceptions of bias or inefficiency.		• Operate transparently and utilise effective communications approaches. • Use Business Plan to prioritise and communicate outputs, Measure progress/deliver outputs. • Represent community issues to, and support their engagement with, higher authorities. • Recent revisions undertaken to the ARM project for the MCZ to address wider stakeholders concerns about engagement. • Effective business planning process in place. • Leading role where appropriate e.g. Op Blake. • Proactive approach to raising issues with Defra. • Identify opportunities to facilitate delivery of Government objectives through outputs and contribute to Government fisheries and environmental targets by embedding into work plans. • Careful consideration of findings and recommendations from the 2018-2022 quadrennial report and incorporation into delivery of duties as appropriate including via CORRIS.	

Description	Owner	Implications	Organisational impact (Reputation + Financial/2)		Likelihood	Risk	Mitigation	Action
Negative media comment	CEO	Negative perceptions of Eastern IFCA utility and effectiveness created at MMO/Defra Loss of Partner confidence Media scrutiny of individual Authority members	**3**		**2**		• Actively and regularly engage with all partners including media outlets. • Review use of social media and web-based information noting its unavoidable use to misinterpret and spread misinformation. • Embed professional standards and practices. • Deliver change efficiently and effectively. • Promulgate successful outcomes. • Assure recognition and understanding through clear and concise publications and effective promulgation of such as appropriate. • Routine updating of news items on website. • Monitor media presence and engage where appropriate. • Targeted and meaningful dialogue with stakeholders which caters for intended audiences to reduce likelihood of misinterpretation or misrepresentation.	**Treat**
			Reputation	**Financial**	Possible – disenfranchised partners may seek to introduce doubt as to Eastern IFCA professionalism, utility, and effectiveness			
			4	**2**				
			Eastern IFCA perceived to be under performing. Eastern IFCA considered poor value for money. Eastern IFCA perceived as irrelevant.	Negative perceptions introduce risk to continued funding				

Description	Owner	Implications	Organisational impact (Reputation + Financial/2)		Likelihood	Risk	Mitigation	Action
Degradation of MPAs due to fishing activity	CEO	Loss or damage of important habitats and species within environmentally designated areas.	**3.5**		**2**		• Fishing activities authorised by Eastern IFCA are assessed per Habitats Regulations and MaCAA; management routinely includes mitigation to prevent adverse effects on MPA integrity. • 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 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. • Ongoing, close liaison with Natural England regarding conservation matters, • Review of management in accordance with Defra guidance, • Utilising I-VMS as a management tool by the Authority. • 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 is a high priority with substantial progress made. Current workstreams (e.g. Cromer Shoal MCZ, remaining 'red risk' and 'amber and green' sites are a high priority and are being progressed.	**Tolerate**
			Reputation	**Financial**	Possible – Eastern IFCA's approach to managing sea fisheries resources actively addresses our environmental obligations.			
			4	**3**				
			Eastern IFCA is not meeting statutory duties under conservation legislation. Eastern IFCA not achieving vision as champion of sustainable marine environment. Degradation of marine habitats which lead to economic, social or cultural impacts.	Legal challenge brought against Eastern IFCA for failing to meet obligations under environmental legislation (including MaCAA).				

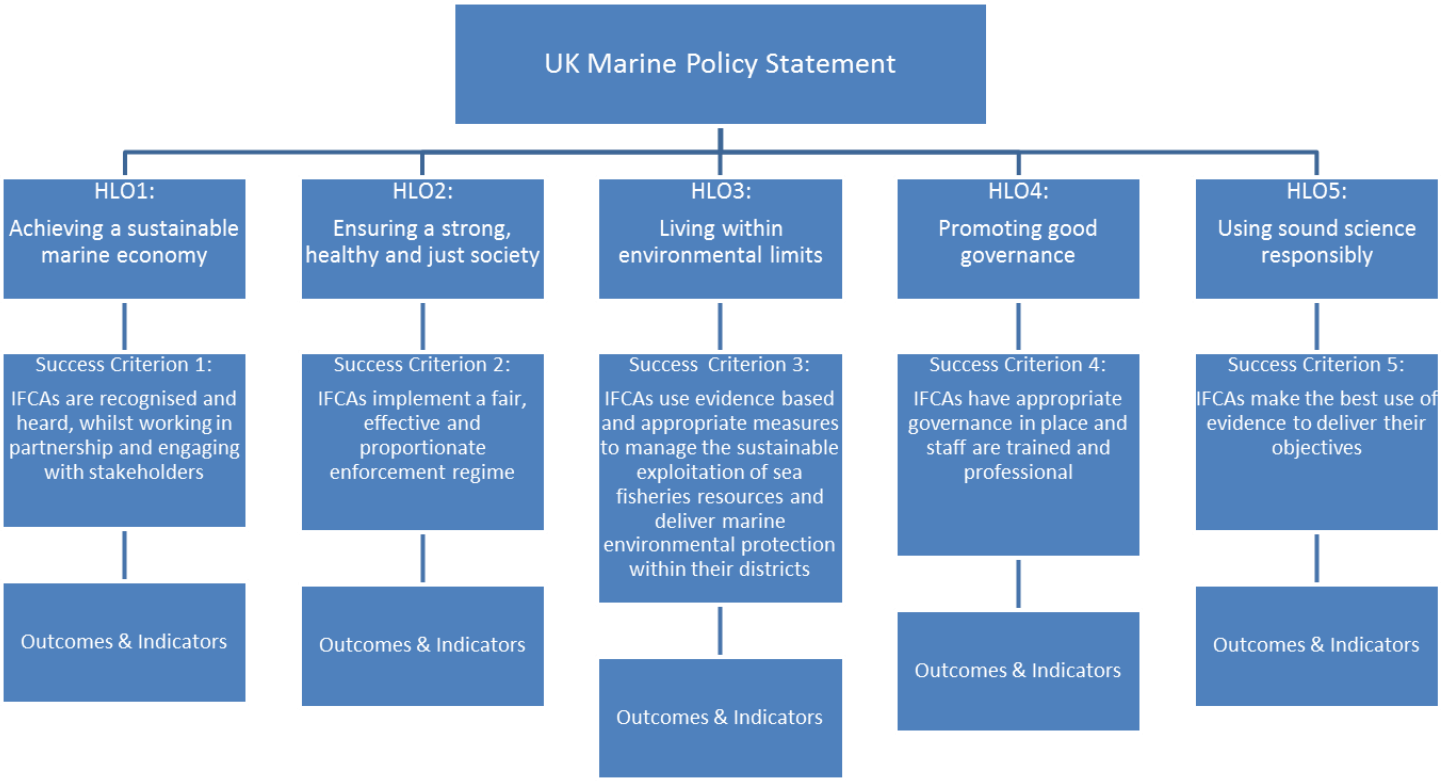
Description	Owner	Implications	Organisational impact (Reputation + Financial/2)		Likelihood	Risk	Mitigation	Action
Shellfish and fish stocks collapse	CEO	Risk of significant negative impact upon industry viability with associated social and economic problems	**3**		**3**		• Annual stock assessments of bivalve stocks in The Wash • Annual review of the level of threat via the Strategic Assessment • Allocate sufficient resources to monitoring and effective enforcement. • Consultation with industry on possible management measures. • Review of management measures in accordance with Defra guidance. • Develop stock conservation measures as required for crab, lobster and whelk fisheries through engagement with the FMP programme and fishing industry and 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 and mussel mortality events. • Whelk research is ongoing to identify level of risk posed and potential mitigation for sustainability concerns. • Annual surveys of Wash cockle and mussel stocks alongside innovative approach to management of the 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. • General engagement with FMP programme.	**Treat**
			Reputation	**Financial**	Possible - Bivalve stocks have high natural variation; “atypical mortality” affecting stocks despite application of stringent fishery control measures Crustacean stocks not currently subject to effort control Bass stocks nationally and internationally under severe pressure Regional whelk and shrimp fisheries effort becoming unsustainable. Regional crab and lobster stocks being exploited beyond maximum sustainable yield. Active monitoring of 2021 cockle fishery identified small cockles being landed with potential impact on stock sustainability.			
			3	**3**				
			Loss in confidence of the Eastern IFCA ability to manage the sea fisheries resources within its district	Resources directed at protecting alternative stocks from displaced effort. Additional resources applied to research into the cause of collapsed stocks and increased engagement and discussion with partners.				

