65th EIFCA Statutory Meeting

To Be Held at:
Council Chambers, King's Lynn Town Hall, Saturday Marketplace, King's Lynn, Norfolk PE30 5DQ

Wednesday
9th September 2026

1030 hours

Vision
The Eastern Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority will lead, champion and manage a sustainable marine environment and inshore fisheries, by successfully securing the right balance between social, environmental and economic benefits to ensure healthy seas, sustainable fisheries and a viable industry.

Meeting: **65th Eastern IFCA Meeting**

Date: 09 September 2026

Time: 1030hrs

Venue: Council Chambers, Kings Lynn Town Hall, Saturday Marketplace, Kings Lynn, Norfolk, PE30 5DQ

Agenda

1 Welcome – *Chair*

2 To accept apologies for absence - *Chair*

3 Declaration of Members' interests – *Chair*

Action items

4 To receive and approve as a true record, minutes of the 64th Eastern IFCA Meeting, held on 24 June 2026 – *Chair* *(pg4)*

5 Matters arising (including actions from previous meeting) – *Clerk*

6 To receive a report to consider Health and Safety risks and mitigation – *ACO(DD)* *(pg14)*

7 To receive a report on the meeting of the Finance and HR sub-committee held on 4 August 2026 – *CEO* *(pg19)*

8 Marine Net Gain – *MSO Wilson/ACO* (pg25)

9 IFCA Regulation and Compliance Framework – *CEO* *(pg31)*

10 Wash Cockle Fishery 2026 update – A*CO(DD)* *(pg 58)*

11 Annual Report 2025/26 – *ACO* *(pg62)*

12 Review of annual priorities and Risk Register - *ACO* *(pg63)*

Information items

13 CEO update (verbal) – *CEO*

14 Operational update

a. Marine Protection report – ACO (DD) (*pg83*)

b. Marine Science report – ACO (*pg89)*

Any other business

15 To consider any other items, which the Chairman is of the opinion are Matters of Urgency due to special circumstances, which must be specified in advance.

J. Gregory
Chief Executive Officer
24 August 2026

Vision
The Eastern Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority will lead, champion and manage a sustainable marine environment and inshore fisheries, by successfully securing the right balance between social, environmental and economic benefits to ensure healthy seas, sustainable fisheries and a viable industry.

64th Eastern IFCA Meeting

A meeting of Eastern IFCA took place on Wednesday 24th June 2026 at 1030 hours in the Council Chambers, King's Lynn Town Hall, Saturday Market Place, King's Lynn Norfolk, PE30 4DQ

Members Present:

Cllr T Adams	(Chair)	Norfolk County Council
Cllr R Whitaker	(Vice Chair)	Lincolnshire County Council
Mr S Bagley		MMO Appointee
Cllr J Costley		Norfolk County Council
Mr J Davies		MMO Appointee
Mr L Doughty		MMO Appointee
Mr P Garnett		MMO Appointee
Mr T Goldson		MMO Appointee
Cllr P Lawrence		Norfolk County Council
Ms B Lynam		MMO Appointee
Mr J Rowley		MMO Representative
Mr N Schiller		MMO Appointee
Cllr G Taylor		Lincolnshire County Council
Mr S Williamson		MMO Appointee

Eastern IFCA (EIFCA) Officers Present:

Julian Gregory	Chief Executive Officer (Clerk)
Jon Butler	Assistant Chief Officer (Designated Deputy),
Luke Godwin	Assistant Chief Officer
Ella Constable	Marine Science Officer

Minute Taker:
Jodi Hammond

EIFCA26/01 Item 1: Election of Chair of the Authority

The Clerk welcomed members to the meeting. It was noted this was the annual meeting when a new Chair and Vice-Chair would be elected. Following recent Norfolk and Suffolk County Council elections only one previous Authority member had returned, Cllr Adams.

Under the EIFCA Constitution & Standing Orders the Chair and Vice Chair needed to be appointed from elected members, which would unofficially circulate around the County Councils. As there had been an almost wholesale reappointment of appointed members it was suggested Cllr Adams, as the longest standing Member should be elected as Chair for the next year.

Members Resolved to elect Cllr Adams as Chair of the Authority.
Proposed: Cllr Whitaker
Seconded: Mr Williamson
All Agreed

EIFCA26/02 Item 2: Welcome

The newly appointed Chair welcomed members to the meeting, in particular a welcome was extended to the newly appointed Norfolk County Councillors Costley and Lawrence.

The Chair then went on to advise that Councillor Chenery, a previous longstanding member of the Authority, had sadly passed away since the last meeting. It went without saying the Authority would extend their condolences to the family.

Members then went around the room introducing themselves and who they represented.

EIFCA26/03 Item 3: Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Ms C Mofatt (NE Representative, Mr R Dyer (EA Representative), and MMO Appointees Dr Gilliland and Ms Smith.

EIFCA26/04 Item 4: Election of the Vice-Chair of the Authority

Members Resolved to elect Cllr Whitaker to the role of Vice-Chair.
Proposed: Chair
All Agreed

EIFCA26/05 Item 5: Declaration of Members Interests

The following dispensations were noted:

Agenda Item	Matters to be discussed	Members with related DPI	Members with relevant dispensation to discuss	Members with relevant dispensation to vote
11 – Wash Cockle Fishery 2026	Management of the Wash Cockle Fishery	Mr Steven Williamson, Mr Paul Garnett, Mr Lee Doughty, Mr Shane Bagley, Ms Bex Lynam	Mr Steven Williamson, Mr Paul Garnett, Me Lee Doughty, Mr Shane Bagley, Ms Bex Lynam	Ms Bex Lynam
12 – Wash Aquaculture Management	Management of the Wash Mussel and Cockle Fisheries	Mr Steven Williamson, Mr Paul Garnett, Mr Lee Doughty, Mr Shane Bagley, Ms Bex Lynam	Mr Steven Williamson, Mr Paul Garnett, Me Lee Doughty, Mr Shane Bagley, Ms Bex Lynam	Ms Bex Lynam

There were no other Declarations of Interest.

EIFCA26/06 Item 6: Minutes of the 63rd Eastern IFCA Meeting held on Wednesday 11th March 2026

Members Agreed to approve the Minutes as a true record of proceedings.
Proposed: Chair
Seconded: Mr doughty

EIFCA26/07 Item 7: Matters arising.

There were two Matters Arising relating to EIFCA25/65 Item 10: Wash cockle Fishery 2026 and EIFCA25/67 Item 12 Interim Management of Wash Aquaculture, both of which would be discussed as Agenda items later in the meeting.

EIFCA26/08 Item 8: Health & Safety Risks and Mitigation

Members were reminded the H&S Risk Register was a standard item on the agenda.
The last quarter had been particularly busy with cockle surveys involving both boat work and walking on the sands, there had been 5 incidents. The worst had been an Officer who reported tripping whilst walking, falling onto a piece of metal which cut his leg. At the time of the incident the Officer felt he was able to carry on with the survey, but the decision was made to return to shore and get medical treatment. The officer returned to work the next day. The Risk Assessment for walking on sands would be reviewed in case any changes were needed.

Other incidents related to mud/grit in the eyes, Eye protection had been made available should officers wish to wear it, eye wash was also available for use on the sands if eye protection was not worn.
The Building Fire risk had been addressed; it would now be removed from the outstanding risk register.
Intertidal working would be added until the Rish Assessment Review previously mentioned had been carried out.

Members Agreed to Note the contents of the report.

EIFCA26/09 Item 9: Report on the meeting of the Finance & HR Sub-Committee held on 5th May 2026

Draft Minutes of the meeting had been provided. Most of the items discussed were 'business as usual', however the Annual Accounts had also been on the Agenda, if was encouraging to note the year ended in a relatively positive position.
Also discussed and agreed to, was the disposal of one of the Authority's open RIBs, *FPV SeaSpray*, which was now surplus to requirements.
It was noted BCKLWN had requested to be relieved of the responsibility of hosting EIFCA's IT, a new provider had been identified and the process of moving over had been put in place.
Water ingress in the generator on *FPV Protector IV* was ongoing, which raised the question of was it a warranty issue. Whilst it was not part of the warranty the question of how the water got in indicated that a design fault may be a contributory factor.
Also of note was the coat of purchase of a new generator plus additional costs. Whilst the Authority were fortunate to have sufficient Reserves to cover this cost, the possibility of it being due to a design fault were being explored.

The Chair noted the cost would be easily identifiable at the next meeting when Capital funds and Reserve funds would be shown separately.

The Chair expressed concern at the number of current vacancies and whether they would be causing 'bottle necks' in the workload. The CEO advised the staff shortage had been noted on the Risk Register, and the absences were likely to create challenges.
Referring to current vacancies it was noted the Senior IFCO (Marine) role would be circulated to a wider audience in order to ensure the best fit for the role.

Members Agreed to Note the contents of the Report.

Mr Goldson arrived

EIFCA26/10 Item 10: Sub-Committee appointments

Members were reminded the Authority had three sub-committees. In line with the election of the new Chair and Vice Chair, and the change in elected members it was necessary to re appoint to the membership of the sub-committees.

FINANCE & HR: Comprised all elected members (Councillors) and two general members. Inge Smith had indicated she would like to step down from the sub-committee and Nick Shilller had advised he would be happy to join the sub-committee. Councillors Costley and Lawrence from Norfolk County Council together with the two yet to be appointed Councillors from Suffolk would be automatically appointed to the sub-committee.

WASH FISHERIES: Made up of seven members, none of whom had a Declared Pecuniary Interest or other connection with the Wash cockle and mussel fisheries. As the Chair and Vice Chair were exempt from this it meant the two Suffolk County Councillors, once appointed, and Cllr Costley would be added to this sub-committee.

WASH APPEALS: CONSISTING OF THE Chair and Vice Chair plus one other elected member. Cllr Lawrence agreed to take on this sub-committee.

Members Resolved to:

- **Note the automatic appointment of the newly appointed councillors from Norfolk and Suffolk to the Finance & HR sub-committee**
- **Agree to appoint Mr Nick Schiller to the Finance & HR sub-committee in place of Ms Inge Smith**
- **Agree to the appointments to the Wash Fisheries (two yet to be appointed Suffolk County Councillors and Cllr Costley) and Wash Appeals (Cllr Lawrence), sub-committees proposed by the CEO following the election of the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Authority during the meeting.**

Proposed: Chair
Seconded: Mr Goldson
All Agreed

EIFCA26/11 Item 11: Wash Cockle Fishery 2026

ACO Godwin gave members a presentation of the process to open the 2026 cockle fishery. It was noted the fishery would usually be opened by the Authority but due to the timing of the meeting delegated authority had been given to the CEO with the understanding he would report back to the Authority.

MSO Constable gave members a summary on the sampling procedure and the survey work undertaken. A total of 1045 samples had been collected and analysed during March and April, the results would inform the overall stock level and the ages of the stock.
Additional samples had been taken from the Hunstanton cockle bed which had been exploited during the previous year.

ACO Godwin then advised Members of the agreed Management Measures. It was also noted that whilst initial closed areas had included the Hunstanton Bed, in an attempt to protect it from contamination by atypical mortality, further sample analysis suggested the disease was already present, therefore the bed would open towards the end of June.

Mr Schiller arrived

Amongst the concerns raised during the consultation process were too many opening dates during certain months, and a specific closing date for the fishery. As a means of quickly addressing such issues it was intended that a Wash Forum would be set up to enable such discussions to take place in a timely manner.

Having heard the presentations members raised some queries. Mr Doughty questioned why vessels coming into the District from other fisheries were not subject to some form of bio-security check, which vessels leaving the District to go to other fisheries were. It was suggested that the Thames in particular had less disease than that already present in The Wash. Members further made the case that whilst the disease may be less, there was a chance it could be different and possible introduce something new to the cockle stocks that were just beginning to recover, it was felt EIFCA should be more precautionary.
It was agreed to Members were content for their concern to be recorded and the CEO would bring a report to the next Authority Meeting.

Members Resolved to:

- **Note the contents of the report**
- **Agree to endorse and continue the management of the 2026 Wash cockle fishery as set out in this report.**
- **Agree to delegate authority to the CEO in consultation with the Chair or Vice-Chair to open the fishery and to introduce, vary or revoke flexible management measures**

referred to in Schedule 4 of the Wash Cockle and Mussel Byelaw 2021.

- **Agree to delegate authority to the CEO in consultation with the Chair or Vice Chair to introduce, vary or revoke flexible management measures with less that 12 hours notice as may be required, in accordance with the provisions of the Wash Cockle and Mussel Byelaw 2021**

Proposed: Chair
Seconded: Mr Goldson
All Agreed

EIFCA26/12 Item 12: Wash Aquaculture Management

ACO Godwin gave a brief background to the situation, advising it had been ongoing for a very long time.
Whilst steps had been taken to get a replacement Several Order in before the expiration of the old one, this had not been possible so temporary measures to protect the lay holders had been put in place.

In December last year advice had been received that Defra would not be considering any new Orders until 2027/28 at the earliest, they also strongly advised considering other means of managing aquaculture in The Wash. This report was to present members with a potential solution for managing aquaculture in light of the advice received.

ACO Godwin gave a presentation on the pros and cons of replacing the Several Order with an IFCA Byelaw as this was felt to be the only alternative regulatory option.
Industry had previously raised a number of concerns about the use of a byelaw, which ACO Godwin also worked through, comparing the capability of an Order and a Byelaw.

The presentation also focused on the next steps, either:

- Do nothing
- Maintain the Status Quo
- Implement a Byelaw to manage Wash Aquaculture

Members were advised the option Officers felt should be pursued was to begin the process of drafting a Byelaw, developing an Aquaculture Policy Statement and an Aquaculture Management Policy, which would be taken to the next appropriate Authority Meeting for consideration.

Members Resolved to:

<u>Note</u> the contents of the report, including the consideration given to potential industry concerns regarding the use of a

byelaw rather than a Several Order to manage Wash-based aquaculture;
<u>Agree</u> in principle to pursue the development of a byelaw to manage aquaculture in The Wash to develop a draft Aquaculture policy statement and to develop a draft Aquaculture management policy
<u>Direct</u> officers to undertake an informal consultation to inform the development of a byelaw approach to managing aquaculture in The Wash present a draft byelaw and draft policies to members at the next appropriate Authority meeting

Proposed: Chair
Seconded: Mr Schiller
All those who could vote, were in favour.

EIFCA26/13 Item 13: Quarterly Review of Annual Priorities and Risk Register

Members were reminded the paper dealt with the primary workstreams.
Business Critical workstreams for the current quarter included:
ACO Godwin guided Members through the priorities for the previous quarter which included the Closed Area Byelaw, addressing inherited Byelaws, and switching IT providers.

Members were also advised there was a new Business Plan in place and the Risk Register updated. Amongst the notable Risks was a number of staff vacancies, recruitment processes were in place to get the best available candidates.

Mr Davies questioned whether the Closed Area Byelaw would reflect the Natural Disturbance Study as some area results could be skewed, suggesting there were more pots on that bed than were there. ACO Godwin advised some information had been provided having taken legal advice.
Reference was also made to cables and windfarms going ahead without proper comms or liaison. The CEO acknowledged this and advised Members NE had objected to the activity, but the plans went through none the less.

Members Agreed to note the content of the report.

EIFCA26/14 Item 14: CEO Update

<u>AIFCA Meeting</u> - The CEO advised Members papers for the last AIFCA Forum Meeting held on 2nd June had been circulated via

e-mail to members. Key items (more detail in papers) considered at the meeting were:

- Appointing a **Training Manager** to lead and co-ordinate training requirements and training delivery for all ten IFCAs. This was already catered for in Eastern IFCA budget (circa £13k pa).
- Draft **complaints policy** adopted and recommended to individual IFCAs for consideration. Eastern IFCA already has a robust process (revised following publication of the quadrennial report) but officers would benchmark against the national policy and revise if it was considered necessary.
- **Local government reorganisation** – noted potential implications for IFCA funding, currently the impact was not known, and both Norfolk and Suffolk may be making legal challenges to the changes.
- **Offshore wind compensatory payments** - A new compensation hierarchy must be followed when selecting environmental compensatory measures. The implications were notable, but the Association were looking at the process.