Description	Owner	Implications	Organisational impact (Reputation + Financial/2)		Likelihood	Risk	Mitigation	Action
Failure to secure data	CEO	Non-compliance with UK General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR). Prosecution casefiles compromised. Loss of data in the event of fire or theft Breakdown in dissemination of sensitive information between key delivery partners.	**4**		**2**		• 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 includes encrypted laptops/secure governmental email system. • All Eastern IFCA personnel undergo DPA and cyber security training. • Electronic backup of all Eastern IFCA documents held by ICT provider offsite. • Policies and processes developed to ensure data security and compliance with data protection legislation.	**Tolerate**
			Reputation	**Financial**	Possible - Limited staff access to both electronic and paper files. Office secure with CCTV, keypad entry system and alarm.			
			4	**4**				
			Partners no longer believe that confidential information they have supplied is secure. Personnel issues arise over inability to secure information.	Eastern IFCA open to both civil and criminal action regarding inability to secure personal information.				
New Burdens Funding discontinued.	CEO	Substantial reduction in Eastern IFCA capability with consequential inability to fulfil full range of duties or additional burden on funding authorities.	**4**		**2**		• AIFCA engagement with Defra regards spending review. • AIFCA bid for continuation in the 2024 government spending review (outcome awaited at the time of writing). • County Council Finance Directors representatives have been kept appraised of the situation and the potential for increased levies in the event that funding from Defra is discontinued.	**Tolerate**
			Reputation	**Financial**	Defra have continued to roll over new Burdens funding in recognition of the value that IFCAs provide in meeting national policy objectives.			
			4	**4**				
			Inability to meet all obligations would have a significant impact upon reputation.	Circa 25% of the annual budget is provided by Defra under the New Burdens doctrine so its loss would have a significant impact.				

Description	Owner	Implications	Organisational impact (Reputation + Financial/2)		Likelihood	Risk	Mitigation	Action
The new Several Order to replace that element of the Wash Fishery Order 1992 is substantially delayed.	CEO	Continuing uncertainty for industry members with consequential impact upon industry viability and associated social and economic issues.	**4**		**4**		• Continuation of a replacement to the WFO as a high priority within the 2026-27 5-year Business Plan. • The fisheries are being managed under interim management measures with the status quo being maintained in terms of access to the fisheries. • Dialogue will be maintained with Defra teams and officers will priories responses to information requests from Defra. • Industry dialogue will be prioritised as required to make progress.	**Treat**
			Reputation	**Financial**	The WFO 1992 expired in January 2023 and due to the process for a new Several Order being prolonged and subject to significant delays by Defra the new order is not in place. Defra have advised that the replacement Several Order application will not be furthered until financial year 2027/28 and have 'strongly encouraged' the Authority to consider alternative management mechanisms including a byelaw which increases the likelihood of delays.			
			4	**4**				
			The effective management of 'lays' in the Wash is important for aquaculture in the Wash is important in terms of industry viability and managing the impact of aquaculture activity in a heavily designated MPA. Loss of confidence in operating lays is likely to be significant if the new Several Order is not replaced in a timely manner.	Potential for legal challenge against Eastern IFCA. Ongoing loss of revenue for managing aquaculture using interim measures without facilities for cost recovery.				

Description	Owner	Implications	Organisational impact (Reputation + Financial/2)		Likelihood	Risk	Mitigation	Action
Failure to secure an IT supplier and successfully migrate IT services following King's Lynn and West Norfolk Borough Council's decision to end contract on 31 March	CEO	Potential for current supplier to stop providing service prior to securing new supplier. System downtime and disruption without effective project management. Loss of access to data files and applications to carry out work. Failure to identify and select supplier who provides best value and service which meets the needs of the organisation.	**3.5**		**3**		• Seeking multiple potential suppliers to seek best value and most appropriate migration and support packages • Careful consideration of proposals provided by perspective suppliers • Adequate provision within reserves to address migration costs. • Dialogue with current supplier ongoing to ensure continued provision of service and assistance during migration	**Treat**
			Reputation	**Financial**				
			4	**3**	Current supplier provided little notice of end of contract and is not providing full service at present. The migration of services is considered to be moderately to highly complex and is likely to result in some disruption, the likelihood of which is dependant in part on the level of assistance provided by the current supplier.			
			Loss or significant disruption to IT services could lead to inability to deliver work or communicate with stakeholders and a risk to delivering priority and business critical workstreams. Data losses or breaches could lead to non-compliance with Data Protection legislation.	The current suppliers decision to end service contract was provided at short notice and as such is not budgeted within 2025/26 Business Plan. Complex migration will potentially lead to additional costs.				

Appendix 2: IFCA Performance Framework and Metrics



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

Definition:
IFCAs will be visible, respected and trusted regulator within coastal communities and will maintain and deliver a strategy to communicate their vision and duties effectively. IFCAs will engage with policy makers, industry, Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), recreational and commercial users; and other regulators. They will work jointly and collaboratively with partner organisations across boundaries; will participate and contribute to the development and implementation of regional and national marine policy, including the marine planning regime; will take long-term strategic decisions and manage risks effectively. IFCAs may maintain a national body to co-ordinate the activities of authorities that are party to arrangements.

Outcomes

- **The IFCA will maintain and implement an effective communication strategy.**
- **The IFCA will maintain its website, ensuring public access to current fisheries and conservation information for the District, including management requirements and byelaws. Non-reserved IFCA Committee papers will be published.**
- **The IFCA will contribute to co-ordinated activity at a national level**
- **The IFCA and its principal partners will have a clear understanding of roles and responsibilities. Memoranda of Understanding with MMO, Natural England, Environment Agency and Cefas will be maintained. Opportunities for greater efficiencies, effective joint working and collaboration will be explored and implemented when feasible.**

Indicators

- **SC1A**: The IFCA will maintain a database of stakeholder contacts that will have been reviewed and updated by 31 March each year
- **SC1B**: The IFCA will have completed a review of its communication strategy and implementation plan by 31 March each year.
- **SC1C**: The IFCA will have reviewed its website by the last working day of each month.
- **SC1D**: The IFCA will have reviewed its website and ensured it meets the objectives of its communication strategy, by 31 March each year.
- **SC1E**: The IFCA will have reviewed all of its Memoranda of Understanding by 31 March each year. There will be a clear plan in place to update MoUs where necessary, to an agreed timescale.
- **SC1F**: By 31 March each year, the IFCA will have participated appropriately, proportionately and at the right level of delegation, in regional and national fisheries and conservation activity identified in the annual plan.

Success Criterion 2:
IFCAs implement a fair, effective and proportionate enforcement regime

Definition:
The IFCA enforcement regime is risk-based, makes appropriate use of intelligence, meets legislative standards and complies with the Regulators Code. It should make effective use of the resources available to regulators; complement and align, if possible, with the regimes in adjacent IFC Districts and management by other organisations including the MMO and Environment Agency. Consistency and fairness is important. Regulatory compliance is promoted. Enforcement action is carried out by trained, professional officers working to clear standards of conduct.

Outcomes

- **The IFCA will publish its enforcement risk register and strategy, clearly setting out its approach to achieving regulatory compliance and potential sanctions that may be applied for infringements and/or offences.**
- **The IFCA will have developed consistency in regulations (byelaws) with other organisations**
- **The IFCA will manage operational activity (e.g. through a Tasking & Co-ordination Group) and capture, record, evaluate and disseminate intelligence that is compatible with partner organisations. It is engaged in joint working with partner organisations.**
- **Warranted Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Officers (IFCOs) will be trained and accredited to nationally agreed standards. They will maintain professionalism and make appropriate interventions to deliver efficient, effective enforcement activity**

Indicators

- **SC2A**: The IFCA will ensure its enforcement risk register and strategy are published and available on its website from 1 April each year
- **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
- **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.
- **SC2D**: The IFCA will adopt the national Code of Conduct for IFCOs, which will be reviewed annually and published on its website by 1 April.
- **SC2E**: The Code of Conduct for IFCOs is reflected in work objectives and annual appraisals for all Warranted Officers.
- **SC2F**: Warranted Officers attain accreditation. All undertake Continuing Professional Development

Success Criterion 3:
IFCAs use evidence based and appropriate measures to manage the sustainable exploitation of sea fisheries resources and deliver marine environmental protection within their districts

Definition:
The IFCAs were created as statutory inshore regulators by the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009. They are relevant authorities for implementing international environmental commitments including the Birds, Habitats, Water and Marine Strategy Framework Directives and make an important contribution to securing a network of well managed marine protected areas, including European Marine Sites and Marine Conservation Zones. Fisheries Management Plans identify local management measures which should be based on evidence; be timely; subject to appropriate consultation and in step with national initiatives and priorities. An IFCA should balance the social and economic benefits of exploiting sea fisheries resources with the need to protect the environment. It should make a contribution to sustainable development.

Outcomes

- **The IFCA will identify issues likely to affect sustainable management of the marine environment in the IFC District; undertake risk assessment and gap analysis; review appropriateness of existing measures; evaluate management options and develop and implement proportionate marine management solutions**
- **The IFCA will support implementation of a well-managed network of marine protected areas by: developing a range of criteria-based management options; implementing management measures to ensure that inshore fisheries activities comply with the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009 and the revised approach to managing commercial fisheries in European Marine Sites; and that local management contributes to delivery of targets for the Marine Strategy Framework Directive,**

Indicators

- **SC3A**: The IFCA will record site-specific management considerations for Marine Protected Areas and report progress to the Authority
- **SC3B**: The IFCA will publish data analysis and evidence supporting new management measures, on its website
- **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
- **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 March each year
- **SC3E**: New IFCA management measures selected for development and implementation are delivered within agreed timescales

Water Framework Directive and Marine Plans. • **The IFCA will develop Fisheries Management Plans for priority species where appropriate. Shared objectives will be developed with identified partners; actions identified and best practice reflected so that management makes a contribution to sustainable development.**	• **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 March each year. • **SC3G**: Progress made in relevant Fisheries Management Plan areas, including Maximum Sustainable Yield commitments, will be noted in the IFCA's Annual Report.

Success Criterion 4:
IFCAs have appropriate governance in place and staff are trained and professional

Definition:
IFCAs are statutory authorities and sit within the local government family. Authority members may be either general members or local councillors. They comply with Codes of Conduct and the Standing Orders that apply to meetings of local government committees. General members are appointed on merit, through open competition and for a term. They are subject to an annual performance appraisal.
An IFCA is funded by levy, charged to its member councils. Funding originates in local taxation. An IFCA is accountable for its use of public resources and should ensure that a proper auditing regime provides confidence in its commitment and spend of public money. It should make effective use of its resources, including staff and assets. An IFCA has a statutory obligation to prepare and publish Annual Plans and Annual Reports.

Outcomes

- **The IFCA will demonstrate its long-term strategic approach to sustainable marine management by having appropriate plan-making, review, update and amendment procedures in place. The IFCA will record its performance against corporate outcomes and indicators as soon as practically possible following the end of the financial year.**
- **Staff performance management systems will be in place that link to the IFCA success criteria. There will be an induction procedure for new joiners. Staff training and development needs will be identified. Performance will be managed and, where necessary, improvement procedures will be followed.**
- **The IFCA Committee will be supported by an organised, efficient and effective secretariat. New members will receive an induction pack and briefing from the Authority. There will be a rolling twelve-month schedule of quarterly Authority meetings.**

Indicators

- **SC4A**: The IFCA will publish a Plan on its website by 31 March, setting out the main objectives and priorities for the next financial year. A copy will be sent to the Secretary of State.
- **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 certified financial information in a normal year, by 30 November. A copy will be sent to the Secretary of State.
- **SC4C**: IFCA staff will have annual performance management plans in place. Annual appraisals for all staff will have been completed by 31 May each year.
- **SC4D**: An efficient secretariat of IFCA staff support IFCA Authority meetings which are held quarterly and are quorate. Meeting documentation will meet Standing Orders.
- **SC4E**: The IFCA will have demonstrated, in its Annual Report, how marine, land and water management mechanisms in the Inshore Fisheries &

Notices of meetings and documentation will be made available in line with Standing Orders. • **IFCA Committee meetings will be held in public unless material is either confidential, or exempt within the meaning of the Local Government Act 1972**	Conservation District have worked responsively and effectively together.