15 years of IFCAs – a celebration of IFCA would take place later in the year. It was anticipated the two Assistant Chief Officers would attend.

EIFCA26/15 Item 15: Marine Protection Quarterly Reports

March/April Officers had been heavily involved with the cockle surveys and the new permit year for whelk fishing, which meant gear inspections had to be carried out.
The Crab and Lobster fishery on the Norfolk coats showed early signs in the spring but landings were lower than anticipated.

One FAP had been issued for non-compliance in an MCZ.

Coastal Health Project and EHO Sampling continued.

Members Agreed to note the contents of the report.

EIFCA65/16 Item 16: Marine Science Quarterly Report

Members Agreed to note the contents of the report

EIFCA25/55 Item 16: Any Other Business

No Items of Other Business had been notified.

Mr Davies took the opportunity to advise that he had found it particularly difficult to hear during the meeting. The CEO acknowledged the sound had not been ideal. It was suggested that if Members were minded the meetings could go back to the Boathouse in Wisbech or an alternative venue in King’s Lynn could be sought.

It was Agreed the venue would be advised of the hearing difficulties and see if the situation improved for the next meeting.

There being no other business the Chair thanked all those who had assisted in putting the papers together and members for attending and closed the meeting at 1230 hours.

Vision
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Action Item 6

65th Eastern Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority meeting

09 September 2026

Health and Safety update

Report by: Jon Butler, Assistant Chief Officer (DD)

Purpose of report
The purpose of this report is to update members on health and safety activity and incidents, risks and associated mitigation over the last reporting period.

Recommendations
It is recommended that members:

- **Note** the contents of this report.

Background
H&S law requires employers to assess and manage risks and so far, as is reasonably practicable to ensure the health, safety and welfare of all its employees and others affected by workplace activities.

The Authority has a declared intent to promote and nurture an appropriate health and safety culture throughout the organisation.

Incidents
The table in *Appendix 1* summarises the incidents that have occurred since the last Authority meeting:

There have been **1** incident and **2** near miss since the last Authority meeting.

Risks/Mitigation
There has been 1 incident since the last Authority meeting which resulted in a vessel breakdown which is currently subject to an insurance claim.

There was one near miss where an officer reported feeling unwell following an intertidal survey, the cause was put down to heat and the officer not drinking enough fluids.

A further near miss occurred during a recent EHO survey where an accompanied guest fell whilst walking in the intertidal areas filling their waders with mud/water. The guest suffered no injuries and returned to Protector IV.

Both these near misses highlight the challenging environment officers work in whilst undertaking surveys in the inter tidal zones particularly during the recent spell of hot weather.

Appendix 1

Date	Nature of incident	Injury / damage occurred	Action Taken	RIDDOR MAIB Y/N	Investigation complete Y/N	Name of investigating Officer	Follow-up action required Y/N. If Y then what?
16/06/26	Vessel	Engine break down and loss of anchor	Vessel towed to marina and lifted out	N	Yes	Jon Butler	Ongoing claim through insurers relating to engine
28/07/26	Person	Officer was sick following cockle survey	Re hydrated, returned home after survey and rested	N	Yes	Sammy Hormbrey	Officers remined of the need to take on fluids and eat during surveys
17/08/26	Person	Guest tripped and fell was walking in intertidal area filling waders with mud/water	Guest returned to Protector IV and given change of clothes	N	Yes	Jon Butler	None required RA being followed.

Appendix 2

Eastern IFCA Organisational Health and Safety risks

Risk	Intervention	Residual Risk	Risk rating* (Current)	Risk rating* (Previous)	Date added
1. Whole Body Vibration	• Risk awareness training to manage impacts. • Health monitoring process to be developed.	• Personal injury from boat movement owing to lower resilience as a result of individual physiology	**Tolerate**	**Treat**	**26/08/2025**
2. Staff stress through exposure to unacceptable behaviour of stakeholders	• Introduction of Unacceptable Behaviour policy • Stakeholder engagement plan and activity delivered in pursuit of corporate communications strategy. • Dialogue with Stakeholders to ensure appropriate tone of communications. • Conflict resolution training for "front line" Officers • Introduction of Body worn Camera's and Sky Guard Alarms.	• No change in behaviour of some stakeholders. • Long term sickness caused by stakeholder hostility	**Tolerate**	**Treat**	**26/08/2025**
3. Working at Height	• Staff briefing • Scoping of all quayside ladders • Risk Assessment • Training to be provided if required	• Failure of quayside ladders • Ownership of quayside ladders not clear	**Tolerate**	**Treat**	**26/08/2025**

4. Intertidal working	• Review working in intertidal area risk assessment to review if any changes need making following incident in recent surveys	• Share assessment with NCC H&S advisor • Make team aware of any changes	**Tolerate**	**Treat**	**24/06/2026**

*

Risk Rating
High
Medium
Low

Risk Treatment	
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 outside Eastern IFCA ability to treat and is transferred to higher/external level

Action Item 7

65th Eastern Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority meeting

09 September 2026

Report by: Julian Gregory, CEO

Meeting of the Finance & HR Sub-committee held on 4 August 2026

Purpose of report
To inform members of the key outputs and decisions from the Finance & HR Sub-Committee meeting held on 4 August 2026.

Recommendations
Members are asked to:
- **Note** the content of the report.

Background
Chapter 4 of the Authority's Constitution and Standing Orders sets out the extent to which the Authority's functions are:
- the responsibility of the full Authority.
- the responsibility of the Chief Executive Officer.
- the responsibility of Sub-Committees of the Authority.

Decision making powers for all strategic and operational financial matters are delegated to the Finance & HR sub-committee except for approving and adopting the Annual Budget and setting the levy to the County Councils, which is the responsibility of the full Authority. The full Authority also retains oversight of finance and HR matters by receiving and approving reports from the Finance and HR sub-committee.

Report
The Finance & HR sub-committee meets quarterly, and the last meeting was held on 4 August 2026. Unconfirmed minutes of the meeting can be found at Appendix A.

Appendices
Appendix A - Unconfirmed minutes of the Finance and HR sub-committee meeting held on the 4 August 2026.

Appendix A – Unconfirmed minutes of the Finance and HR sub-committee meeting held on the 4 August 2026.

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Finance & HR Sub-Committee

A meeting of the Finance & HR Sub-Committee took place at the EIFCA Offices, King's Lynn on 4th August 2026 at 1055 hours.

Members Present:

Cllr T Adams	Chair	Norfolk County Council
Cllr R Whitaker	Vice Chair	Lincolnshire County Council
Cllr J Costley		Norfolk County Council
Cllr J Mummery		Suffolk County Council
Cllr G Taylor		Lincolnshire County Council
Mr S Williamson		MMO Appointee
Mr N Schiller		MMO Appointee

Eastern IFCA Officers Present:

J Butler	Assistant Chief Officer (DD)
Julian Gregory	CEO
Joanne Sams	Aston Shaw Accountants

FHR26/15 Welcome

The Chair welcomed members to the meeting.

FHR26/16 Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs Aiano (SCC), and Lawrence (NCC).

FHR26/17 Declarations of Members Interest

Cllr Mummery advised her husband ran the BFP fish auction in Lowestoft, and Cllr Mummery had previously run the Fish Market Alliance, which was dormant whilst Cllr Mummery was a County Councillor. The CEO advised he had spoken to the Monitoring Officer at SCC as Cllr Mummery's situation was unusual due to her strong links to commercial fishing. A dispensation for relevant species would be addressed for the next meeting of the full Authority. During this meeting for item 10 the CEO advised that it would be prudent if Cllr Mummery participated in discussion but did not vote.

At this point, due to the number of new members, there was a round on introductions.

FHR26/18 Minutes of the Finance and Personnel Sub-committee meeting held on 5th May 2026

Members Resolved to accept the minutes as a true record of proceedings.
Proposed: Chair
Seconded: Cllr Costley
All Agreed

FHR26/19 Matters Arising

FHR26/11 ASSET DISPOSAL: The CEO advised *FPV SeaSpray* had been put up for sale, although there had been much interest shown yet.

FHR26/12 IT PROVISION: Transition to a new provider was ongoing.

FHR26/14 ANY OTHER BUSINESS: PIV was at Goodchilds getting a replacement generator fitted. Members were advised the generator replacement was the subject of an insurance claim in terms of the installation.

FHR26/20 Quarter 1 Payments and Receipts

This report set out actual payments and receipts which had occurred during the previous quarter. One table referred to Revenue accounts the other was for Reserve accounts, Mr Schiller felt this was a matter of report and was very easy to understand.

Members Agreed to Note the report.

FHR26/21 Quarter 4: Management Accounts

As with the Payment and Receipts two tables had been provided, one for Revenue accounting the other for Capital and Reserve Accounting. It was noted that in some years there may be no movement in the Capital and Reserve Accounting.

The Management Accounts showed an underspend on salaries, due to the vacancies currently being recruited for.
Cllr Mummery enquired how many staff EIFCA have, in view of the fishing industry being just about finished Cllr Mummery questioned what all the staff were doing. The CEO advised at full complement there were 25 staff, the Marine Science Team and the Marine Protection Team all working together to address both the enforcement, research and conservation objectives. The Business Plan routinely highlighted there

were more requirements than there was time for. The vacancies meant some workstreams were progressing and some were just marking time.

Cllr Mummery then questioned how many MMO Officers there were to cover 5 vessels in Lowestoft, was it time for IFCA and MMO to amalgamate. The CEO advised he was not in a position to speak for the MMO, and possible amalgamation was not a matter for the sub-committee as it would be a national debate involving Defra. He further advised that the IFCAs and MMO had different functions but with some overlap in particular areas.

Mr Schiller questioned what happened to the funding at the end of the year if there was an underspend, would it be given back. The CEO advised any underspend would go into reserves, usually the Asset Replacement Reserve. The funding Authorities were happy with this arrangement as it helped to prevent requests for large amounts of funding to replace assets.

Members Agreed to note the Management Accounts

FHR26/22 Internal and External Audit Reports

Members were provided with a copy of the report from Norfolk Audit Services. Whilst it was no longer a legal obligation to have the accounts audited the Authority continued to do so for probity and best practice.
An external Audit was also carried out by Aston Shaw.

The Internal Audit report showed previous small issues had been addressed, ACO Butler and the Admin Officer were thanked for the clean bill of health.

Cllr Mummery questioned whether the Audit covered processes as well as funding. The CEO advised that all financial processes were audited.

Members Agreed to Note the content of the report.

Ms Sams left the meeting

F&HR26/23 Resolution

Members Resolved that under Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting for items 10 & 11 on the grounds they involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act.
Proposed: Mr Schiller
Seconded: Cllr Taylor
All Agreed

F&HR26/24 Cromer MCZ ARM Project Funding

Summary in accordance with Section 100(C)(2) of the Local Government Act 1972

The ARM project was to gather information on the impact of potting activity, undertaking research and introducing Management Measures. This research had been ongoing for several years but there had been no dedicated funding stream for the work and the project sought external funding streams each year, and as such funding each year was not guaranteed.

An opportunity had arisen to enter into a partnership with a university to look at the impact of gear when deployed. The University would get the majority of the funding, but a total of 25% match funding would be required. Natural England had indicated that they would provide a large proportion of the match funding and EIFCA was being asked to contribute, expected to be between £15-£25k.

It was noted that previous grant funding for the ARM project had a net positive effect on previous year's revenue budgets, which impacted positively on Capital and Reserves accounts, which is where the requested match funding would be drawn from.

Both the Chair and Mr Schiller felt it was unlikely EIFCA would get another opportunity like the one the university were offering.

Cllr Mummery expressed a concern that the work should have been offered to scientists based at Cefas in Lowestoft, but it was noted that would have to be fully funded by EIFCA and would cost considerably more than £25k. In addition, it was unlikely they would have the capacity to undertake what was a niche piece of research and not the usual work undertaken by Cefas. Cllr Mummery asked whether EIFCA Officers could carry out the research, and the CEO advised that this would be stretching both the skill set and capacity.

Following considerable discussion Members Resolved to:

- **Note the content of the paper**
- **Agree in principle to provide a match funding contribution towards the proposed research project as a collaborative partner**
- **Agree to delegate authority to the CEO in consultation with the Chair and Vice-Chair to approve final financial contribution towards the proposed potting study once costs had been finalised.**

Proposed: Chair
Seconded: Mr Schiller
All those able to vote, were in agreement.

F&HR26/25 HR Update

Summary in accordance with Section 100(C)(2) of the Local Government Act 1972

- The recruitment process continued. One IFCO started in March and another was due to start in September.
- A conditional offer had been made for a Business Support Officer, start date was anticipated to be in a few weeks, once checks had been completed .
- A temporary MSO had been employed in March, the incumbent had now been offered a full-time permanent post, subject to meeting EIFCA employment checks.
- One current IFCO Grade 6 had been promoted to IFCO Grade 7.
- During the last quarter there had been one disciplinary for Gross Misconduct.
- Members were advised a Senior MSO was retiring at the end of the year. This would be a loss of 26 years' experience and associated knowledge and skill set. The post had been advertised, and a reasonable number of applications had been received.
- Recruitment to post of Senior IFCO was not so successful.
- A second attempt to recruit to a vacant IFCO position in Lowestoft was ongoing.

Members had a general discussion around the recruitment process

Mr Williamson left the meeting at 1215hrs

Cllr Mummery questioned how the funding was split, was it by activity or need? The CEO advised the Annual Business Plan set out the Authority's priorities and business critical workstreams. The annual budget was set by the Authority based upon recommendations from the CEO as Responsible Finance Officer, who meets annually with the heads of finance from the three County Councils. At this meeting there was discussion about the work of the Authority and management of expenditure and there was usually agreement on the amount of the annual levies that would be placed on the respective councils. This sub-committee would consider and approve a draft budget which would be put to the full authority for approval, in December.

Members Agreed to note the content of the Report.

FHR26/14 Any Other Business

There were no other matters for discussion.

The meeting closed at 1225 hours, the Chair thanked members for attending.

Action Item 8

65th Eastern Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority Meeting

09 September 2026

Marine Net Gain

Report by: Kaitlin Wilson, MSO

Purpose of Report
To inform members of Marine Net Gain, potential implications on inshore fisheries and to seek agreement on a Position Statement with regards to Marine Net Gain.

Recommendations
It is recommended that members:

- **Note** the contents of the report
- **Agree** to adopt the proposed position statement on Marine Net Gain.

Background
Marine Net Gain (MNG) has been developed to target biodiversity decline in the UK marine environment, driven by a variety of pressures including pollution, overfishing and climate change. In practice, MNG is intended to extend the net gain approach into English inshore and offshore waters by requiring in-scope marine developments, such as licensed or consented infrastructure projects, to leave the marine environment in a measurably better state than before (Task & Finish Group, 2026). This is broadly comparable to Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG), which is already mandatory for developers on terrestrial sites and requires a 10% gain, but MNG is being developed specifically for the different ecological, licensing and management context of the marine environment. This means that a development will result in more or greater quality habitat than there was before development began.

MNG is intended to ensure that developers, as in organisations or individuals that are building, installing or operating infrastructure in the marine environment (including Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIP)), provide evidence-based and measurable improvements in the marine environment. The policy framework is still being developed by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra). To support its development, a Task and Finish group was established in 2021 through the Offshore Wind Evidence and Change Programme, in collaboration with the Seabed Used and Developer Group, the RSPB and the Wildlife Trusts (Task & Finish Group, 2026).

The group has worked through three phases: identifying MNG targets with the greatest potential to reverse biodiversity loss; reviewing existing restoration and conservation projects alongside likely future demand; and, from 2025, testing the application of MNG targets through a local pilot in the East Marine Plan area (Task & Finish Group, 2026).

As part of the framework, developers may either restore marine habitats themselves or contribute financially to a national Marine Net Gain fund, which would finance Strategic Marine Net Gain (SMNG) measures. The oversight of this fund would be with a National SMNG Working Group that would be responsible for allocating funds, setting priorities and ensuring consistency. Alongside this, regional SMNG Working Groups would be coordinating delivery at a smaller, regional scale, ensuring that local issues are addressed (Task & Finish Group, 2026).

MNG is being increasingly viewed as a key mechanism for securing marine environmental recovery alongside development. However, there are concerns that the application of MNG could have implications for inshore fisheries, the Marine Protected Area network and the Authority's statutory functions. Of note, the implementation of MNG measures could result in new or expanded fisheries restrictions, further contributing to the spatial squeeze on inshore fishermen. Additionally, the inshore fleet are likely to be disproportionately affected by any restrictions due the small size of vessels active in the fleet which limits the distance vessels can travel to fishing grounds.

To address these concerns, influence the development of MNG and ensure a consistent approach when responding to related consultations and or engaging in the MNG process, it is proposed that the Authority agree and adopt a position statement for MNG. This will help ensure that the delivery of MNG does not result in unjustified or disproportionate impacts on inshore fisheries and the communities that depend on them.

Report

This report seeks to explain why a formal position statement by the Authority is proposed, sets out the principles that it is suggested should guide the Authority's response to Marine Net Gain and presents a proposed position statement for adoption by the Authority.

Need for a position statement

There are positive ecological outcomes that could arise from MNG such as enhanced marine habitats, more resilient ecosystems and pressure reduction, all of which could also have positive outcomes for fishing industry. However, MNG proposals could seek to prioritise "easy wins" by targeting fishing activities rather than other more complex or expensive initiatives. The Phase Three report[1] (Task & Finish Group, 2026) consistently states that the Government will lead action or intervention, however, the same report contains a proportionately large number of measures focused on fisheries, that will not be the primary pressure requiring intervention.

MNG is designed for developments to offset damage to the marine environment, and as fisheries are not involved in such development they are not the cause of the pressures that will arise from them. This creates a risk that, despite the recognition of

[1] Local Application of Strategic Marine Net Gain (SMNG) Targets in the East Marine Plan Area

the broader pressures, fisheries may still become the default sector targeted for "pressure reduction" simply because they are easier to regulate.

Small-scale, inshore fishery business models specifically are typically less resilient to economic impacts, compared to larger, offshore operations, compounding the impacts of what is often referred to as the 'squeeze on inshore fisheries' as fishing grounds are utilised by other sea users (including windfarms, aggregate extraction etc.) and activities are curtailed and restricted as a consequence of Marine Protected Area (MPA) management.

Although the Phase Three report (Task & Finish Group, 2026) does not explicitly state that delivery could default to unfairly targeting fisheries, its recommendations create a structural risk that fisheries may become the most readily targeted sector. The Strategic Targets (Task & Finish Group, 2026) repeatedly notes that many ecological pressures, including water quality, eutrophication, spatial squeeze, climate driven habitat loss, and disturbance from shipping or dredging, are government led and not caused by fisheries, while fisheries restrictions are often the only clearly actionable measures listed. This imbalance is highlighted throughout the proposed targets tables within the Phase Three Report (Task & Finish Group, 2026), where numerous targets explicitly state that industry is "not able to reduce fishing pressure" and that action must be government led. This demonstrates a recognised concern within the MNG evidence base that fisheries could be disproportionately targeted simply because they are easier to regulate, rather than because they are the primary drivers of ecological decline.

<u>*Statutory duties*</u>
The Authority's statutory duties provide the basis for its proposed position on Marine Net Gain. Under section 153 of the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009, the Authority must:

153 Management of inshore fisheries

> (1)The authority for an IFC district must manage the exploitation of sea fisheries resources in that district.
> (2)In performing its duty under subsection (1), the authority for an IFC district 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.

The Authority's duty to 'take steps to contribute to sustainable development' is considered to be relevant to the delivery of MNG, in accordance with Defra Guidance

on such[2]. Some potential targets are fishing industry and government led, requiring Eastern IFCA to support /implement suggested targets in the region (Task & Finish Group, 2026).
Whilst the Authority is likely to support measures delivering genuine environmental benefits, where fisheries restrictions are presented as a mechanism for delivering MNG there is a potential conflict between duties, most notably to 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.

Potential fishery targets

The following proposed fisheries related recommendations come from the Phase Three Report (Task & Finish Group, 2026), and are intended to provide a strategic plan to MNG.

- Stop dredging within a 5-mile radius of the coast.
- Manage bottom towed fishing gear.
- License and reduce trawling effort in vulnerable habitats to zero.
- Reduce bottom trawling by 50%, develop no trawl zones which cover a minimum of 30% of marine area.
- Reduce the extent of bottom impacting fishing activities within protected sites by 50% or more.

These are also the stratgegic targets developed by the Task and Finish Group (2021)[3] for marine and coastal environments, in which they discuss the "Scale of Oppotrunity for Industry Contributions", such as:

- Offshore habitats – High. Pressure removal (particularly fisheries pressure removal) likely to support long-term habitat recovery and ecological recovery.
- Offshore fish. GES has not been achieved for some commercial fish species. Medium/High. Scope to contribute funding of fisheries measure for key food chain species such as Sandeel, Herring and Sprat but implementation of measures will need to be led by government.

These recommendations lead to significant concern that Marine Net Gain (MNG) could lead to disproportionate and unfair impacts on inshore fisheries unless governance structures explicitly safeguard them. Whilst fishing activities can result in marine degradation and loss of biodiversity, other pressures such as sedimentation, offshore developments, pollution and climate change can also have significant detrimental effects.

Fishermen are often the first to feel the consequences of a reduced biodiversity in the marine environment through poorer fishing grounds and spatial or gear restriction. In addition, fishing activities are already subject to assessments to ensure

[2] IFCA byelaw guidance - GOV.UK
[3] ABPmer Report No. R. 3734 - Final - 22 Oct 2021

MPA conservation objectives are met and management measures are introduced where adverse effects are identified and require mitigation.

Marine Net Gain is intended to be delivered in two ways, with developers choosing to implement habitat restoration themselves or to contribute to a nationally pooled fund. This fund is intended to support Strategic Marine Net Gain (SMNG) measures, creating a risk that environmental uplift generated from development within the Eastern IFCA district may be delivered elsewhere. This could result in localised ecological degradation, reduced biodiversity, and diminished fishing opportunities within the district while benefits are realised in other regions. Inshore fishers could then face disproportionate restrictions or reputational consequences for declines driven by pressures originating outside the fishing sector.

Potentially, the proposals set out by the Task and Finish Group could directly impact fishing livelihoods, with several structural elements including nationally pooled funds, government led pressure reduction for non-fisheries sectors, and the concentration of actionable measures on fisheries creating a credible risk that inshore fleets may bear disproportionate burdens unless regional governance and sector-specific safeguards are established.

Proposed principles for considering MNG development and proposals
When considering MNG proposals, it is suggested that the following principles should be applied:

1. **Is evidence based** – there should be clear, robust evidence that proposed measures address real environmental pressures or opportunities
2. **Is proportionate** - measures should be proportionate to the scale of the environmental benefit required and should not go further than necessary.
3. **Applies the 'polluter pays' principle** - MNG should not result in fisheries carrying the burden of offsetting impacts caused by other sectors or developments
4. **Is locally relevant and regionally delivered** – MNG measures should ensure that environmental benefits arising from development are delivered, wherever possible, in the local or regional seas affected by that development.
5. **Considers displacement and cumulative impacts** - proposals should consider whether restrictions would displace fishing effort elsewhere, contribute to spatial squeeze or add to existing pressures on the inshore fleet.
6. **Assesses social and economic consequences** - proposals should consider the effect on local fishing businesses, coastal communities, vessel viability, ports, supply chains and the ability of smaller vessels to adapt.
7. **Recognises existing fisheries management -** where fisheries have already been assessed as compatible with conservation objectives, or where management measures are already in place or being developed, MNG should not duplicate or undermine those processes.
8. **Is consistent with the Authority's statutory duties -** the proposal should support sustainable development, balance social, economic and environmental needs, and be compatible with the Authority's conservation duties.

It is suggested that Eastern IFCA's position should support regional governance of Strategic Marine Net Gain, including formal IFCA representation, to ensure that MNG measures and associated funding are locally relevant, regionally delivered, and informed by statutory inshore fisheries management expertise. This is necessary to ensure that environmental benefits are directed towards the marine areas affected by development, that responsibility for environmental improvement rests with the sectors creating the relevant pressures, and that MNG does not impose disproportionate burdens on small-scale coastal fishing communities.

These principles provide a framework for assessing whether MNG proposals are appropriate, justified and consistent with the Authority's statutory role. They also provide the basis for the proposed position statement set out below.

Proposed position statement
To address these risks and ensure a consistent approach to Marine Net Gain development, a position statement has been prepared for members' consideration:

Eastern IFCA will actively engage in the development and delivery of Marine Net Gain, including Strategic Marine Net Gain and any associated Marine Net Gain fund mechanisms, where measures provide genuine, measurable and locally relevant environmental benefits. Eastern IFCA will not support measures that have an overall adverse or disproportionate impact upon fishing activities, fishing opportunities, or coastal fishing communities, or where benefits generated from development within the district are not fairly reflected in local or regional delivery.

Financial Implications
None identified.

Legal Implications
None identified

Conclusion
The proposed position statement is intended to provide a consistent basis for responding to future Marine Net Gain consultations, project engagement and policy development. It does not oppose Marine Net Gain in principle; rather, it sets out the circumstances in which the Authority would support or object to specific measures.

Appendices
None

Background Documents
None

References
Task & Finish Group (2021) *Strategic Net Gain: Final Report.* Offshore Wind Evidence and Change Programme, The Crown Estate. ABPmer Report No. R. 3734 - Final - 22 Oct 2021

Task & Finish Group (2026) *Local Application of Strategic Marine Net Gain Targets in the East Marine Plan Area: Final Report.* Offshore Wind Evidence and Change Programme, The Crown Estate. Available at: Local Application of Strategic Marine Net Gain (SMNG) Targets in the East Marine Plan Area

Action Item 9

Eastern Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority Meeting

09 September 2026

IFCA Regulation and Compliance Framework

Report by: J. Gregory, CEO

Purpose of Report
To advise members of national developments on the Regulation and Compliance Framework and to recommend an updated national Regulation and Compliance Strategy and Enforcement Policy for approval.

Recommendations
It is recommended that members:

- **Note** the content of the report including the introduction of the IFCO Code of Conduct.
- **Agree** to adopt of the revised national Regulation and Compliance Strategy.
- **Agree** to adopt the revised national Enforcement Policy.

Background
Upon inception in 2011 all ten Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authorities (IFCAs) developed Enforcement and Compliance Policies that were guided by national Success Criterion and High Level Objectives (HLO) agreed between Defra and the IFCAs.
At that time Success Criterion 3 provided that for each IFCA '*A fair, effective and proportionate enforcement regime is in place.'* There was collaboration between IFCAs as each developed a risk-based enforcement framework that were broadly similar but with some minor variations. The original Enforcement and Compliance Strategy for Eastern IFCA was noted at the 5th meeting of the full Authority in April 2012.

Under the same Success Criterion, HLO 3.2a provided that for each IFCA '*A code of conduct for inspections both at shore and at sea is created by 30th October and reviewed annually. The code of conduct is published on each IFCA's website and available from each IFCA's office by 30 April each year.'* The IFCAs collaborated on the development of a Code of Conduct for Inspections (see Appendix A), which was approved by the Chief Officers Group in January 2012 and noted at the 5th meeting of the full Authority in April 2012.

The original Success Criterion and HLOs, were later replaced by new HLOs aligned with the UK Marine Policy Statement, under which Success Criteria, Outcomes and Indicators now sit.

HLO2 '*Ensuring a strong, healthy and just society'* sits above Success Criterion 2 which provides that *'IFCAs implement a fair, effective and proportionate enforcement regime.'* Success Criterion 2 together with the associated Outcomes and Indicators are at Appendix B.

Over time individual IFCAs made some revisions to the original Enforcement Policies and the use and relevance of the Code of Conduct for Inspections gradually diminished, due in part at least to its limited scope and much of its content effectively becoming standard operating procedure. Of note is that Indicators SC2D and SC2E under Success Criterion 2 (Appendix B) refer to an IFCO Code of Conduct being adopted and reflected in work objectives and appraisals. In the absence of such a code it is assumed that this refers to the Code of Conduct for Inspections but given its limited scope it is apparent that something more comprehensive was envisaged.

In 2014 Eastern IFCA introduced a Regulation and Compliance Strategy which set out the principles that would guide the introduction of regulation and how the strategy would be implemented tactically, which included the introduction of an annual Strategic Assessment and an updated Enforcement Policy.

In February 2025 the Government published the quadrennial Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authorities Conduct and Operations Report 2018-2022 (C&O report). The report is structured by overarching themes, developed through analysis of the data:

- Accountability, Governance and Finance;
- Engaging Stakeholders and Working in Partnership;
- Evidence and Data; Fisheries Management;
- Compliance and Enforcement.

The analysis led to thirteen Government conclusions, which are addressed in the Government Response (Appendix C refers).

To address the findings of the C&O report the Conduct and Operations Report Recommendations Implementation Steering Group (CORRIS) was established comprising the Chair and Vice-Chair of the IFCA Chief Officers Group, the Chief Officer of the Association of IFCAs and senior representatives from Defra and the Marine Management Organisation. The overall purpose of the Group is to provide identifiable leadership and ownership for considering and addressing the findings of the report through a collaborative and coordinated approach.

Under the Scheme of Delegations in the Authority's Constitution and Standing Orders responsibility for approving the regulation and compliance framework falls to the full Authority.

Report

From the outset CORRIS identified the cross-cutting nature of many of the findings of the C&O report and identified various actions and workstreams intended to address them. A key theme underpinning this work has been to seek to achieve consistency between all IFCAs with variations existing only where there is an identifiable requirement due to local circumstances.

One such workstream was to review the IFCAs Enforcement and Compliance policies, which has been undertaken by CORRIS in consultation with the IFCA Chief Officers Group and the National Inshore Marine Enforcement Group via the group's Chair.

This work has led to the development of a Regulation and Compliance Strategy, an Enforcement Policy and a Code of Conduct for Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Officers (IFCO), which are intended to be adopted by all IFCAs to ensure consistency.

IFCA Regulation and Compliance Strategy (R&C Strategy)

Whilst it is recognised that management measures required for inshore fisheries resources and to protect MPAs will vary between IFCA districts because of a varied fishing industry and a dynamic marine environment, it is important that the approach taken is consistent, fair and importantly, easily understood by stakeholders.

The R&C Strategy is intended to provide the framework within which all IFCAs fulfil their regulatory and compliance remit, and it provides a set of principles that incorporate legislative requirements and underpin the IFCAs approach to ensure that it is transparent, accountable, necessary, proportionate and consistent. The strategy also sets out key elements of the tactical approach to implementing the strategy, which includes the IFCA Enforcement Policy.

The IFCA R&C Strategy has been agreed by the IFCA Chief Officers Group and can be found at Appendix D.

IFCA Enforcement Policy

The Enforcement Policy is intended to ensure '*…the delivery of a fair, effective, consistent and proportionate enforcement regime through an intelligence led and risk-based approach and ongoing engagement with affected stakeholders.'*

The policy sets out the principles that will be followed to ensure that stakeholders are fully informed on the existence of and rationale for regulation as well as setting out the range of sanctions that can be applied where necessary in cases of non-compliance. It also sets out that IFCAs will work in accordance the principles set out in the Legislative and Regulatory Reform Act 2006[4] and the requirements of the Regulators' Code[5].

The policy also provides that decision making in relation to prosecutions will consider both the sufficiency of evidence and public interest tests and will be undertaken by

[4] The statutory principles of good regulation can be viewed in Part 2 (21) on page 12: http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2006/51/pdfs/ukpga_20060051_en.pdf.