Success Criterion 5: **IFCAs make the best use of evidence to deliver their objectives**	
Definition: **IFCAs are statutory regulators for their Inshore Fisheries and Conservation District. Decision-making should be based on evidence. All IFCAs are supported by officers who pool their expertise and share best practice as a Technical Advisory Group (TAG). A programme of research activity and monitoring is planned, developed and updated in consultation with partners. The programme informs management decisions and supports justification for additional research and evidence gathering.**	
Outcomes • **A strategic research plan that contributes to greater understanding of the marine environment and delivery of cost-effective management of sea fisheries resources** • **Standard Operating Procedures describe how data is captured and shared with principal partners** • **A list of research databases held by the IFCA and the frequency of their review** • **Non-confidential meta-data collected through the IFCA research programme should be recorded in a database available to the marine research community**	Indicators **SC5A**: The IFCA will demonstrate progress that has made towards identifying its evidence needs by publishing a research plan each year **SC5B**: The IFCA will publish a research report annually that demonstrates how evidence has supported decision making **SC5C**: The IFCA's contribution to TAG and progress that has made towards national evidence needs programme will be recorded in the IFCA's Annual Report

Appendix 3: Eastern IFCA Priorities 2026-27

The table below sets out the work-streams which were identified as of high priority by the Strategic Assessment 2026. Each work-stream has been assigned a supplementary priority. Where resource limitations call for work-streams to be re-prioritised, these are used to inform which work should be the focus of available resources.

High Priorities for 2026-27
1. To ensure that the conservation objectives of Marine Protected Areas in the district are furthered through: a. Implementation of management measures for 'red risk' gear/feature interactions (**carried over**). b. Continued implementation of Adaptive Risk Management of fishing activity within the Cromer Shoal Chalk Beds Marine Conservation Zone (**carried over**). c. Completion of 'amber/green' gear/fishing interaction assessments and development and implementation of management measures as required (**carried over**). d. Participation in the national 'Coastal Health' project and the pilot in The Wash (**carried over**). e. Habitat mapping in relation to *sabellaria* reef within MPAs outside of the Wash and North Norfolk Coast (**new priority**).
2. Management of cockle and mussel fisheries (wild capture and private) through: a. Develop appropriate management of private shellfish aquaculture within The Wash including consideration of using MaCAA byelaws (**revised priority**). b. A review of relevant byelaws inherited from Eastern Sea Fisheries Joint Committee (**carried over**).
3. Obtaining better fisheries data through: a. Facilitating and contributing to the roll-out of I-VMS by the Marine Management organisation (**carried over**). b. Development of measures (through byelaws and / or permit conditions) to implement standardised reporting rates across of VMS units (**carried over**). c. Consider gathering vessel tracking data through alternative means (in lieu of I-VMS) (**new priority**).
1. Contribute to the development and implementation of Fisheries Management Plans though: a. Supporting the planning / preparation phase (**carried over**). b. Supporting the publication phase including by reviewing and evaluation plans (**carried over**). c. Supporting post-publication phase including implementation (**carried over**). d. Consider the development of a bass drift net scientific trial (**new priority)**
4. Contribute to the development of second-generation Marine Plans through: a. Collaboration with the Marine Management Organisation to seek opportunities to improve data and evidence for inshore fishing activities (**carried over**). b. Stakeholder engagement to raise awareness of marine planning and identify key issues (**carried over**).

c. Contributing to policy development by providing expert advice and relaying information from our stakeholders (**carried over**).

Business Critical Workstreams 2026-27

The Strategic Assessment indicates where risks in relation to a fishery or species are mitigated because of established work streams. The cessation of such work streams has the potential to increase risk associated with a fishery. Such identified work streams are set out below and constitute ongoing, long running workstreams which have become established and represent 'business as usual'.

- *Management of shrimp fisheries via Shrimp Permit Byelaw 2018 and associated effort limitation scheme* – includes management within the Wash and North Norfolk Coast SAC which mitigates impacts on the associated MPA.
- *Shrimp fishery management via the Marine Stewardship Council accreditation scheme* – this workstream involves participation and contribution to the industry led management of shrimp fisheries and mitigates risks relating to stock sustainability. During 2025/26 this will also include review of the Shrimp Permit eligibility criteria.
- *Study of the Wash Embayment, Environment and Productivity (Business Critical workstream)* – this workstream involves monthly sampling to monitor 'food availability' to mitigate risks associated with exceeding the carrying capacity of the Wash. The workstream is required to enable private aquaculture in The Wash.
- Wash cockle and Mussel management – this includes annual mussel and cockle stock surveys, assessments to identify and mitigate potential impacts on Wash MPAs and development and implementation of associated management measures annually.
- *Management of Whelk fisheries via the Whelk Permit byelaw 2016* – – this workstream includes the monitoring of whelk stock health and development and implementation of management measures via permit conditions as may be required. This includes investigation into the size of maturity for whelks in Suffolk. .
- *Assessments for 'unplanned' fisheries* – this workstream is dependent on the identification of any 'new' fisheries without established management measures. It potentially includes research (stock surveys, impacts etc.), assessment (if within an MPA) and the development and implementation of management measures as required and the development of a new system for permitting 'prospecting' for mussels within the district
- *Advice in relation to sustainable development* – this workstream involves contributing to the Marine Management Organisation's consideration of marine licence applications and advising on potential impacts on inshore fisheries and facilitating dialogue with fishery stakeholders.
- *Compliance monitoring and engagement in accordance with the Compliance Risk Register and TCG* – this workstream involves the effective deployment of

the Marine Protection resource to reduce the risk associated with non-compliance.

- *Engagement with Recreational Sea Anglers (RSA)* – this workstream involves engagement with RSA during compliance monitoring and seeks to enhance our understanding of RSA activity and reduce the risk of non-compliance.
- *Monitoring of district-wide biosecurity risk* – this workstream includes the logging and investigation of biosecurity issues detected and consideration of mitigation measures as may be required (including educational engagement and management measures).