[5] Regulators' Code - GOV.UK

both an appropriate officer who has not been directly involved with the investigation and independently by the IFCA's solicitors. This is aligned with the Code for Crown Prosecutors[6].

The IFCA Enforcement Policy has been agreed by the IFCA Chief Officers Group and can be found at Appendix E.

IFCO Code of Conduct

The role of IFCOs and the importance of their conduct in the context of their warranted status and ability to exercise powers over people and to direct them to undertake a particular function or course of action was identified as an important factor when reviewing the IFCA regulation and compliance framework.

Given the limited scope and diminished relevance of the 2012 Code of Conduct for Inspections, the Indicators under Success Criterion 2 (SC2D and SC2E - Appendix B refers) and the importance of maintaining the confidence of stakeholders, particularly considering the findings of the C&O report, a new IFCO Code of Conduct has been developed.

The purpose of the Code is to provide standards of professional behaviour that are appropriate for IFCOs charged with undertaking duties and exercising powers that impact upon the activities and lives of others. Whilst it is not statutory for IFCAs it is drawn from the Standards of Professional Behaviour set out in legislation that applies to the Police Service in England and Wales.[7]

The IFCO Code of Conduct has been agreed by the IFCA Chief Officers Group and can be found at Appendix F.

It is relevant to note that this is regarded as an HR related matter and as such falls to the CEO under the Scheme of Delegations in the Authority's Constitution and Standing Orders.

Financial Implications
None identified

Legal Implications
Both the revised R&C Strategy and Enforcement Policy take account of relevant legislative requirements and associated guidance.

The Authority's HR advisor has been consulted on the introduction of the IFCO Code of Conduct and has advised that as it does not involve contractual chages for staff formal consultation is not required. It was suggested that Unison be advised of its introduction and that staff are given the opportunity to see the code and to comment prior to implementation and this has been undertaken.

Conclusion

[6] The Code for Crown Prosecutors | The Crown Prosecution Service
[7] Schedule 2, The Police (Conduct) Regulations 2020.

The combination of the IFCA Regulation and Compliance Strategy, Enforcement Policy and IFCO Code of Conduct are intended to provide a cohesive framework that ensures that all IFCAs approach to regulation and compliance is transparent, accountable, necessary, proportionate and consistent. Achieving this will require more than simply adopting the documents and they will need to be reflected in in officer induction, training and development as well as being a key driver for working practices.
The three documents also form part of a constructive response to several of the findings of the C&O report including:

> *2. Oversight of IFCA activities*
> *There is duplication and lack of clarity between IFCA and MMO roles, particularly around enforcement and compliance.*
>
> *3. Transparency around decision making*
> *Decision-making processes are not transparent, and it is unclear how stakeholder input influences final decisions.*
>
> *5. Transparency around consultations*
> *Engagement needs to be more locally tailored and closer to fishing communities.*
>
> 7*. Promoting partnership working arrangements*
> *Partnership working is not well communicated or visible to stakeholders.*
>
> *11. Building trust*
> *There is too much emphasis on enforcement, which undermines trust.*
>
> *13. Complaints*
> *Complaints processes are inconsistent and hard to navigate.*

The principles of the R&C Strategy embed stakeholder engagement, involvement, education and consultation in the regulatory process as well as addressing the ability for stakeholders to appeal, object and complain. They also include 'Collaboration and commonality' that address partnership working, and the Tactical Approach includes partnership working with partners including the MMO with joint Tasking and Coordinating Group arrangements and de-confliction of compliance activity to avoid undue burden on those that are the subject of regulation.

It is recommended that both the revised national Regulation and Compliance Strategy and Enforcement Policy are adopted by the Authority.

Appendices
Appendix A – Code of Conduct for Inspections 2012
Appendix B – IFCA Success Criterion 2
Appendix C – IFCA Conduct and Operations Report 2018-2022 Findings
Appendix D – IFCA Regulation and Compliance Strategy
Appendix E – IFCA Enforcement Policy
Appendix F – IFCO Code of Conduct

Background Documents

Papers and minutes for Items 21 and 22 of the 5th Eastern IFCA meeting held on 25 April 2012.

Papers and minutes for item 6 of the meeting of the Regulation and Compliance Sub-Committee held on 25 November 2014.

Appendix A

CODE OF CONDUCT FOR INSPECTIONS

INSHORE FISHERIES AND CONSERVATION AUTHORITIES (IFCAs)

This Code of Conduct should be read in conjunction with other statutory and policy requirements. This is a framework document, and individual Authorities may provide additional information according to specific needs and circumstances.

RESPONSIBILITY DURING INSPECTIONS

Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Officers (IFCOs) are employed by Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authorities to carry out inspections of marine organisms, fishing vessels, fishing equipment and vehicles and to monitor compliance and enforce EU, UK, local fisheries and environmental legislation both ashore and out to 6nm from the coastline. Some IFCOs also enforce on behalf of other government bodies such as the Environment Agency and the Marine Management Organisation.

Whilst carrying out inspections, IFCOs will endeavour to conduct inspections in a courteous and fair manner and will promote a professional image on behalf of the IFCA. IFCOs will state their intentions and may ask for assistance in order to carry out their duties. Those subject to inspection are expected to show a level of cooperation and courtesy that will allow the IFCOs to carry out their duties without fear of reprisal, harassment or abuse and to avoid any action which would amount to obstruction of the IFCO.

Persons subject to inspection must alert the IFCO carrying out the inspection to any potential hazards and it is expected that IFCOs and Masters of vessels being inspected will maintain good communication in order to ensure Health and Safety is not compromised.

On the conclusion of an inspection, the IFCO will inform those inspected of the findings. This may result in words of advice being given or a caution being issued where the person inspected is suspected of not complying with the relevant legislation. If it is necessary to seize equipment during an inspection, the IFCO will issue a receipt.

BOARDING VESSELS

A lead enforcement officer will identify him/her self to the skipper of the vessel subject of the inspection. The Officer will explain the reason and purpose of the inspection.

The presence of the skipper can be requested for all or some of the elements of an inspection process. Assistance of the skipper and/or crew must be provided if it is requested .

All IFCO’s carry warrant/ID cards which will be made available for inspection upon request or when it is practicable to do so.

In order to facilitate an inspection, it is expected that Masters of vessels maintain a proper VHF watch on Channel 16 and cooperate and respond when hailed.

In the interests of Health & Safety, Masters will be asked to facilitate a safe boarding for IFCOs carrying out inspections and to cooperate and comply with specific instructions to aid a safe boarding and compliance with legislation. Examples of such requests may be to slow down, to offer a lee or haul gear and provide a suitable boarding ladder. Each individual inspection will dictate the nature of the request made.

It is the intention of the IFCA's to conduct inspections so far as possible with minimal interference.

INVESTIGATIONS

The IFCA will endeavour to carry out necessary further investigations leading from inspections in a timely manner.

STANDARD OF DRESS

IFCOs will not always be in uniform when carrying out their duties. However, all IFCOs will present their Warrant Card when identifying themselves.

CONTACTS FOR ENQUIRIES

Any questions about this document, the carrying out of inspections or subsequent investigations or anyone experiencing dissatisfaction during any of these processes can send their concerns in writing to the Chief Officer of the relevant IFCA. The time for responding may depend on the nature of the concerns highlighted but where possible such concerns will be addressed in a timely manner.

Adopted: IFCA Chief Officers Group

January 2012

Appendix B

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 <u>all</u> Warranted Officers. • **SC2F**: Warranted Officers attain accreditation. <u>All</u> undertake Continuing Professional Development

Appendix C – IFCA Conduct and Operations Report 2018-2022

Findings of the report

The report is structured by overarching themes, developed through analysis of the data: Accountability, Governance and Finance; Engaging Stakeholders and Working in Partnership; Evidence and Data; Fisheries Management; and Compliance and Enforcement.

The analysis has led to thirteen government conclusions, which are addressed by the Government Response. The conclusions are as follows:

1. IFCA committee structure and membership

IFCA committee structures are set out in accordance with IFCA Orders and the MMO appoints general members following guidance issued by Defra. Stakeholders report that committee general membership does not adequately reflect fisher representation with respect to knowledge, expertise and input to decision making and that there is an imbalance between fisher and environmental interests.

2. Oversight of IFCA activities

The IFCAs collaborate with other organisations, including the MMO, on various workstreams such as intelligence gathering, enforcement, training, and byelaw development. Stakeholders note duplication particularly between IFCAs and the MMO which may impact on delivery of partnership outcomes, including efficient ways of working.

3. Transparency around decision making

The divergence between the Chief Officers and stakeholder feedback indicates that although the IFCAs may engage with stakeholders to inform decision making and publish decisions, the process between engagement and final decision is not sufficiently transparent for stakeholders.

By not understanding the decision-making process or how the IFCAs have balanced multiple viewpoints, stakeholders (particularly fishers) are not feeling sufficiently engaged and are not able to understand if their inputs have influenced the resultant decision.

4. Funding and accountability

Chief Officers and stakeholders shared concerns with the funding provided to and utilised by IFCAs. Government acknowledges the range of IFCA revenue budgets. It is for IFCA committees to agree work plans that fulfil the IFCAs statutory duties and determine the corresponding level of funding. The current funding model, including accountability arrangements between Defra and Local Authorities, is not transparent and limits the oversight of the effectiveness IFCA management such as day to day running costs associated with the organisations, risks associated with budget management, and delivery of duties.

5. Transparency around consultations

There are a wide variety of engagement methods that the IFCAs use with a significant range of stakeholders, with communication by email and consultations being common methods. Less common methods included stakeholders accessing authority meeting papers, attending authority meetings, or through social media.

In quayside conversations stakeholders expressed a need and preference for face-to-face communication and indicated that online approaches didn't reach some, in particular older members of their community.

Stakeholder perception was mixed around transparency of consultations which led to reduced confidence and trust in IFCA public consultations and how the information is used.

6. Tailoring engagement

Effective stakeholder engagement through the Covid-19 pandemic was challenging.

The large spatial geography of some IFCA districts creates obstacles for effective communication. Stakeholders wished to see engagement that was closer to their home ports and communities. Specific stakeholder groups wish to see engagement and communication channels tailored to the needs of the audience.

7. Promoting partnership working arrangements

IFCAs work closely with other public bodies across several workstreams and through a number of fora. Stakeholders perceive that partnership working is not always communicated sufficiently and appropriately.

8. Stakeholder engagement through data collection

IFCAs gather evidence from a wide variety of stakeholders which enables them to identify and prioritise issues while balancing the needs of local sectors and communities. Fishers perceived that evidence they provided was not always utilised and reflected in reports. Fishers, as an important stakeholder group, wished to see more encouragement of fishers and contractors contributing to data collection and science programmes.

9. Balancing stakeholder views in decision making

IFCA management decisions are shown to be evidence based, using a range of available sources. Some stakeholders, in particular inshore fishers, do not feel that they have sufficient ability to influence management decisions; they reported that their fisheries are not balanced alongside other users of the marine environment, which can impact trust in IFCAs as fishing regulators. IFCA statutory duties as set out in section 153 and 154 of MaCAA state that IFCAs must ensure that the Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) in their district are appropriately protected from damaging fishing activities.

10.Byelaw making process

The process for making and confirming byelaws across the IFCAs, MMO and Defra is complex, and Defra acknowledges the rigour required to implement new legal instruments is extensive.

Efficiencies across partners could be explored to improve stakeholder engagement and the pace at which new measures can be implemented.

11.Building trust

IFCA officers that undertake enforcement are trained in accordance with the requirement of the statutory powers afforded to them through warrants. Stakeholders believe that there is a disproportionate emphasis on enforcement. Some stakeholders report that this may be influenced by the volume of IFCA employees with a police or military background.

12.Knowledge of the fishing industry

IFCA compliance and enforcement strategies are in accordance with Government's Codes of Practice, such as the Regulators Code and Powers of Entry. Officers are highly trained and work in accordance with the codes and associated legislation, as they are legally required to do.

Some fishers would like to see a greater tailoring of approach to include the possibility of face-to-face communication where appropriate, and an increase in enforcement staff who have a background in the fishing industry. Differences are reported between MMO and IFCA enforcement approaches and decisions.

13.Complaints

Efforts are made by IFCAs to conduct activities as a fair and proportionate regulator. Defra recognises that in support of this, there is a need for a consistent and effective complaints process across all IFCAs that is published and easy to navigate.

Government Response to these findings

We are very grateful for the time that all interested parties have taken to provide constructive input to help us create the IFCA Conduct and Operations Report 2018-2022 ("the report"). The conclusions of the report have guided our approach to developing recommendations to support the improvement of the conduct and operations of the IFCAs. Conclusions have been drawn from the analysis of the evidence arising from the consultation response and supporting data commissions, and recommendations are grouped to address multiple conclusions.

Government will work with interested parties where appropriate, to support the work required to fulfil the implementation of the recommendations. A review of progress will be undertaken by government and reported on in subsequent Conduct and Operations Reports.

Defra will undertake work to further look at the MMO/IFCA interface and regulatory responsibilities. This will include close work with the MMO and IFCAs, and if necessary other marine regulators, to review the roles and responsibilities of MMO and IFCAs as marine regulators, with an eye to improving the regulatory cohesion, simplifying the landscape and developing and agreeing an optimal operational model **(Conclusion 2, 7)**.

This review will look back at the findings of the 2019 IFCA independent evaluation and will consider the themes explored throughout this report, considering, under any future operating model, how to ensure that decision-making and communication thereof is transparent and reflective of key stakeholder interests and sets out best practice where it can be demonstrated **(Conclusion 3, 5, 6)**.

Effective and clear funding and accountability arrangements are critical to the longevity of any organisation. This consultation has highlighted concerns about the complexity of funding arrangements for IFCAs, complicating forward planning and effective delivery. An additional aspect to the review will consider accountability for delivery as well as setting common standards for IFCAs. As part of the wider review on roles and responsibilities mentioned above, Defra will consider funding and accountability arrangements to enable future delivery of statutory duties and government priorities **(Conclusion 4)**.

Given that stakeholder feedback has suggested that committee general membership does not adequately reflect fishers' interests, The review will also seek to strengthen Defra guidance to the MMO with respect to committee general member appointments and will consider ways to increase fisher representation on committees **(Conclusion 1)**. The byelaw making process will be considered including what efficiencies could be made to reduce the time it takes to make and confirm byelaws and communicate those in a timely way to stakeholders **(Conclusion 10)**. It will also consider other guidance that Defra has provided to the IFCAs and any other guidance that may be useful.

In the immediate term, the Minister encourages IFCAs to implement the following recommendations:

Firstly, to ensure that all stakeholders are given the opportunity to maximise their input into management decisions (Conclusion 9). In parallel, IFCAs should maximise transparency and communication around decision making processes and consultations, ensuring stakeholders can determine how their input is used, and that engagement is tailored to the needs of stakeholder groups (Conclusion 3, 5, 8, 6).

Where IFCAs are compelled to prioritise MPA protection over fisheries management, IFCAs should clearly explain the reasoning for this prioritisation to help build trust and understanding. The IFCAs should aim to be transparent when other constraints impact fisheries management decisions (Conclusion 9).

IFCAs should consider ways to improve collaboration and communication when undertaking regulatory duties to build understanding and trust amongst fishers, such as on the thresholds for issuing advice and guidance and/or taking enforcement action. (Conclusion 11). IFCAs should consider whether closer collaboration with those with a background in the fishing industry can support appropriate enforcement approaches (Conclusion 12). IFCAs should also consider ways to work with local authorities to improve the adequacy of complaints processes and review their effectiveness from a customer-facing perspective (Conclusion 13).

Appendix D

Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authorities
Regulation and Compliance Strategy

Introduction

The ten Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authorities (IFCAs) covering the English coastline and the Isles of Scilly have a shared Vision:

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 IFCAs also have a shared remit to manage inshore fisheries resources and to protect Marine Protected Areas (Marine Conservation Zones and European Marine Sites) within their district. Because the issues relating to fisheries and MPAs vary from district to district, each IFCA is empowered to provide management measures which are in keeping with local conditions.