Future priorities / value added workstreams

The Strategic Assessment also identifies workstreams which would be of benefit to achieving the Authority's main duties in areas where a lesser risk is identified or one which could potentially represent a higher risk in the future. They are noted annually so as to ensure that they can be considered in future years but also, as some may be achievable in the short-term where they can be addressed alongside business critical or high priority workstreams as 'added value' elements to projects. They do not all necessarily represent workstreams which would be led by Eastern IFCA and may be more feasible as projects run by partners or other groups (community and industry groups for example) facilitated by or with contributions from Eastern IFCA.

Fishing data and evidence gathering

- Collaborative working with MMO to develop a 'joined up' approach to gathering fishing data and reduce the burden on fishery stakeholders associated with providing two regulators similar information including potentially through adaptation of the MMO electronic data gathering systems.
- Gather information to improve understanding of wider 'value' of crab & lobster, shrimp and key finfish fisheries.
- Gather information on hand-gathering fisheries throughout the district.
- Develop relationships with RSA to obtain better RSA data.
- Explore options to better reflect understand the local 'value' (economic, societal etc.) of fin-fish fisheries, including RSA within the district.
- Investigate the economic value of RSA fisheries in the District and consider value in developing a RSA strategy
- Investigate use of drones to gather fisheries data (including stock data)
- Investigate use of Artificial Intelligence to facilitate analysis of ROV data.
- Undertake local crab and lobster stock assessments.
- Collaborate with Cefas to develop effective lobster stock assessment data gathering.
- Assessment and trials of alternative shrimp fishing gears which reduce risk to the Wash and North Norfolk Coast MPAs.
- Investigate disturbance impacts on seals from hand-work cockle fishery.

Engagement and communications

- Develop biosecurity awareness communications.

- Develop communications on the potential for seed (mussel) fisheries outside the Wash.
- Facilitate knowledge exchange between established and new fishers to pass on knowledge of traditional ways of working.
- Review the ARM Engagement Strategy (to include 'celebrating success' and a proactive approach)
- Consider benefits of consolidating RSA related actions within an Eastern IFCA RSA strategy

Fishing opportunities

- Explorer potential for a razor clam fishery in the Wash
- Explore opportunities to enhance the value of Crab catches.
- Undertake assessment of the potential for climate change impacts locally, including in relation to new fisheries and threats to existing fisheries
- Review the mussel fishery management policies (2008) and replace with an updated 'mussel fishery management plan.'
- Explore ways to facilitate industry raising the profile of the local shrimp fishery.

Biosecurity

- Develop local biosecurity action plans.

Appendix 4: Eastern IFCA Enforcement Plan 2026-27

Introduction

Compliance activity is undertaken in accordance with the Regulation and Compliance Strategy with the emphasis being upon the principle of endorsing compliance. This provides that clarity on regulation together with guidance and advice is essential to ensure compliance. The Eastern IFCA approach is to encourage compliance with regulation, but sanctions are also available to deter, sanction and remove any benefit from non-compliance in line with the Enforcement Policy.

To ensure that compliance and enforcement activity is proportionate and to make best use of limited resources a risk-based approach is taken, and this is informed by the Compliance Risk Register.

Method

The inshore fisheries sector is dynamic and as such compliance and enforcement activity can change from week to week. To ensure a cohesive approach operational activity is planned and co-ordinated using a clear process. A Tasking and Co-ordinating Group (TCG) considers information from the Annual Compliance Risk Register via a monthly Risk Profile, which combined with analysis of previous activity, intelligence and emerging issues, is used to agree priorities for the month. A weekly Operations Meeting manages activity to address the priorities agreed at the TCG meeting.

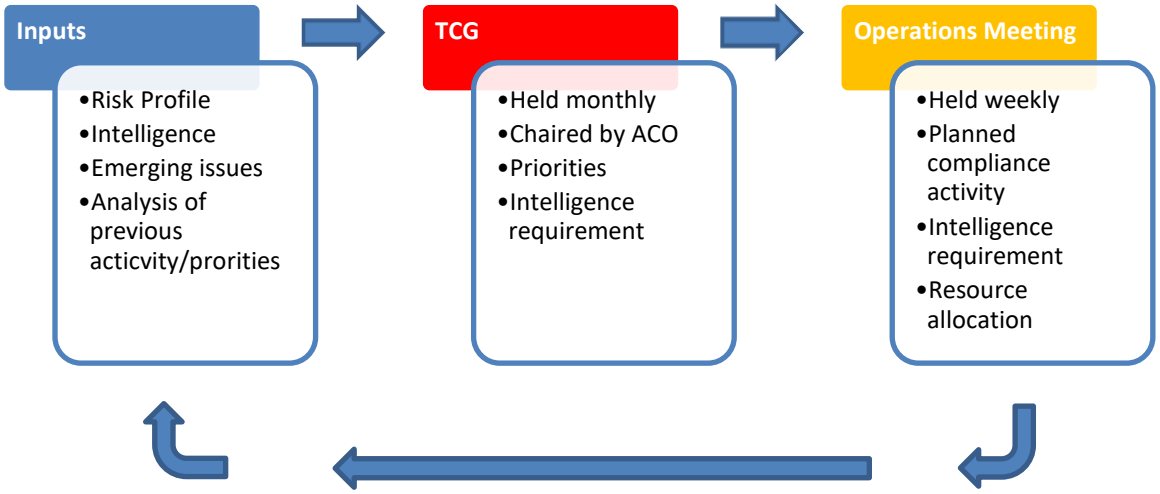


Figure 2. The TCG Process

Tactical Activities

Compliance and enforcement activities are conducted both at sea and ashore and can be categorised under six primary themes (see below). Activity may comprise one or all the following themes at any one time:

1. **High Profile Visible Presence**

Being present in the environment in which fishers operate is the foundation upon which all compliance activity is built. At a basic level, it provides credibility through operating both at sea and ashore, reassurance to the majority who comply with regulations and a deterrent effect for those that may be tempted to flout regulations. It also provides the opportunity for information and intelligence gathering as well as engagement and education.

2. **Monitoring Activity**

Monitoring activity enables Eastern IFCA to understand the level, nature and impact of fishing activity and the potential for regulations to be breached. It also helps Eastern IFCA to meet its legal obligation to prevent damage to MPAs from fishing activity e.g. in some cases, fisheries regulations exist for protecting these sites and in these cases, Eastern IFCA monitors compliance.

3. **Engagement and Education**

As provided by the Regulation and Compliance Strategy the primary approach is to encourage compliance with regulation. This is best achieved through engagement with the fishing industry to provide clarity on regulation and to assist compliance through education and the sharing of best practice. Engagement is also important in developing and maintaining strong and constructive relationships with both the commercial and recreational fishing sectors.