IFCA byelaw making powers are provided by the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009[8] and the process for making byelaws remains aligned to guidance[9] published by Defra in 2011.

Objective

Management measures required for inshore fisheries resources and to protect MPAs will vary between IFCA districts as a consequence of a varied fishing industry and a dynamic marine environment. It is, therefore, important that the approach applied to management is well understood, consistent and fair. Whilst decisions may differ from one IFCA district to another, the principles underpinning them will remain consistent.

This strategy provides the framework within which all IFCAs will fulfil their regulatory and compliance remit, and it should be read in conjunction with the IFCAs Enforcement Policy and individual IFCA's Compliance Risk Register.

Principles

Fisheries management can only succeed with an integrated approach encompassing communication, research and enforcement. The following principles, which incorporate the requirements of the Legislative and Regulatory Reform Act 2006 and

[8] Sections 155 to 164 Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009
[9] ifca-byelaw-guidance.pdf

the Regulators' Code[10], underpin the IFCAs approach to regulation and compliance to ensure that it is transparent, accountable, necessary, proportionate and consistent[11]:

- **Bottom-up approach** –It is recognised that a regulate-first approach may lead to other, possibly more appropriate measures not being considered. The IFCAs will always consider whether less burdensome non-regulatory measures may be appropriate prior to proposing regulation. This may include working with the fishing industry, recreational fishers and the wider public to develop a code of practice as an alternative to regulation, setting out measures that significantly reduce the risk of harm to fisheries or the marine environment. Codes of practice will be published on the IFCA's website.
- **Education, empowerment and consultation** – Compliance with sustainable fishing practices is most successfully obtained through a co-management approach. To achieve this fishers accept that management measures will be required to achieve sustainable, environmentally compatible exploitation of fisheries and take an active part in consultation in order to assist with the development of coherent management measures. The IFCAs will ensure appropriate engagement with relevant stakeholders when developing or reviewing management measures.
- **Collaboration and commonality** – Local issues require local solutions, however managing inshore fisheries resources in isolation of partner organisations will lead to complicated regulatory frameworks which will be difficult to understand and to comply with. The IFCAs will seek appropriate engagement with partners when developing management measures and undertaking compliance activity. This will include working with partners in seeking to minimise requirements for the provision of information following the principle of '*collect once, use many times*', sharing information with other regulators and working collaboratively on compliance.
- **Evidence based management** – Management measures will be based upon the best available evidence and will be periodically reviewed to ensure that they remain relevant. In the absence of comprehensive evidence a precautionary approach will be taken where it is judged necessary and appropriate.
- **Balance and sustainability** – Achieving the right balance between social, environmental and economic benefits to ensure healthy seas, sustainable fisheries and a viable industry is explicit in the IFCAs vision. Without sustainable fisheries there cannot be a viable industry and as such the

[10] Regulators' Code - GOV.UK
[11] The statutory principles of good regulation can be viewed in Part 2 (21) on page 12: http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2006/51/pdfs/ukpga_20060051_en.pdf.

IFCAs will, within the parameters of their statutory duties[12], seek to develop and maintain management measures that ensure the sustainability of inshore fisheries. Understanding and endeavouring to minimise negative economic impacts and the cost of compliance will be important considerations in developing regulation, as will seeking to enable both compliance and growth within industry.

- **Appeal, objection and complaint** –Consultations on proposed regulation will provide the opportunity to disagree with or to object to proposed regulation and objections that are not resolved will be notified to Defra for consideration in the Byelaw making process. Objections not resolved when making or revising permit conditions or polices under an existing byelaw will be a consideration for the IFCA committee. A clear complaints process will be accessible on IFCA websites and will include the option to refer a matter to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman[13] if a complainant considers that the matter has not be satisfactorily addressed under the complaints process. Where enforcement action leads to prosecution and conviction at court an appeals process is provided by the criminal justice system.
- **Endorsing compliance** – Clarity on regulation together with guidance and advice are essential to ensure compliance. The IFCAs approach is to make information on regulations easily accessible and to encourage compliance, with but sanctions are also available to deter, penalise and remove any benefit from non-compliance in line with the Enforcement Policy.
- **Risk-based enforcement** – The IFCAs will adopt a targeted approach to enforcement to make best use of its limited resources. Enforcement resources will be targeted at the highest areas of risk and in accordance with the Enforcement Policy

Tactical Approach

This strategy is underpinned by the following elements, which together will ensure a cohesive approach to regulation and compliance.

Strategic Assessment

As part of the business planning cycle a comprehensive risk assessment of all fisheries and Marine Protected Areas within the district will be undertaken and refreshed annually. It will combine fisheries data and other evidence to identify fisheries and MPAs that require management measures or changes in management measures and will list them for action in order of priority to inform the IFCAs Annual Plan.

Compliance Risk Register

[12] Sections 153 and 154 of the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009 set out the duties of all IFCAs and the priority that must be applied to protecting the environment from the impact of fishing activity.
[13] Home - Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman

A comprehensive risk assessment of all fisheries and regulated Marine Protected Areas within the district will be undertaken annually. It will assess the risks of non-compliance with UK and local fisheries and environmental legislation (byelaws) in order to inform enforcement activity.

Tasking and Co-ordination Group (TCG)

The purpose of the TCG is to ensure appropriate tasking of enforcement resources. It achieves this through consideration of risks identified in the Compliance Risk Register, emerging issues and new intelligence. The frequency of TCG meetings will be determined by individual IFCAs.

Partnership Working

The IFCAs work collaboratively with partner organisations such as Environment Agency and the Marine Management Organisation with joint TCG arrangements, joint patrols and de-confliction of compliance activity were appropriate to avoid undue burden on those that are the subject of regulation.

IFCA Enforcement Policy

This policy sets out the IFCAs approach to compliance and enforcement. It provides that an adaptive co-management approach will be taken, where compliance is achieved through engagement, advice and understanding. It also provides the range of sanctions open to the IFCAs where compliance is not achieved through this approach.

Appendix E

Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authorities

Enforcement Policy

Statement of Intent

All Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authorities (IFCAs) are committed to the delivery of a fair, effective, consistent and proportionate enforcement regime through an intelligence led and risk-based approach and ongoing engagement with affected stakeholders.

Introduction

This document sets out the IFCAs approach to achieving compliance and it provides the general principles that will be followed.

In undertaking their regulatory responsibilities the IFCAs start from the position that the majority of the people, organisations and industries engaged in the inshore fisheries, whether recreationally or commercially, are compliant with the regulations and controls that affect them. The IFCAs will work with all parties to ensure that they understand what rules apply to their particular activity and the rationale that makes regulation necessary. To support compliance and awareness of the regulations as they apply to people, IFCAs will provide guidance and will seek to publicise the restrictions that are in place.

Where consensus with the management approach is not achieved or where the potential gain is significant, the risk of illegal activity increases. The risk is even greater where an effective enforcement deterrent is not in place. The deterrent is only effective where the perceived risk of enforcement action is high and the consequences are serious. In recognition of the need to have an effective deterrent, fines applicable to byelaw offences under the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009 increased in 2015 from a maximum of £50,000 to unlimited fines[14].

The IFCAs use various compliance measures to ensure, where possible, that no person(s) illegally engaged in fishing related activity removes fishing opportunities for others or gains an unfair market advantage by breaking the rules and that law abiding person(s) are not disadvantaged by being compliant. IFCAs will also seek to use appropriate compliance and enforcement measures, where they consider it to be necessary, to ensure that the marine environment and sustainability of stocks are not adversely affected by fishing activities.

[14] https://www.legislation.gov.uk/id/uksi/2015/664

The IFCAs appoint warranted Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Officers (IFCO) who have the necessary powers under the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009 to enable them to conduct inspections and investigations (see Conduct of Investigations below). This includes powers to inspect vessels, vehicles and premises, to seize items, fish and fishing gear, to request and copy documents and to detain a vessel to port. The IFCAs officers are fully trained and competent and in exercising their powers they will comply with the IFCO Code of Conduct.

Better Regulation

Where the IFCAs undertake compliance activity, they will work in accordance the principles set out in the Legislative and Regulatory Reform Act 2006[15] and the requirements of the Regulators' Code[16]. In carrying out its functions, each IFCA will ensure that:

I. Any investigative or compliance related action it takes is **proportionate** to specific, identified, risk or need for intervention;

II. It is **accountable** for its regulatory and enforcement activity – to its stakeholders, its partner organisations, Ministers, local taxpayers, the general public and the Courts;

III. Its actions are **consistent**, in that it should make similar (but not necessarily the same) decisions about activity in similar circumstances, in accordance with its delegated responsibilities, statutory objective and guidance;

IV. Its regulatory actions are **transparent**, by publishing information to its regulated stakeholders indicating what enforcement action it can take in appropriate circumstances and what enforcement action it has taken;

V. All its activities and, in particular those that would place a "burden" on a regulated person (such as monitoring, inspection, investigation and compliance actions), are targeted using a **risk-based** approach[17], ensuring such action is for a specific identifiable need, for example, limiting random inspections to specific identified compliance requirements;

VI. IFCOs' are highly trained, competent and adhere to the IFCO Code of Conduct; and

VII. IFCAs will work closely with partner organisations to make best use of available resources and share information.

Stakeholder Engagement

As set out in the IFCAs Regulation and Compliance Strategy, an important element in achieving understanding and compliance is ensuring that those stakeholders who

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[15] The statutory principles of good regulation can be viewed in Part 2 (21) on page 12: http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2006/51/pdfs/ukpga_20060051_en.pdf.
[16] Regulators' Code - GOV.UK
[17] The Compliance Risk Register and Tactical Co-ordinating Group are the means by which this is achieved, in accordance with the IFCA Regulation and Compliance Strategy.

are potentially affected by measures taken by an IFCA have a real opportunity to engage with its work. By engaging in the management process, the IFCAs and all stakeholders are able to properly understand the often-varying perspectives of other parties and the relevant statutory obligations for the IFCAs.

A key element of the warranted IFCOs role is ongoing engagement with the commercial and recreational fishing sectors, which includes not only on matters relating to compliance and enforcement but also on wider matters of concern that stakeholders would like the IFCA to be aware of.

Enforcement Outcomes

The IFCAs will endeavour to use an adaptive co-management approach, where compliance is achieved through engagement, understanding and advice. Where compliance is not achieved by this approach, the IFCAs have a range of enforcement actions available that may be applied as necessary and proportionate to the circumstances of the case. Each option, with the exception of No Further Action, will be recorded by the IFCA and may be taken into consideration when considering enforcement options in cases where there is subsequent offending by the person concerned.

No further action

Where an IFCA decides that there is not sufficient evidence of an offence, or it is not in the public interest to pursue any further investigation of an offence or to take further action, the investigation of that offence will be concluded. In such circumstances, the IFCA will advise all parties and may still communicate with any party who was suspected of committing an offence, in order to raise awareness and highlight illegal practice in respect of the legislation under which the offence had been suspected.

Verbal Warning

A verbal warning may be issued when a minor infringement of legislation is detected. Often used if there is no previous evidence against the person for a similar suspected offence, where the matter can be immediately rectified and there has been no significant harm to fisheries or the marine environment, the intention is to remind the person of relevant legislation, and their obligation to comply.

Advisory Letter

Where it is believed that breaches of legislation may have been committed and it is appropriate to do so, an advisory letter may be sent reminding the person(s) of the need to comply with legislation. An advisory letter may be sent to confirm a verbal warning and may be sent without prejudice to other purely civil remedies[18].

[18] Civil remedies are procedures and sanctions, used to prevent or reduce criminal activity as an alternative to using formal court proceedings.

Official Written Warning

Where an offence has been committed and the sufficiency of evidence test has been satisfied but it is not considered to be in the public interest to implement formal proceedings, an official written warning letter may be sent to the alleged offender, outlining the offence, when it occurred and that it will be held on record and may be taken into consideration should further offending occur. This may be sent without prejudice to other purely civil remedies.

Simple Caution

This option is not used by all IFCAs[19], but where it is a simple caution may be offered by the IFCA to a person over 17 years of age who is liable for a suspected offence. It may be used for the disposal of an infringement where the evidential test is satisfied, and it is in the public interest to offer this sanction.

This disposal may be most appropriate in circumstances where there is no significant financial gain from the offending.

A caution can only be issued to a person who admits the offence and accepts the caution. The caution is a criminal record and may be considered by the Court should the person be convicted of a similar offence in the future.

Simple Cautions' will be issued in line with guidelines set by the Ministry of Justice.[20]

Financial Administrative Penalty

The IFCAs may issue a Financial Administrative Penalty (FAP) as an alternative to criminal prosecution, the level of which will vary according to the circumstances but will not exceed £10,000.[21]

A FAP will only be issued where the evidential test has been satisfied and it is in the public interest to offer this sanction. It may be issued to the owner, skipper and/or charterer of an English or Welsh vessel wherever it operates.

Payment of the penalty by any party on whom the FAP has been served will discharge the liability for prosecution. If a FAP is not paid within the required timescale (28 days), or the FAP is not accepted, the matter will automatically proceed to court (note that non-payment of the FAP is not an offence).

FAPs are not issued for offences concerning the obstruction of officers in the performance of their duties.

Prosecution

The ability to take criminal prosecutions is essential in discouraging serious non-compliance. The purpose is to secure a conviction to enable the court to apply appropriate sanctions including fines and where appropriate, forfeiture of fishing gear, fish and containers and suspension or disqualification from holding an IFCA

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[19] Simple Cautions are used by Cornwall, Devon & Severn, Kent & Essex, Isles of Scilly, and North Eastern IFCAs.
[20] Simple cautions: guidance for police and prosecutors - GOV.UK
[21] The Sea Fishing (Penalty Notices) (England) Order 2011

permit.[22] The court may also determine that the costs of prosecution or a proportion thereof be paid by a defendant.

In order to prosecute or issue a FAP, offer a simple caution or issue an official written warning, the IFCA has to be satisfied that there is:

1) **Sufficient evidence** of the alleged offending and;

2) That there is a clear **public interest** in taking criminal proceedings or a lesser sanction.

The two elements of decision making are aligned with the principles set out in the Code for Crown Prosecutors[23].

Sufficiency of Evidence Test

The IFCA will only commence a prosecution if it is satisfied that there is a realistic prospect of conviction against each suspect on each charge on the available evidence. The IFCA must consider what the defence case may be, and how it is likely to affect the prospects of conviction. If a case does not pass this test, it will not go ahead regardless of how important or serious it may be.

If a case passes the sufficiency of evidence test, the IFCA will consider whether it is appropriate to prosecute, or whether it is appropriate to exercise one of the enforcement options available to it as set out above. In determining the correct response in any individual case, the IFCA will always consider the public interest in prosecuting.

Public Interest Test

Where there is sufficient evidence to justify a prosecution or offer any form of out-of-court disposal, the IFCA must go on to consider whether a prosecution is required in the public interest.

The following lists of public interest factors in favour and against prosecution are not exhaustive and each case must be considered on its own facts and on its own merits:

- Whether the implications of the offending for the enforcement of the regulatory regime undermines the management approach taken;
- The impact of the offending on the environment, including wildlife, and also, where applicable, having regard to the objectives of Marine Protected Areas;
- With regard to offences affecting sea fisheries resources, whether recovery species are involved and any issues as to quota status;
- The level of culpability of the suspect;
- The suspect's age and maturity at the time of the offence;

[22] Section 164 Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009
[23] The Code for Crown Prosecutors | The Crown Prosecution Service

- The financial benefit of the offending or other financial aspects of the offence, including the impact on other legitimate operators;
- Whether the offence was committed deliberately or officials were obstructed during the course of the offending / investigation;
- The previous enforcement record of the suspect;
- The attitude of the offender including any action that has been taken to rectify or prevent recurrence of the matter(s);
- Where offences are prevalent or difficult to detect and the deterrent effect on others by making an example of the offender.