4. **Information, Intelligence and Evidence Gathering**

Information, intelligence and evidence are key to Eastern IFCAs approach to fisheries management, regulation and compliance. Fisheries involve people, vessels, fish and markets, all of which are dynamic (e.g. people are compliant or non-compliant; vessels move; the emergence of fish is highly dependent on the environment; and markets go up or down). Understanding these factors is essential to Eastern IFCAs ability to operate effectively. Advances in technology provide for additional information sources, including for example use of drones and utilising Inshore VMS data, and the Authority will embrace and adopt these to further inform enforcement activity. The distinction between information, intelligence and evidence in this context is important:

> *Information* takes many forms, but it includes local knowledge, anecdotal information and information gleaned from any source that may be of relevance to fisheries management. The dynamic nature of the marine environment means that fishing activity will vary from year to year and this form of evidence gathering is crucial to being reactive to changes in a dynamic inshore fisheries sector and it can help to inform compliance activities in the short term. It may also indicate gaps in our current data or evidence base and be used to direct further investigation.

Intelligence relates primarily to enforcement and is information that has been evaluated to assess provenance and reliability to make informed use of it in compliance and enforcement activity.

Evidence in this context relates to quantifiable information that can be used to support fisheries management and regulation. This will include fisheries data, which is quantitative evidence gathered in such a way as to understand its confidence. For example, quantities landed and fishing effort. Generally, evidence is not used to support short-term responses to dynamic changes, but it informs the strategic management of fisheries and their regulations. This form of data is of crucial importance to designing and assessing the suitability of management measures.

5. Inspection

An important element in ensuring compliance with sea fisheries regulations is undertaking inspections (e.g. measuring catch and inspecting fishing gear) both at sea and ashore in ports, harbour, creeks, and beaches. Such inspections are risk based, and the objective is to operate a proportionate regime that achieves the right balance between achieving compliance and managing the regulatory burden on commercial fishers and the level of intervention into the activities of recreational fishers. Not only do inspections provide confirmation of compliance or evidence of transgression but they also enable engagement and education and the opportunity to gather intelligence and information.

Eastern IFCA works in partnership with the MMO and the EA as well as other organisations. As such, evidence is collected and passed onto partner organisations for offences which are not necessarily enforceable by Eastern IFCA (e.g. quota restrictions).

6. Enforcement

Whilst the primary objective is to achieve compliance though engagement and education there will be occasions where it is appropriate to undertake operations to identify offending and to apply sanctions to deter, sanction and remove any benefit from non-compliance in line with the Enforcement Policy. Operations and investigations can take many forms, but the key elements are to employ appropriate tactics to identify offending; to secure and gather evidence; and to prepare case files to support the appropriate sanction.

Partnership Working

Whilst Eastern IFCA are responsible for managing the fisheries out to six miles at sea there are some shared and complimentary areas of responsibility with both the MMO and the EA. Not only is co-ordination of effort between organisations important

for stakeholders it also provides opportunities for sharing resources and reducing workloads.
Therefore, partnership working, particularly with the MMO, is a key element of Eastern IFCA's approach to achieving compliance. Key mechanisms to achieve this are set out below:

- **Attendance at TCG:** MMO officers attend the monthly Eastern IFCA TCG and *vice versa*. This enables shared priorities to be identified and information relevant to determining such to be shared.
- **Attendance at Operational meetings:** As with the above, attendance at operation meetings is undertaken to ensure that opportunities to share resources are identified and actioned.
- **Shared intelligence:** IFCA's and the MMO pool intelligence through the national 'Clue' intelligence system so as to ensure relevant information can be actioned by the relevant body. Officers from either organisation will gather intelligence relevant to the MMO, IFCA or other partner organisation.

This collaborative approach has resulted in more efficient deployment of officers to undertake inspections and an increased pool of information from which operational, tactical and strategic decisions can be made. Eastern IFCA will continue to foster partnerships to further enhance working relationships between the Border Force, local police, and Broads Authority.

Objectives

Whilst the method employed to deploy resources via the TCG process (*ante*) means that it is necessary to retain the ability to be flexible, it is appropriate to set benchmark objectives for some activities to ensure that resources are not unintentionally directed toward one fishery or area. This includes the potential to surge and draw-back on levels of activity on a seasonal and risk-based approach. It is also appropriate to have an established intention in relation to vessel sea time to provide a high-profile presence as a minimum and to enable other compliance activities.

Objective	Quantity	Comments
Sea patrol days (primary enforcement)	50+	50 dedicated enforcement sea patrols to establish high profile visual determent to non-compliance. The impact of sea-borne patrols is augmented through the use of social media to emphasise presence across the district. This objective in the context of a proportionate approach to compliance where the intention is not to over-burden fishers (set out in the Regulation and Compliance strategy).
Sea patrol days (secondary enforcement)	40+	In addition to the above dedicated enforcement patrols, IFCOs function as crew aboard research and survey activities at sea. The level of activity is not driven by enforcement priorities however IFCOs still perform enforcement functions (monitoring, engagement etc.) and activity will be reprioritised to focus on compliance where necessary.
Monitor MPA closed areas	n/a	All areas closed under the Marine Protected Areas Byelaw 2018 will be monitored via direct observation throughout the year on a risk-based approach managed via the TCG. The anticipated implementation of I-VMS requirements will increase the capacity to monitor compliance and the need for continued routine, direct observations will be reconsidered.

Table 2. Shore Based Compliance Activity

Objective	Quantity	Comments
Port visits (Primary)	2 x per month (min)	High profile visible presence augmented through the use of social media. A minimum level of effort ensures intelligence gathering and fishing trends monitoring is undertaken evenly across the district in the absence of risk-based drivers.
Port visits (Secondary)	1 x per month	High profile visible presence augmented through the use of social media. A minimum level of effort ensures intelligence gathering and fishing trends monitoring is undertaken evenly across the district in the absence of risk-based drivers.
Monitoring MPA closed areas	1 x per month (min)	All areas closed under the Marine Protected Areas Byelaw 2018 will be monitored throughout the year on a risk-based approach managed via the TCG. The anticipated implementation of I-VMS requirements will increase the capacity to monitor

		compliance and the need for continued routine, direct observations will be reconsidered.
Officers to engage with the owner/skipper of all vessels which have recently entered the district	100%	Engagement and education to ensure that persons unfamiliar with the district are aware of the relevant restrictions and regulations.
Table 3. Partnership Working		
Objective	Quantity	Comments
Attendance at MMO Area TCG meeting	100%	Monthly meetings that provide the opportunity to harmonise activity and plan joint work.
Joint patrols/inspections/ operations with the MMO	n/a	Joint working is now well established with the MMO and joint patrols are organised in accordance with the monthly TCGs and therefore no formal metric (target) is set.