A prosecution is less likely to be required if:

- The court is likely to impose a nominal penalty;
- The seriousness and the consequences of the offending can be appropriately dealt with by an out-of-court disposal which the person(s) accepts;
- The offence was committed as a result of a genuine mistake or misunderstanding;
- The financial gain or disturbance to sensitive marine habitat can be described as minor and was the result of a single incident, particularly if it was caused by a misjudgement;
- There has been a long delay between the offence taking place and the date of the trial, unless there are key mitigating circumstances that caused the delay;
- The person(s) played a minor role in the commission of the offence; the suspect is, or was at the time of the offence, suffering from significant mental or physical ill health.

Decision making in relation to both the evidential and public interest tests will be documented and will be considered initially by an appropriate officer who has not been directly involved with the investigation and independently by the IFCA's solicitors.

Companies and Company Office Holders

Criminal proceedings may be commenced against all those persons suspected of the offence(s). Where there is sufficient evidence and it is in the public interest, proportionate and appropriate to do so, the IFCA may commence proceedings against companies or other bodies liable for offending and company directors or other statutory office holders, where we believe there is evidence of personal liability

Conduct of Investigations

The IFCOs have a range of powers available in order to assist in the prevention and investigation of offending. For the purpose of carrying out any relevant functions the powers[24] include:

- The power to board and inspect fishing vessels or marine installations;
- The power to enter and inspect premises;
- The power to enter and inspect premises and, in exceptional circumstances, dwellings;
- The power to require production of and to inspect documentation;
- The power of seizure and retention of items;
- The power of forfeiture in respect of fish and fishing gear suspected to be unlawful;
- The power to detain vessels or marine installations:
- The power to use reasonable force, if necessary, in the exercise of their powers.

IFCOs will exercise their powers appropriately, lawfully, courteously and proportionately to the particular circumstances. Inspections and investigations will be carried out in accordance with relevant legislation, including the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 (as amended) and the Criminal Procedure and Investigations Act 1996. Officers will act in accordance with the Standards of Professional Behaviour set out in the IFCO Code of Conduct.

[24] Chapter 2, Common Enforcement Powers Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009

Appendix F

Association of IFCA

Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Officers

Code of Conduct

Introduction

The Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authorities (IFCAs) appoint[25] warranted Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Officers (IFCOs) who have the necessary powers[26] to enable them to conduct inspections and investigations. This includes powers to inspect vessels, vehicles and premises, to seize items, fish and fishing gear, to request and copy documents, to detain a vessel to port and to use reasonable force[27], if necessary, in the exercise of such powers.

The IFCAs approach is to encourage compliance with regulation through engagement, education and proportionate enforcement, with sanctions available to deter, penalise and remove any benefit from non-compliance in line with the IFCA Enforcement Policy.

In achieving this it is important that individuals and organisations that are the subject to regulation and the wider public have trust and confidence in warranted IFCOs.

Purpose of the Code

The purpose of the Code of Conduct is to provide standards of professional behaviour that are appropriate for IFCOs charged with undertaking duties and exercising powers that impact upon the activities and lives of others.

Whilst the Code of Conduct is not statutory for IFCAs it is drawn from the Standards of Professional Behaviour set out in legislation that applies to the Police Service in England and Wales.[28] The Code is approved by the IFCA Chief Officer Group and is adopted by all IFCAs.

Standards of Professional Behaviour

Honesty and Integrity

IFCOs must act with honesty and integrity and must not compromise or abuse their position.

Authority, Respect and Courtesy

IFCOs must act with self-control and tolerance, treating members of the public and colleagues with respect and courtesy.

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[25] Section 165 Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009.

[26] Chapter 2 (Common Enforcement Powers) and sections 264, 268, 269 and 284 Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009.

[27] Section 261 Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009.

[28] Schedule 2, The Police (Conduct) Regulations 2020.

IFCOs must not abuse their powers or authority and must respect the rights of all individuals.

Equality and Diversity
IFCOs must act with fairness and impartiality. They must not discriminate unlawfully or unfairly.

Use of Reasonable Force
IFCOs do not ordinarily use force and will only do so to the extent that it is necessary, proportionate, reasonable and lawful in all the circumstances.

Orders and Instructions
IFCOs must only give and carry out lawful orders and instructions.

IFCOs must abide by their IFCA policies and lawful orders.

Duties and Responsibilities
IFCOs must be diligent in the exercise of their duties and responsibilities.

IFCOs have a responsibility to give appropriate cooperation during investigations, inquiries and formal proceedings, participating openly and professionally in line with the expectations of a warranted officer when identified as a witness.

Confidentiality
IFCOs must treat information with respect and access or disclose it only in the proper course of IFCA duties and in compliance with legislation.

Fitness for Duty
IFCOs when on duty or presenting themselves for duty must be fit to carry out their responsibilities.

Discreditable Conduct
IFCOs must not behave in a manner which discredits the IFCAs or undermines public confidence in them, whether on or off duty.

IFCOs must report any action taken against them for a criminal offence, any conditions imposed on them by a court or the receipt of any penalty notice.

Challenging and Reporting Improper Conduct
IFCOs must report, challenge or take action against the conduct of colleagues which has fallen below the Standards of Professional Behaviour.

Action Item 10

65th Eastern Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority Meeting

09 September 2026

Wash Cockle Fishery 2026 Update

Report by: Luke Godwin (ACO)

Purpose of Report
The purpose of this report is to update members on the 2026 Wash cockle fishery.

Recommendations
It is recommended that members:

- **Note** the contents of the report

Background
The Authority manages the Wash cockle fisheries under the Wash Cockle and Mussel Byelaw 2021 and sets management measures (for example, a Total Allowable Catch (TAC) and closed areas to protect future fisheries) in accordance with the Wash Cockle Fishery Management Plan 2018.

The 2026 cockle stock survey identified that stocks were sufficient to enable the opening of a fishery. A Habitat Regulation Assessment was undertaken which concluded that the Authority could rule out adverse effects to the Wash Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) if mitigation (in the form of management measures) were put into place. Natural England agreed with the outcomes of the assessment. Such management measures included closing areas which supported high-density Year-0 (juvenile) cockles.

In addition, the newly identified Hunstanton cockle bed was not opened to the fishery initially pending the outcome of sample collection and analysis to determine whether diseases associated with atypical mortality seen elsewhere in The Wash were present. The intention was to prevent the spread of the diseases to this productive bed. The measure was intended to be temporary, pending the outcome analysis.

Fishery stakeholders were involved in the development of management measures, including via an industry meeting held at an earlier stage of the process to enable input into the design of closed areas in particular. A full industry consultation was also held to gather views on proposed measures. Key outputs of the consultation included:

- Broad agreement with high-density juvenile closures on the proviso that the Authority carefully monitors the closed areas and in the event that die-off is detected (either from ridging out or through atypical mortality) the Authority considers opening such areas to the fishery;

- There were strongly polarised views regarding the daily vessel quota with some industry of the view that it should be increased to ensure the TAC is fully exhausted before the ‘end’ of the fishery and others concerned that this would promote poor practices and reduced economic performance.

The fishery opened with a Total Allowable Catch of 4,992 tonnes on 15 June 2026 using delegated authority provided to the CEO at the 63rd Eastern IFCA meeting.

Members were provided a full report on the cockle stock surveys and management measures introduced at the 64th Eastern IFCA meeting and agreed to endorse the continuation of those management measures.

Report
The following key updates are provided:

Management measure revisions
During sample collection from the Hunstanton cockle bed, die-off consistent with atypical mortality was detected (i.e. moribund cockles in high densities including cockles gapping on the surface of the bed). This observation essentially ruled out the possibility that the bed did not contain cockles contaminated by associated diseases and as such the bed was opened to the fishery on 28 June 2026.

Biosecurity risks from the Thames
Work to investigate and assess potential biosecurity risks arising from vessels operating in the Thames fishery has been delayed due to limited resources and competing priorities, including work associated with non-compliance in the cockle fishery. However, it should be noted that the 2026 fishery was already open when the concern was raised. The associated risk is currently considered to be relatively low, as the level of cockle die-off has not changed significantly in recent years and, in the case of mussels, has reduced, although the cause of this reduction is unknown. On that basis, this matter is considered more appropriately addressed as a workstream for the following year’s fishery.

Fishing activity and uptake of the TAC
Of the 63 permits issuable, 54 permits were issued for the 2026 cockle fishery. The average weight of cockle landed per trip has remained relatively stable at 1850kg since the start of the fishery and approximately 40-45 vessels are regularly active in the fishery.

Determining the uptake of the fishery and the remaining TAC is dependent on having received catch returns and receiving information from other sources such as from cockle processors. Analysis indicates that the fishery has exhausted approximately half of the TAC at the time of writing. However, there are a significant number of missing returns and missing processor data at this time and so only approximate estimates can be made.

Missing data has also impacted estimates of the rate of uptake pursuant of determining whether the fishery will exhaust the TAC during the course of a normal fishery or even before the next survey. However, initial indications are that the TAC will likely be exhausted by the end of September based on current trends and as such there is not case for increasing the daily vessel quota at this time. The uptake of the TAC is under regular review and consideration as to whether to revise the daily vessel quota will also continue.

<u>Compliance</u>
Failure to submit catch returns within the required time period (the Wednesday following the week that fishing took place) is an offence under the Wash Cockle and Mussel Byelaw 2021, and engagement and enforcement actions are ongoing to ensure the timely receipt of catch returns.
11 vessels are also under investigation for suspected fishing activity within closed areas. All such incursions are being treated very seriously, as they have the potential to jeopardise future fisheries and undermine the environmental and stock management of the fishery and Wash MPAs. Such activity also undermines the efforts of the majority of the fleet, who continue to operate responsibly and sustainably.

Notwithstanding the potential consequences of enforcement action on the individuals involved, the serious nature of the non-compliance with closed areas will be a consideration in the development of future closures to ensure that such closures will be effective at protecting high-density juvenile stock.

Non-compliance with closed areas is a high enforcement priority and the significant level of non-compliance is likely to have a detrimental effect on resource available for other workstreams including monitoring closed areas for die-off and broader engagement.

<u>Industry engagement</u>
Industry have generally reported positively on the productivity on the fishery, with most landing the daily quota. Initially most activity was concentrated on The Gat sand, which led to some raising concerns of damage to the bed.

Officers visited the bed in response to concerns raised by fishing industry about damage being caused by poor prop-washing practices and identified that activity was broadly consistent with the Code of Best Practice[29] with a minority of outliers and no serious damage caused. Poor practice includes excessive prop-washing which leaves deep circles in the sands and ‘pushing off the sand too early’ (i.e. before there is sufficient water) which can create deep keel marks in the sands.

Industry have also reported high levels of spat settling on cockle beds. While this is potentially good news in terms of future fisheries, it also increases the risk associated with ‘ridging out’ whereby smaller cockles grow quickly forcing other, older cockles out of the beds and leading to die-off events. The views of some within industry have been that the daily quota should be increased to enable more cockle to be taken before potentially being lost to die-off, however others are of the view that the daily quota should remain at 2-tonnes per day. The situation will continue to be monitored through the remainder of the season.

[29] 2020_Code_Of_Best_Practice.pdf

It is also noteworthy that some reports have also been received relating to general dissatisfaction with the fishery, and in particular the method of fishing (with a preference for dredging) and the requirement and use of vessel trackers. Noting that this has been received from an industry representative, dialogue and engagement is ongoing to understand the extent of the concerns and to what extent they are reflective all the wider Wash fishing fleet.

Financial Implications
Noting the high level of serious non-compliance, pending the completion of associated investigations, there may be a financial implication from legal fees associated with prosecutions. However, this is not thought to pose a budgetary risk.

Legal Implications
Enforcement activity and action is taken in accordance with the Authority's Enforcement Policy[30] and will be proportionate and fair, mitigating risk of legal challenge.

Conclusion
The fishery is considered to be generally successful and productive. Work to manage the fishery dynamically is ongoing including responding to industry concerns and reports as well as analysing available data to inform revisions to management measures.

High levels of non-compliance within closed areas pose a serious risk to the fishery and which has the potential to impact the majority of industry who continue to fish responsibly. However, it is intended that proportionate enforcement action will be taken, in accordance with the Authority's enforcement policy following a full investigation, to ensure that the benefits of non-compliance are removed.

Appendices
None

Background Documents
Papers and minutes for Action Item 10 of the 63rd Eastern IFCA meeting held on 11 March 2026

Papers and minutes for Action Item 11 of the 64th Eastern IFCA meeting held on 24 June 2026

[30] Eastern-IFCA-Enforcement-Policy.pdf

Action Item 11

65th Eastern Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority Meeting

09 September 2026

Annual Report 2025-26

Report by: Luke Godwin, ACO

Purpose of Report
To present the Annual Report 2025-26 for consideration by members.

Recommendations
It is recommended that members:

- **Approve** the Annual Report 2025-26.
- **Direct** the CEO to publish the report and distribute to Defra.

Background
The Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009 requires Eastern IFCA to produce an Annual Report at the end of each financial year and that a copy of the report be sent to the Secretary of State (via Defra).

Report
Officers have prepared a draft Annual Report for 2025-26, which is at Appendix 1 (available online). The report details the Authority's work over the last financial year, progress against the priorities set for that year and other organisational metrics.

Financial Implications
N/A

Legal Implications
It is a legal requirement for the Authority to produce and publish an Annual Report.

Appendices
Appendix 1 – Eastern IFCA Annual Report 2053-26 available online at:

[2026_09_09_Item_11_Appendix_Eastern_IFCA_Annual_Report_2025_2026_FINAL_DRAFT.docx]

Vision
The Eastern Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority will lead, champion and manage a sustainable marine environment and inshore fisheries, by successfully securing the right balance between social, environmental and economic benefits to ensure healthy seas, sustainable fisheries and a viable industry

Action Item 12

65th Eastern Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority Meeting

09 September 2026

Review of Annual Priorities and Risk Register

Report by: L. Godwin, ACO

Purpose of Report

The purpose of this report is to update members on progress against 2026-27 priorities and to review the Risk Register.

Recommendations

It is recommended that members:

- **Note** the content of this report

Background

The Authority is mandated to produce an annual plan each year to lay out the expected business outputs for the year ahead.

The Authority has a rolling five-year Business Plan[31] that incorporates annual priorities informed by the annual Strategic Assessment. The plan also includes the high-level objectives agreed with Defra.

The rolling five-year business plan reflects the need to engage in longer term planning in the context of high levels of demand and the requirement to be flexible with priorities to reflect the dynamic nature of inshore fisheries, the marine environment and the policy landscape.

The Risk Register is contained within the Business Plan, and it captures key issues that are judged to pose potential risks to the organisation. The matrix sets out the magnitude of the risk to Eastern IFCA from an organisational viewpoint, incorporating amongst others reputational and financial risks. It also sets out the likelihood of an identified risk occurring.

Report

This update encompasses the period June 2026 to end of August 2026.

The tables at Appendix 1 detail the progress against the key priorities for 2026-27, as set in the Business plan for 2026-31.

[31] Business Plans - Eastern IFCA

The Risk Register is set out at Appendix 2 and the current status of each risk area is shown at Appendix 3.

During this reporting period the Marine Protection, Marine Science and Support teams have continued to operate at reduced capacity. Vacancy management remains a significant challenge, with the Senior Skipper, Support Officer and Grade 5 Marine Science Officer (MSO) posts remaining unfilled throughout the period although recruitment activity was a priority during the period. As a result, the operational and administrative capacity impacts identified in previous reports have continued to be experienced across the Authority.

In addition to the ongoing vacancies, the legacy impacts arising from the departure of the Grade 6 Marine Science Officer and Grade 6 Policy and Projects Officer continue to be felt. Whilst efforts have been made to redistribute workloads and maintain delivery of priority workstreams, the loss of knowledge, experience and specialist expertise associated with both posts has inevitably affected delivery across a range of functions and has continued to place additional pressure on remaining staff.

The combined effect of these vacancies and previous departures represents a significant reduction in organisational capacity and resilience. The impact extends beyond the loss of resource itself, encompassing increased demands on existing staff, constraints on operational flexibility, and the time required to support recruitment activity and induct new personnel when appointments are secured. Within the Marine Science Team, resource limitations have continued to affect progress on a number of workstreams, including the 'Amber and Greens' programme and Cromer Shoal MCZ-related activities, requiring ongoing prioritisation of work to ensure delivery of statutory responsibilities and the Authority's key business plan objectives.