Indicators

To understand resource usage and outcomes it is necessary to capture data that will provide indicators on activity and performance. Reporting metrics are set through the National Inshore Marine Enforcement Group (NIMEG) which will also be reported through the Annual Report. This information is used to assess the effectiveness of enforcement actions, the spread of our activities and to identify any gaps.

Table 4. NIMEG reporting metrics		
Category	Metric	Detail required
Inspections at sea	Vessel patrols	Count any patrol by a patrol vessel or survey vessel (mother/daughter boat combination counts as one patrol)
	Fishing vessel boarding	Count fishing vessels (including unregistered/unlicensed) inspected at sea, where boarding was in pursuit of any relevant duty
	Fishing gear inspections	Count store-pots, tiers/strings etc of fishing gear found deployed in the sea, where inspection was in pursuit of any relevant duty. Do not count gear inspected on board a vessel
Inspections ashore or in port	Shore patrols	Excursion/visit of any length to any part of the coast for an inspection or observation of fishing related activity

	Port visits	Individual port/cove/beach visits within a shore patrol
	Premises inspections	Markets, merchants, refrigerated units, retailers, food producers/outlets etc
	Fish/shellfish landing inspections	First-hand observations of fish/shellfish as it was landed ashore from a vessel. Do not count inspections of fish laid out on a market or in a storage facility unless the landing of that fish was observed
	Other inspections	Count vessel gear/fish checks in port/ashore, diver and shore angler catches, vehicle contents, shellfish on lay areas etc

Eastern IFCA collects additional information to help inform our progress with the targets set out above. These are set out below.

Partnership Working

- Attendance at MMO TCG meetings
- Joint patrols/inspections/operations with the MMO
- Joint Patrols and collaboration with Border Force, Norfolk, and Lincolnshire Police, Environment Agency and Broads Authority

Enforcement

- Verbal warnings
- Advisory letters
- Official written warnings
- Financial Administrative Penalties
- Prosecutions

Appendix 5: Eastern IFCA Communication and Engagement Plan 2026-27

The Importance of Communication and Engagement and Objectives

Effective communication and engagement are essential to effectively fulfilling our duties under MaCAA and across our workstreams.

Defra guidance to IFCAs for byelaw making sets out a consultative process which underpins well-informed decisions on management measures which is adhered to and ordinarily exceeded by the Authority.

Three **key objectives** of communication and engagement are:

- Transparency and clarity to build trust with stakeholders.
- Educate stakeholders to aid compliance with management measures by improving an understanding of the importance of these measures.
- Draw on the expertise and local knowledge of stakeholders to inform management decisions.

Approach

To facilitate meeting our objectives, the Authority is committed to providing stakeholders with information, making it publicly available or available on request as may be appropriate. All Authority meetings are held in public, and minutes published online and available from the office.

A multi-channel approach is often adopted in recognition of the diversity of our stakeholders and to seek to ensure our key messages are understood. This includes utilising traditional forms of communication including postal letters and notices in newspapers, as well as more modern approaches including use of the Authority's website, emails, and social media in addition to organising meetings and visiting our stakeholders in person.

Anyone seeking information, advice or seeking to provide information themselves are responded to in a timely manner and in accordance with information legislation including the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and the Environmental Information Regulations 2004. All information received from our stakeholders is gathered and collated to inform our annual planning process and relevant workstreams and stored securely in accordance with our suite of data protection policies and procedures. To mitigate over-burdening stakeholders, the consultations will be planned to take place at the most effective times, minimising overlap between consultation and considering fishery seasonality where possible.

In addition, stakeholders will be informed of these timings in advance, providing clarity to avoid confusion between consultations. Where overlap is inevitable, given competing priority workstreams addressed above, officers will seek to provide

targeted engagement and support to ensure that key messages are received and understood.

IFCA Conduct and Operations Report 2018-2022 and 'Conversations with the IFCA' report

The 2018-2022 quadrennial IFCA Conduct and Operations Report was published in February 2025.[20] This report provided the findings from the Secretary of State's review of IFCAs based primarily on stakeholder perceptions and set out recommendations, some of which related to engagement with stakeholders. In addition, the 'Conversations with IFCAs' study led by Newcastle (Dr Sarah Coulthard) considering the IFCAs capacity to deliver regional co-management of inshore fisheries was also published in February 2025.[21] This report suggested four pathways to enhance the IFCAs ability to deliver well-managed fisheries using a 'Theory of Change' model.

The recommendations from the Conduct and Operations Report are being implemented via CORRIS, for which the CEO is the Chair, playing a leadership role in actioning recommendations including in relation to engagement with stakeholders. This will include the publication of consultation commitments which were developed during the previous financial year.

Key engagement areas in 2026-27

Engagement and communication are at the core of our approach to managing fisheries. However, some workstreams require a far greater resource to action in accordance with these principles. The Business Plan and Strategic Assessment has identified that the coming period is likely to be one of change for our stakeholders as the Government puts into effect the new legislative landscape to manage fisheries in the absence of European legislation. Facilitating understanding by our stakeholders will be of benefit to their sense of security and surety through this period, the various bodies seeking to implement the new legislative regime and the Authority in garnering trust. The key engagement areas for the 2026-27 financial year are summarised below.

<u>Adaptive Risk Management (ARM) in the Cromer Shoal MCZ</u>

ARM refers to the process of 'learning through doing', an iterative process of implementing management in lieu strong evidence and monitoring its effectiveness which is, in the case of potting within the Cromer Shoal MCZ, a means of avoiding more impactful, precautionary measures (such as closures).

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[20] Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authorities: conduct and operations 2018 to 2022 - GOV.UK

[21] Report out on IFCAs performance - AIFCA

Successful ARM is dependent on a collaborative approach, bringing stakeholders and regulators together to inform research and management. To that end, the project's governance structure is designed specifically to ensure stakeholders can contribute to the projects delivery and developed and agreed a communications strategy and plan to guide and inform engagement.

This workstream is highly contentious, with a strong conflict in perspective between what can be described as our 'conservation' stakeholders and those from the fishing sector. Despite this, the work has so far led to the adoption of voluntary measures and the development of a flexible permit byelaw and associated conditions to manage fishing in the site.

Monitoring of risk and the continued development of management will be the key focus area for engagement during 2026/27 to ensure that resultant management is effective at reducing risk to the site and engagement with stakeholders will be at the core of this work. This will include further development of the 'rates of damage assessment', which synthesises the best available evidence to inform the project as to the level of risk posed by fishing activity and will be enhanced during 2026 through engagement with stakeholders, particularly the Evidence Sub-Group.

Development of aquaculture management in The Wash

The Authority previously managed aquaculture in The Wash under the WFO, which expired on 4 January 2023. The Authority agreed to make a Several Order to manage private fisheries (lays) in The Wash to replace the WFO and interim measures have been in place pending the outcome of the application.

Following advice from Defra, the Authority is exploring whether aquaculture management can be achieved without a Several Order, and this will be a key engagement priority during 2026. Seeking to achieve a fair and equitable management system provides security to facilitate investment into aquaculture in The Wash will be informed by dialogue with stakeholders and the careful consideration of different perspectives.

Fisheries Management Plans (FMPs)

Pursuant of the provisions of the Fisheries Act 2020, Defra is leading on the development of FMPs, and the Authority will play a crucial role particularly with respect to facilitating stakeholder involvement in addition to providing our expertise and knowledge with respect to the needs of the local fisheries and environment. Ultimately, the FMPs may lead to requirements to introduce additional management within the district and as a result, future engagement needs.

In particular, several FMPs relevant to the district have now been published, including in relation to whelks, crab and lobster and bass. Eastern IFCA will continue to input into the development of associated implementation plans drawing on our

knowledge of local fisheries and environmental conditions to seek to ensure that they can deliver national policy in a locally relevant way.

Marine Planning

Inshore fisheries are particularly vulnerable to what the Authority often describes as a 'squeeze' from other sea users, and particularly those involved in national infrastructure projects including renewable energy. Given this, it is unsurprising that there is a level of concern amongst our stakeholders as is often reported to the Authority.

The MMO is undertaking a consultative process on the second-generation marine plans, starting with the East Marine plan, which was the first to be developed and now, the first to be updated.

Facilitating stakeholder dialogue on the matter of marine planning will ensure that impacted stakeholders will be able to feed into the process with the aim of ensuring inshore fisheries are, in particular, recognised nationally for their contribution to coastal economies and culture.

Other fisheries

The Shrimp Permit Byelaw 2018 enables the Authority to manage shrimp fisheries including by setting permit conditions. Following a review of the permit conditions undertaken in 2025, the 'experience requirement', which requires skippers of vessels fishing for shrimp in The Wash and North Norfolk Coast to have experience fishing in the area, is being further considered via consultation with fishing industry. This more detailed review will consider whether the requirement is having the intended effects and if any revisions are required.

Engagement with Recreational Sea Anglers (RSA) has been built into our compliance approach for several years and has been generally well received. Our approach to dialogue and communication with RSA is necessarily different to that with our commercial fishery stakeholders; there are significantly more RSA than commercial fishermen and our communications are much less well-established. The multi-channel approach is undertaken to reach our RSA stakeholders including the use of fixed signage and social media, but a general rapport has been developed in certain areas with more regular RSA and local establishments (bait and tackle shops) to enhance our reach further. Dialogue with RSA will remain a crucial component of our communications.

Informed by Community Voice Method

The Authority invested in the Common Ground project in 2016 to identify what our stakeholders' value about our coastal environment. The project used novel engagement techniques (Community Voice Method) to give an equal voice to a wider range of invested stakeholders. Through the application of this technique, the

project was able to identify stakeholders' shared values and set out key actions to improve engagement between Eastern IFCA and our stakeholders[22].

The table below, shows how the key actions are addressed within communication and engagement work.

CVM - Engagement Plan Actions	
Action	**Rationale**
Maintain and improve a professional and up-to-date website. With regularly updated content (2 new news items per month)	CVM participants highlighted the need for regular effective communication of news and updates which they have a vested interest in; therefore the focus is to have regular updates and news items, and this will be reflected in project planning.
Social media sites to be regularly updated; use social media posts in conjunction with website updates, to deliver key updates to the community	Social media will be used to 'add value' to content published on the website as appropriate. This will include posting links to the website, adding photos and engaging/having dialogue with partner organisations to improve visibility and reach. Officers will consider social media updates into their weekly plans to ensure platforms are updated at an appropriate frequency. In addition to posting updates, officers will use available analytical tools to assess and improve on successful posts and engagement.
Engagement with key stakeholders around consultations	This year, there are significant engagement requirements once again. Both with groups that are regularly consulted with and those that are not. Therefore, additional work (on top of resource that is usually invested on getting meaningful engagement) will be completed to learn the preferences of these new groups. Specific improvements planned are: • Immediate feedback/dialogue with disparate stakeholders so that views/opinions can be included in a meaningful way. • Follow up calls/visits to individuals who may have not involved themselves with initial consultation but may have a view/opinion they want to express. • Hold meetings, online and in-person where permitted, to enable further direct needs for engagement, acknowledging individuals' different needs in consultation work.

[22] https://wnnmp.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/sites/29/2017/12/Common-Ground-final-report.pdf

	• During consultation periods deploy properly briefed and equipped staff (through the TCG process) to gather information and views.
Establish working groups on key fisheries issues	To facilitate engagement with key stakeholders, Eastern IFCA intends to set up working groups as required, with representative stakeholders, to ensure that they have input during the regulatory process. Working groups will be established for key regulation projects throughout the year, where a need is identified. This has been most successful in the development of the ARM approach from Cromer Shoal MCZ work; a series of working groups including project, research, and stakeholder groups have been established to support the development of management. These groups will continue to be a priority for engagement into 2026-27. Working groups for other fisheries will continue to be considered where relevant. During 2026-27, the establishment of a Wash Cockle working group will also be considered.
Maintain the stakeholder database	Maintaining an up-to-date stakeholder database is crucial to stakeholder engagement. Some of the most important messages are still passed on to fishers through personal engagement or through letter. Whilst Eastern IFCA aims to promote electronic engagement with stakeholders, fair and comprehensive engagement can only be achieved through utilising all available tools.
Key engagement messages reflected in officer duties	The Marine Protection Team utilise monthly risk profiles to set priorities both in enforcement and engagement at the TCG meeting each month. Given the level of exposure IFCOs get with stakeholders (particularly fishers), the utilisation of IFCOs to deliver key messages represents a key mechanism for engagement. Guidance for IFCO's documents to be produced for each consultation so officers are aware of key messages to communicate. All officers to utilise established message system to log stakeholder comments centrally.
Review outputs of CVM to inform and develop how the organisation engages and communicates with stakeholders	The CVM project provides some information and data explaining stakeholder preference regarding engagement and communication. This information will be retained and further reviewed to inform future activities.
Joint work with partner organisations	Officers are often approached to join in with partner organisation events (e.g. Eastern IFCA attendance at Suffolk Coastal Forum conference). These events have been some of the most successful we have attended as they use a lower amount of resource for the organisation and coordination, have a promotional effect and allow closer links and working

	relationships with key partners. It is also a key action highlighted by CVM. Where possible officers will identify and participate in such events, remotely where possible, to add value to the ongoing engagement and communication themes, and as such preference will be given to events that link with ongoing consultations and will work with social media streams.