It is also noteworthy that the Senior MSO (Research) has provided advanced notice of retirement, expected following Christmas 2026. Given the significance of this role and the specialist knowledge held by the postholder, recruitment is being undertaken in advance of retirement to facilitate an appropriate handover period and minimise any further loss of organisational knowledge and continuity. Recruitment to the post started within the reporting period.

Recruitment to the Senior IFCO (Marine) (previously 'Senior Skipper') role also continued during the reporting period after an initial round of recruitment was unsuccessful in attracting a sufficient number of applicants.

Recruitment and retention therefore remain an organisational risk, and the associated risk identified at Appendix 3 continues to be relevant in light of the ongoing challenges in filling vacancies and maintaining workforce capacity.

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Update on priorities set for 2026-27

Appendix 2 – Risk Register

Appendix 3 – Update on Risk Register

Background Documents

Eastern Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority Business Plan 2026-31.

APPENDIX 1 - Progress against Annual Priorities – June 2026 to end of August 2026 (inclusive)

Five key priorities are established for 2026-27.

Financial Year 2025-26		
Priorities	**Progress**	**Comment**
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).	**Delayed**	Submission of the Closed Areas Byelaw 2021 to MMO was planned for Q1 of 2026/2027 but was delayed primarily as a consequence of a lack of capacity in the context of recent staff turnover, particularly in relation to the Grade 6 Project Officer. Progress has been made however, and it is intended that the byelaw will be submitted in the near future.
b) Continued implementation of Adaptive Risk Management of fishing activity within the Cromer Shoal Chalk Beds Marine Conservation Zone (carried over).	**On Track**	Overall, delivery of the project plan is on track with the ARM plan, however, some components are delayed. A quarterly update is provided on the Authority’s website[32] setting out progress against the plans workstreams and these are summarised below: • Further consideration of MMO QA regarding the Cromer Shoal Chalk Bed Byelaw is delayed due to resources required in other areas (notably the management of the 2026 Wash Cockle Fishery. • The Natural Disturbance Study (NDS) is ongoing and two key outputs were delivered during the reporting period; the independent review of the NDS methodology[33] and Interim analysis of initial data[34] undertaken by Cefas. An application to the Fisheries and Seafood Scheme is in development to seek funding for the remainder of the project, which will include further at sea surveys and analysis towards making a conclusion.

[32] CSCB MCZ ARM Newsletter - Eastern IFCA

[33] Natural Disturbance Study - Eastern IFCA

[34] Natural Disturbance Study: Interim Analysis - Eastern IFCA

		• Interim measures which include mandatory positional reporting via trackers and mandatory closures to support the NDS are still in place. The former requirement remains in place whilst roll-out of new IVMS devices is underway. • Monitoring of compliance with the mandatory NDS closures is ongoing. It is noteworthy that this monitoring requires a significant resource which includes daily checks of fishing vessel tracker data. • The study concerning the value of chalk is underway including a consultation with local fishermen to gather social and economic data however response rates are low at present. Sampling at sea from fishing vessels is also ongoing. • A project to better understand the mechanisms of damage from potting on rugged chalk has been proposed by the University of Liverpool. The Authority intends to support the project, including through the associated FaSS funding bid and through provision of some match funding alogn with Natural England. The project, if successful, will provide important insight into the matter which would not be achievable with the resources and expertise of the Authority alone.
c) Completion of 'amber/green' gear/fishing interaction assessments and development and implementation of management measures as required (carried over).	**Delayed**	Further progress has been made during the reporting period including having completed a sixth HRA (for Hansborough, Hammond and Winterton SAC) following formal agreement with Natural England. It remains the case that every effort is being made to progress the workstream, including re-prioritisation of other workstreams.
d) Participation in the national 'Coastal Health' project and the pilot in The Wash (carried over).	**In Progress**	Additional cockle samples continue to be collected to contribute to the project. Additional samples from the 'new' cockle bed off Hunstanton were collected and provided to Cefas for analysis and final results are pending. However, during collection of samples from the bed, die-off was detected and the bed is now

		considered to be suffering from the effects of atypical mortality. Further work is anticipated in this area once results of disease prevalence is available.
e) Habitat mapping in relation to *sabellaria* reef within MPAs outside of the Wash and North Norfolk Coast (new priority).	**Delayed**	Development of a survey plan has been delayed due to capacity being focussed on other areas, including 'amber and green' workstreams and development of a survey plan for a potential cockle bed identified elsewhere in the district.
2. Management of Wash 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).	**On track**	Work to develop a mechanism to manage Wash aquaculture is ongoing, with the next step being to prepare a draft management mechanism to put to consultation with industry. The Crown Estate have also been engaged with regards to renewal of the Authority's lease for The Wash and the extent to which such is possible given the lack of a Several Order.
b) A review of relevant byelaws inherited from Eastern Sea Fisheries Joint Committee (carried over).	**Not Started**	Work to review the inherited byelaw continues to be delayed due to focus on other priority workstreams.
3. Obtaining better fisheries data through:		
a) Facilitating and contributing to the roll-out of I-VMS by the Marine Management Organisation (carried over).	**On track**	Temporary vessel tracking devices have been allocated to vessels involved in the Cromer Shoal potting fisheries and Wash cockle fishery pending the completion of the MMO workstream to replace Inshore Vessel Monitoring System (IVMS) devices associated with SuccorFish who will no longer be providing an IVMS service. It is noteworthy that the administration of such has required a significant resource which has been carried by the Marine Science team in particular

		(including issuing and monitoring of vessel locations) pending the appointment of the vacant Support Team role and allocation of monitoring to the Marine Protection Team. It is also noteworthy that this work has led to the identification of potentially significant non-compliance with cockle management measures (closed areas) which has also required significant abstraction from the Marie Science Team to process and present expert evidence.
b) Development of measures (through byelaws and / or permit conditions) to implement standardised reporting rates across of VMS units (carried over).	**Delayed**	Implementation of the measures to standardise reporting rates across all vessel sizes within the whelk and shrimp fisheries is delayed primarily due to a lack of resource within the Marine Proetction Team which is compounded by the resource allocated to the investigations regarding potential non-compliance within the Wash cockle fishery.
c) Consider gathering vessel tracking data through alternative means (in lieu of I-VMS) (carried over).	**In Progress**	Alternative vessel trackers were successfully deployed to vessels which do not have functioning IVMS units in the Wash cockle fishery which has enabled the detection of potential non-compliance.
4. Fisheries Management Plans		
a) Supporting the planning / preparation phase (carried over).	**In progress**	No relevant FMPs were at this stage during the reporting period.
b) Supporting the publication phase including by reviewing and evaluation plans (carried over).	**In progress**	Three relevant FMPs have been put to consultation with a deadline of 14 October for responses. The consultation has been promulgated using the Authority's website and the plans are being considered to develop appropriate responses including through dialogue with associated fishing industry. The three relevant plans are the North Sea Herring, Northern Shelf Mackerel and Northern Shelf blue whiting FMPs.

c) Supporting post-publication phase including implementation (carried over).	**In progress**	Dialogue regarding the implementation of FMPs is ongoing through attendance and contribution to associated meetings, most notably in relation to the implementation of the Whelk FMP which included attendance at and contribution to a workshop to consider best use of data in monitoring stock health.
d) Consider the development of a bass drift net scientific trial (new priority)	**In progress**	Work continued to progress a project proposal and desk-based literature review which is currently in draft. A FaSS funding bid is also in development.
5. 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).	**In Progress**	Engagement with the publicised consultations has continued including an ongoing consultation regarding policy objectives for the second-generation plan.
b) Stakeholder engagement to raise awareness of marine planning and identify key issues (carried over).	**In Progress**	Promulgation of relevant stakeholder events has been undertaken in relation to publicised engagement events.
c) Contributing to policy development by providing expert advice and relaying information from our stakeholders (carried over).	**In Progress**	Input has been provided as requested via the publicised consultations.

Key:

	Complete		**Progress stalled / delayed**
	In progress		**Not started**

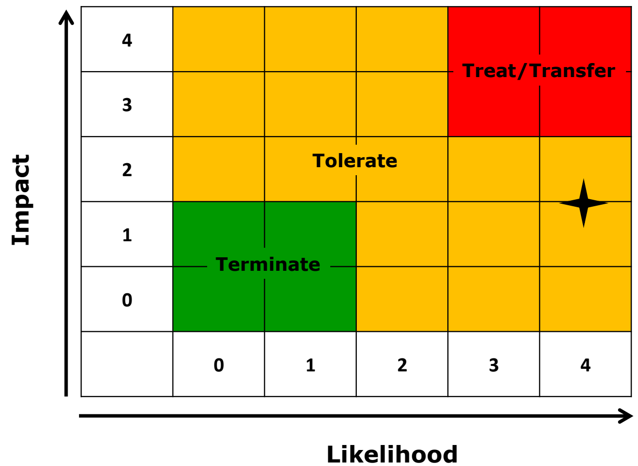
Appendix 1: Risk Management

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



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**	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.			
			4	**4**				
			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 relevance amongst partners.	CEO	If Eastern IFCA fails to maintain relevance amongst partners Eastern IFCA's utility will come under scrutiny potentially resulting in re-allocation of duties	**4**		**2**		• Provide a leadership function. • Be proactive and identify issues early. • Engage with all partners routinely • 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.	**Tolerate**
			Reputation	**Financial**	Possible – Whilst positive relationships have been established the existence of disparate partner aspirations introduces complexities which may drive perceptions of bias or inefficiency.			
			4	**4**				
			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				

<table>
<tr><th>Description</th><th>Owner</th><th>Implications</th><th colspan="2">Organisational impact (Reputation + Financial/2)</th><th>Likelihood</th><th>Risk</th><th>Mitigation</th><th>Action</th></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="4">Negative media comment</td><td rowspan="4">CEO</td><td rowspan="4">Negative perceptions of Eastern IFCA utility and effectiveness created at MMO/Defra
Loss of Partner confidence
Media scrutiny of individual Authority members</td><td colspan="2">3</td><td>2</td><td rowspan="4"></td><td rowspan="4">

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.
</td><td rowspan="4">Tolerate</td></tr>
<tr><td>Reputation</td><td>Financial</td><td rowspan="3">Possible – disenfranchised partners seek to introduce doubt as to Eastern IFCA professionalism, utility, and effectiveness</td></tr>
<tr><td>4</td><td>2</td></tr>
<tr><td>Eastern IFCA perceived to be under performing.
Eastern IFCA considered poor value for money.
Eastern IFCA perceived as irrelevant.</td><td>Negative perceptions introduce risk to continued funding</td></tr>
</table>

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 - Ability to 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.				

<table>
<tr><th>Description</th><th>Owner</th><th>Implications</th><th colspan="2">Organisational impact
(Reputation + Financial/2)</th><th>Likelihood</th><th>Risk</th><th>Mitigation</th><th>Action</th></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="4">Failure to secure data</td><td rowspan="4">CEO</td><td rowspan="4">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.</td><td colspan="2">4</td><td>3</td><td rowspan="4"></td><td rowspan="4">• All computers are password protected. Individuals only have access to the server through their own computer.
• Secure wireless internet
• Remote back up of electronic files
• Access to electronic files is restricted.
• Up to date virus software installed on all computers.
• Important documents secured in safes.
• ICT equipment and policies provided by public sector provider remains in place while transition is ongoing– including encrypted laptops/secure governmental email system.
• All Eastern IFCA personnel undergo DPA training.
• Electronic backup of all Eastern IFCA documents held by ICT provider offsite remains in place while transition is ongoing
• Policies and processes developed to ensure data security and compliance with data protection legislation. Careful project planning underway with new provider to ensure careful and secure data management</td><td rowspan="4">Treat</td></tr>
<tr><td>Reputation</td><td>Financial</td><td rowspan="3">Possible - Limited staff access to both electronic and paper files. Office secure with CCTV, keypad entry system and alarm.

Likelihood of data loss has increased as a consequence of IT migrations</td></tr>
<tr><td>4</td><td>4</td></tr>
<tr><td>Partners no longer believe that confidential information they have supplied is secure. Personnel issues arise over inability to secure information.</td><td>Eastern IFCA open to both civil and criminal action regarding inability to secure personal information.</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="3">New Burdens Funding discontinued.</td><td rowspan="3">CEO</td><td rowspan="3">Substantial reduction in Eastern IFCA capability with consequential inability to fulfil full range of duties</td><td colspan="2">4</td><td>2</td><td rowspan="3"></td><td rowspan="3">• AIFCA engagement with Defra regards spending review.
• AIFCA bid for continuation in the 2024 government spending review (outcome awaited at the time of writing).</td><td rowspan="3">Tolerate</td></tr>
<tr><td>Reputation</td><td>Financial</td><td rowspan="2">Defra have continued to roll over new Burdens</td></tr>
<tr><td>4</td><td>4</td></tr>
</table>

		or additional burden on funding authorities.	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.	funding in recognition of the value that IFCAs provide in meeting national policy objectives.		• 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.	

<table>
<tr><th rowspan="2">Description</th><th rowspan="2">Owner</th><th rowspan="2">Implications</th><th colspan="2">Organisational impact
(Reputation + Financial/2)</th><th rowspan="2">Likelihood</th><th rowspan="2">Risk</th><th rowspan="2">Mitigation</th><th rowspan="2">Action</th></tr>
<tr></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="4">The new Several Order to replace that element of the Wash Fishery Order 1992 is substantially delayed.</td><td rowspan="4">CEO</td><td rowspan="4">Continuing uncertainty for industry members with consequential impact upon industry viability and associated social and economic issues.

Potential legal challenge against the Authority in relation to lay management under interim measures – specifically where areas are closed to the public fishery but are not being used for active aquaculture.</td><td colspan="2">3.5</td><td rowspan="2">4</td><td rowspan="4"></td><td rowspan="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.
Recent revisions to interim measures reduce legal risk.
Priority workstream includes consideration of alternative mechanisms for managing Wash aquaculture</td><td rowspan="4">Treat</td></tr>
<tr><td>Reputation</td><td>Financial</td></tr>
<tr><td>4</td><td>3</td><td rowspan="2">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.</td></tr>
<tr><td>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 way.</td><td>Potential for legal challenge against Eastern IFCA.

Interim measures provide no mechanism for cost recovery.</td></tr>
</table>

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** **Reputation** **4** 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.	**Financial** **3** 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.	**2** 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.		• Supplier secured after 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 • New supplier undertaking project planning process in consultation with the Authority • Project delivery meetings are attended by a member of the leadership team to ensure progress against plan.	**Tolerate**

<table>
<tr><th rowspan="2">Description</th><th rowspan="2">Owner</th><th rowspan="2">Implications</th><th colspan="2">Organisational impact (Reputation + Financial/2)</th><th rowspan="2">Likelihood</th><th rowspan="2">Risk</th><th rowspan="2">Mitigation</th><th rowspan="2">Action</th></tr>
<tr></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="4">Failure to fill staff vacancies and/ or retain current staff</td><td rowspan="4">CEO</td><td rowspan="4">Reduced operational capacity; Reduced ability to meet deadlines and complete work on time. Decline in enforcement presence.

Resignation of senior roles such as Grade 6 and managers results in loss of knowledge and leadership capacity.</td><td colspan="2">3</td><td>3</td><td rowspan="4"></td><td rowspan="4"><u>Existing mitigation</u>
Eastern IFCA offer a competitive salary
All the Eastern IFCA team are remunerated by an established salary structure with a set number of annual increments based upon length of service.
Established a ‘Grade 6’ position within Marine Science and Marine Protection teams to provide progression opportunities.
Providing staff training and personal development plans supports employee development.
Regular supervisions and support provided to teams through established process
Providing leadership and management training to supervisors
Ongoing planning to prioritise the ‘high priority’ and ‘business critical workstreams’ outlined in the 5-Year Business Plan to ensure delivery of core duties
Exit interviews undertaken and reviewed by leadership team with actions taken as required
Staff work-related stress risk assessment and mitigation in place including provision of Norfolk Wellbeing services
HR support provided by external professional
Implementation of hand-overs to ensure no loss of business critical knowledge
Additional mitigation
Prioritise recruitment to vacancies in a timely manner
Review vacancy advertising platforms
Continue to review workplace engagement through one-to-ones and bespoke engagement exercises (e.g. staff wellbeing surveys)
Continue to review policies in accordance with best practice</td><td rowspan="4">Treat</td></tr>
<tr><td>Reputation</td><td>Financial</td><td rowspan="3">Three recruitment rounds (in relation to separate posts) failed to appoint an appropriate candidate.

In a small organisation opportunity to progress can be limited which discourages long-term commitment and increases the likelihood employees seeking development elsewhere. Some roles (particularly MSOs) attract mostly graduates who often leave to pursue career progression.

Fewer staff mean that existing staff face a higher workload, potentially increasing workplace stress leading to further turnover.

Requirement to work near Kings Lynn for most of the roles limits the pool of applicants as there may not be the appeal for younger relocating professionals.</td></tr>
<tr><td>4</td><td>2</td></tr>
<tr><td>Eastern IFCA perceived by partners to be under-performing and not meeting duties

Eastern IFCA perceived to lack enforcement presence and therefore could increase non-compliance.

Negative perception of Eastern IFCA both externally from partners and internally from staff if workload increases.

Perceptions of negative workplace environment with further negative impacts on recruitment.</td><td>Failure to meet core duties, achieve priorities and / or negative perceptions from partners introduces risk to continued funding

Recruitment costs including induction and training costs.</td></tr>
</table>

Appendix 3 – Risk Register Update June 2026 to end of August 2026

Risk Description	Change in risk-rating / update
Eastern IFCA fails to secure funding to replace assets	**No Change** in risk rating or mitigation since last publication of 5-year Business Plan.
Eastern IFCA fails to maintain relevance amongst partners	**No change** in risk rating or mitigation since last update.
Negative media comment	**No change** in risk rating or mitigation since last update. CEO contributed to BBC Look East piece on management of Cromer MCZ in August
Degradation of MPAs due to fishing activity	**No change** in risk rating or mitigation since last publication of 5-year Business Plan. However, it is noteworthy that progression of the Closed Area Byelaw 2021 workstream leading to confirmation of the byelaw will potentially change (reduce) the associated risk for this factor.
Shellfish and fish stocks collapse	**No change** in risk rating or mitigation since last update.
Failure to secure data	**Change in risk** – Although organisation impact remains the same, the likelihood has increased, increasing the over risk as the Authority move through an IT migration. Previous mitigation still remains in place, and new mitigation is being developed for the new system to ensure secure data management.
New Burdens funding discontinued	**No change** in risk rating or mitigation since last publication of 5-year Business Plan.
The new Several Order to replace that element of the Wash Fishery Order 1992 is substantially delayed.	**No change** in risk rating or mitigation since last update.
Failure to secure an IT supplier and successfully migrate IT services following	**No change** in risk rating or mitigation since last update. Project to transition to a new provider is underway and making good progress.

King's Lynn and West Norfolk Borough Council's decision to end contract on 31 March 2026	
Failure to fill staff vacancies and/ or retain current staff	**No change** in risk rating or mitigation since last update. Recruitment campaigns are proving successful.

Information Item 14a

65th Eastern Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority Meeting

09 September 2026

Marine Protection Quarterly Report

Report by: Jon Butler, Assistant Chief Officer (DD)

Purpose of Report
To provide members with an overview of the work carried out by the Marine Protection team during the period of June 2026 to August 2026 inclusive.

Recommendations
It is recommended that members:

- **Note** the content of the reports.

Background
Nationally agreed Marine Protection statistics are reported in the Authority's Annual Report and quarterly reports are provided to the full Authority to update on activity for the quarter.

Report
Officer vacancies have remained challenging during the last quarter; there continues to be a vacancy for a Senior IFCO (Marine) Kings Lynn with 3 applicants shortlisted for interviews on 3 September. A strong field of 7 candidates were interviewed for the Grade 5 IFCO to be based in Lowestoft; a conditional offer has been made and accepted by the preferred candidate. Two IFCO's recruited during the spring are currently progressing through there probationary period and we have a further officer starting on 1 September.

June saw the opening of the Wash Cockle Fishery, this year in addition to ensuring all fisherman had been issued with skipper packs officers also needed to ensure vessels had a functioning VMS, VMS+, IVMS device if this wasn't the case Eastern IFCA issued GPS live trackers. Officers have carried out quayside inspections, whilst fisherman have been relatively compliant, some have been issued with verbal and written warnings for landing in excess of the 2t daily allowance. Officers have been monitoring areas closed to cockle fishing activity and have to date identified 11 vessels and skippers where is it alleged fishing activity has taken place inside of the closures. These are now part of live investigations which are being followed up by officers.

Shrimp activity has continued at low levels, with enforcement activity focusing on following up on missing returns from fishermen. The annual permit year started in August, and officers have been carrying out the required gear inspections prior to permits being issued

The whelk fishery is ongoing with officers carrying out quayside inspections, officers have also been following up on missing returns from fishermen.

Crab and Lobster activity on the North Norfolk Coast has been steady, officers have continued to monitor the closed areas and to date no further incursions have been detected. Officers have been developing a test in recent months to detect cases where female Lobsters have been 'scrubbed'. We are now nearly at the stage where this can be rolled out as a tool for IFCO's to test Lobsters on landings across the district.

Officers have continued with our ongoing commitment to the EHO surveys and collected additional samples as part of the ongoing Coastal Health Project in conjunction with CEFAS.

Officers have been carrying out inspections and engaging with Recreational Sea Anglers, reports have been of a mixed fishery with some species absent such as mackerel, this has mean officers have been able to focus on other priority areas during the period when a high presence is normally required on the North Norfolk shingle beaches.

Financial Implications
None

Legal Implications
None

Appendices
Appendix 1 – Marine Protection Quarterly Report

Background Documents
Not Applicable

MARINE PROTECTION MONTHLY REPORT

June to August 2026

An overview of the work conducted by the Marine Protection Team.
Report by: Assistant Chief Officer (Designated Deputy)

<u>Enforcement and engagement priorities throughout the district as agreed through the Tactical Co-ordinating Group (TCG)</u>

Area 1 (Hail Sand Fort to Gibraltar Point)

Activity remained low within this area.

Patrols included inspections of fishing gear and catches to ensure compliance with Regulations.
The potential finding of a new cockle bed very close to the shore was still being investigated..

Area 2 (The Wash and North Norfolk Coast to Brancaster)

Inspections of whelk gear to comply with permit applications, as well as landing to ensure compliance with MLS were made throughout the quarter.

Opening of the cockle fishery in June meant this was an intense period of activity, ensuring all skippers received information packs as well as monitoring activity at sea and landings ashore.
147 inspections were conducted in June alone, this level of activity continued during the open days of the fishery.
Enforcement activity highlighted fishing within closed areas, resulting in 11 vessels being investigated for non-compliance.

Area 3 (Brancaster to Great Yarmouth)

Compliance inspections relating to crab and lobster fisheries were a priority
Oversight of Closed Areas relating to the Natural Disturbance Study continued, as well as monitoring of fishing activity through trackers and IVMS.

Area 4 (Great Yarmouth to Harwich)

With most enforcement capability targeting the cockle fishery in the Wash patrols in this area were restricted, however whelk fishing vessels were monitored at sea, and shore patrols focused on engagement and education for RSA Activity.
Like the rest of the District RSA activity remained low, 9 inspections were all compliant.

Primary Ports - Aim to visit twice / month	June	July	Aug	Yr Total to date
Grimsby **	0	1	0	5
Boston **	7	4	3	19
Kings Lynn **	11	6	3	30
Wells **	3	1	1	25
Cromer **	2	4	1	39
Sea Palling**	1	4	0	13
Lowestoft**	1	1	0	10
Southwold**/ Walberswick	2	1	0	11
Felixstowe Ferry**	0	1	1	2

Secondary Ports - Aim to visit once / month

	June	July	Aug	Yr Total to date
HsPt	0	1	0	1
Gibraltar Point	1	0	0	1
Saltfleet	0	1	0	1
Mablethorpe				3
trusthorpe				1
Chapel St Leonards				3
Ingoldmells	0	0	2	5
Skegness	1	0	1	5
Surfleet				2
Fosdyke				5
Sutton Bridge				1
Hunstanton				1
Brancaster	0	0	3	8
Morston	0	0	1	4
Blakeney	0	0	1	1
Cley	0	1	0	11
Salthouse	0	1	0	1
Weybourne	0	1	0	15
Sheringham	0	3	0	16
West Runton	0	1	0	14
East Runton	0	2	0	19
Overstrand	1	3	0	7
Trimmingham	1	2	0	4
Mundesley				0
Bacton				2
Walcott				1
Cart Gap	0	1	0	3
Happisburgh				0
Winterton	0	1	0	1
Caister	0	2	0	8
Great Yarmouth	0	2	0	12
Corton				1
Gorleston	0	1	0	3
Pakefield				1
Kessingland				1
Dunwich				1
Sizewell	1	1	1	4
Aldeburgh	1	1	1	5
Orford				2
Shingle St				0
Felixstowe	0	1	0	3
Levington	0	1	0	1
Shotley	0	1	0	1
Woolverstone				0
Ipswich				0
Thorpeness	0	1	1	2

Sea Patrols	June	July	Aug	Yr Total to date
Primary Enforcement (Aim 50+/year) *dedicated patrols*	1	3	6	11
Secondary Enforcement (Aim 40+/year) *monitoring during Research activities at sea*	1	2	0	27

<u>Marine Protected Area monitoring</u>

Monitoring of 'restricted areas' under the Marine Protected Areas Byelaw 2018 were conducted throughout the reporting period via direct observation on a risk-based approach. The following monitoring occurred:

Protected Feature	*Intertidal biogenic reef*	*Subtidal biogenic reef: Sabellaria spp. (Ross worm), subtidal stony reef, subtidal mixed sediments, subtidal mud.*	*Intertidal seagrass beds, subtidal mixed sediments, subtidal mud.*	*Eelgrass beds (Humber)*
Protected Areas	1-13	14-29	30-35	36
June	No monitoring occasions	No monitoring occasions	No monitoring occasions	No monitoring occasions
July	2 monitoring occasions (areas 7/8/9)	1 monitoring occasions (areas 24)	No monitoring occasions	1 monitoring occasion (area 36)
August	No monitoring occasions	1 monitoring occasions (areas 14/15/17/18/19/20/21/22/25/29)	1 monitoring occasions (areas 31/32/33/34	No monitoring occasions

Information Item 14b

65th Eastern Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority Meeting

09 September 2026

Marine Science Quarterly Update

Report by: Luke Godwin (ACO)

Purpose of Report
The purpose of this report is to update members on progress made by the Marine Science Team in its delivery of the 2026-31 Business Plan.

Recommendations
It is recommended that members:

- **Note** the contents of the report

Background
Key Marine Science updates are reported within the Quarterly Progress against annual priorities paper taken to each Authority meeting. To avoid duplication, the Marine Science Quarterly Reports outline progress against business as usual / business critical workstreams (as per the 5-Year Business Plan).

Report
This report describes progress against 'business critical workstreams' during June, July and August.

The period was characterised primarily by the ongoing management of the Wash 2026 Wash cockle fishery and contribution to key priority workstreams following abstraction due to undertaking the annual cockle survey and subsequent development of fisheries management measures.

As is usual for the time of year, abstraction due to Annual leave was a factor in capacity in addition to the loss of two grade 6 officers and the consequential loss of knowledge and experience. In particular, the loss of the Grade 6 Project officer, who would ordinarily provide a significant contribution to delivery of the Wash Cockle Fishery and associated administration of the Eligibility Policy, had the effect of requiring resource from other areas including the Executive Team. In addition, implementation of vessel tracker devices and ongoing monitoring fell to the Marine Science Team due to a lack of resource (within the Support team) and skill sets (in relation to use of GIS) within the Marine Protection Team. In both cases, the impacts on delivery were primarily felt in relation to delivery of priority workstreams (particularly the 'amber and greens' and Closed Area Byelaw workstreams). Despite resource capacity challenges, business critical workstreams were delivered throughout the period as per the following updates.

Shrimp Management
Shrimp fishing effort is monitored on a monthly basis to ensure activity does not exceed levels which would risk impacts to site integrity of the Wash and North Norfolk Coast. Fishing effort is well within threshold limits, primarily as a consequence of fishing activity having focussed on the Lincolnshire coast as opposed to the sensitive Wash grounds. Following the conclusion of the Shrimp Permit Year (1 Augst to 31 July), work is underway t set the Total Allowable Effort for the 26/17 permit year. This will include dialogue with the shrimp working group.

The review of shrimp permit experience requirements is yet to take place and is now delayed having been programmed for Q2 of the 2026/27 financial year.

Study of the Wash Embayment, Environment and Productivity (SWEEP) and Environmental Health Monitoring (EHO)
All SWEEP and EHO samples were collected during the reporting period with the exception of SWEEP samples for the Thief and Wreck during June. SWEEP primarily serves to monitor 'food availability' (in relation to plankton which serves as a food resource for bivalves and not to be confused with the 'Bird Food Availability' model) within the Wash to ensure Wash Aquaculture does not exceed the carrying capacity of The Wash. Given the very low level of aquaculture activity in The Wash, and the successful collection of all other SWEEP samples from other areas, the risk associated with having failed to collect Thief (on multiple occasions) and Wreck samples is considered to be low.

An investigation state was initiated within the Stubborn Sand water classification area following an E.coli result of >4600 micrograms per 100g of flesh. The result has limited short-term implications because the area is subject to a temporary prohibition for harvesting between 1 July and 31 August due to seasonally high E.coli results over time.

Wash Cockle and Mussel Management
The 2026 Wash Cockle Fishery opened on 15 June 2026 following a formal consultation, consideration of impacts and confirmation from Natural England that the fishery would not adversely impact site integrity if management measures were implemented.

Applications for permits and consideration of eligibility was undertaken in early June in parallel with consultation on management measures. Given the vacancy in the Policy and Project officer post, Executive Team resource was required to deliver the administration of permit and eligibility applications.

Subsequent to opening the fishery, die-off was detected within the Hunstanton Bed which was consistent with a-typical mortality observed throughout the Wash. As such, after consideration of the limited biosecurity risk posed, the bed was opened to the fishery, and this was communicated to industry.

Several visits to areas closed for the purpose of protecting high-density juvenile cockles were undertaken. At the time of writing, die-off was not detected to the extent that the closures required reconsideration. Further site visits are intended to take place.

As a consequence of the timing of the roll-out of replacement Inshore Vessel Monitoring devices by the Marine Management Organisation, trackers were issued to affected vessels within he cockle fishery. The administration of trackers and subsequent monitoring of vessel locations was undertaken by the Marine Science team and which identified potentially significant non-compliance. Marine Science Officer has also contributed to at sea evidence gathering and data processing (of tracker information) pursuant of undertaking associated investigations.

Management of Whelk Fisheries
Monthly monitoring of the whelk fishery identified that the Landings per Unit Effort have remained stable the reporting period, indicating that the fishery remains sustainable.

Assessment of unplanned fisheries
A survey plan has been developed to determine if a reported potential cockle bed (Lincolnshire Coast) will potentially support a fishery. This may necessitate a Habitat Regulation Assessment in order to determine if a fishery can take place.

Advice in relation to sustainable development
24 requests for responses to marine works, the vast majority relating to Marine License Applications, were received during the reporting period, of which 22 were responded to.

Monitoring district-wide Biosecurity risk
No new biosecurity risks were identified during the reporting period.

Financial Implications
None identified

Legal Implications
None identified

Appendices
Not applicable

Background Documents
Eastern IFCA 5-Year Business Plan 2026-2031