



Annual Plan 2025-2026

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Introduction

Kent and Essex Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority (KEIFCA), and the District for which it has responsibility, was established under sections 149 and 150 of Marine and Coastal Access Act in 2011. This annual plan outlines the key actions and workstreams for KEIFCA in 2024/5; how it will continue to shape inshore management and contribute towards the Government’s Marine Policy Statement.

THE IFCA VISION: “Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authorities will lead, champion and manage a sustainable marine environment and inshore fisheries, by successfully securing the right balance between social, environmental and economic benefits to ensure healthy seas, sustainable fisheries and a viable industry”

- Achieving a sustainable marine economy
- Living within environmental limits
- Ensuring a strong, healthy and just society
- Promoting good governance
- Using sound science responsibly

The Kent and Essex Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority has clearly defined duties under the Act (sections 153 and 154) to manage sustainable fisheries and conserve the wider marine environment within the coastal waters off Kent and Essex.

153) Kent and Essex IFCA must manage the exploitation of sea fisheries resources in its district, in doing so it must:

- a) seek to ensure that the exploitation of sea fisheries resources is carried out in a sustainable way.*
- b) seek to balance the social and economic benefits of exploiting the sea fisheries resources of the district with the need to protect the marine environment from, or promote its recovery from, the effects of such exploitation.*
- c) take any other steps which in the Authority’s opinion are necessary or expedient for the purpose of making a contribution to the achievement of sustainable development.*
- d) seek to balance the different needs of persons engaged in the exploitation of sea fisheries resources in the district.*

154) Kent and Essex IFCA must also seek to ensure that the conservation objectives of any MCZ in the district are furthered.

The Fisheries Act 2020 provides the framework to manage our fisheries as an independent coastal state and under the Act Fisheries Management Plans (FMPs) are being created to replace the EU Common Fisheries Policy. The ambition is that FMPs will set out the policies to inform future management actions, creating national a fisheries management framework that IFCAs will work within. As a Competent and Relevant Authority’ the Kent and Essex IFCA is also required to perform its duties regarding current and future iterations of the Habitats Directive, the Water Framework Directive and the Marine Strategy Framework Directive.

The workstreams and aims set out in this plan are undertaken with due regard given to the Environmental Principles Policy Statement which was released at the end of 2023. The environmental principles listed in the policy statement operate as a set of overarching principles to guide the development of all relevant policy, which includes byelaws and management by KEIFCA.

The Kent and Essex IFCA District

The Kent and Essex Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Order 2010, section 3, defines the extent of both the landward and seaward elements of the Kent and Essex Inshore Fisheries and Conservation District as summarised.

- the combined areas of the relevant councils (the “basic area” of the district); and
- the sea adjacent to the basic area of the district within the boundaries specified to a distance of 6 nautical miles from the 1983 baselines.

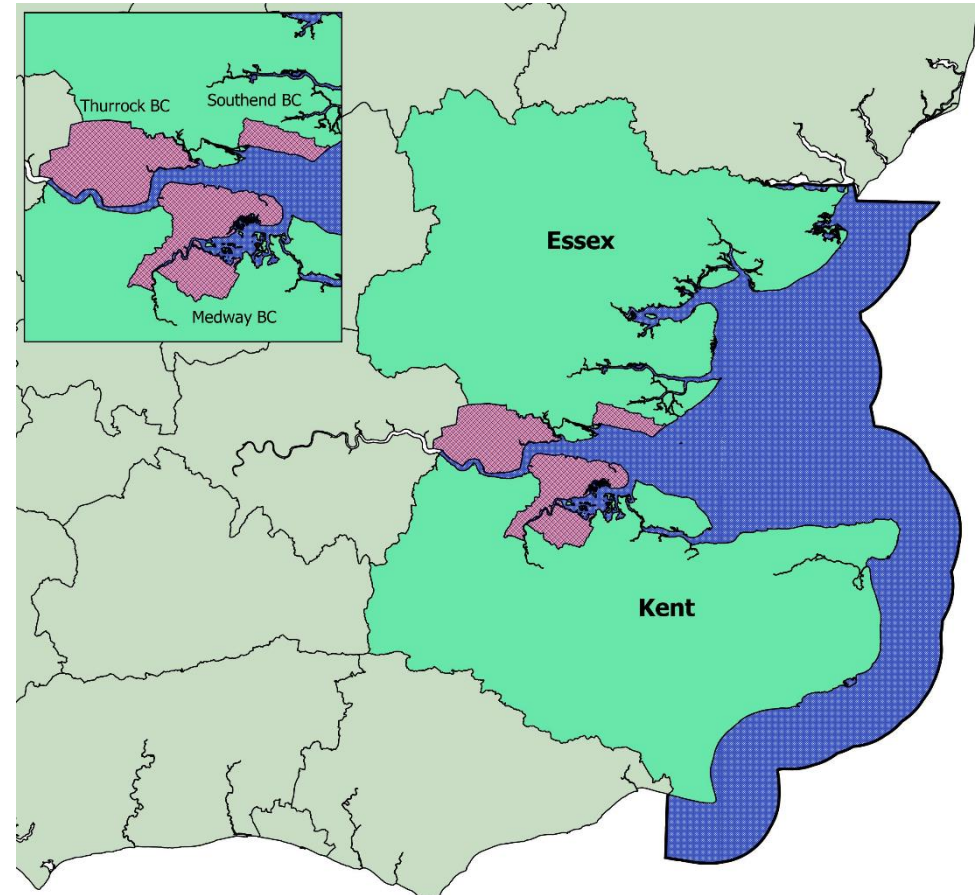
Seaward district boundaries

Kent & Essex IFCA district covers an area of over 3,412 km² and extends from the east end of Rye Bay in Kent to the northern boundary of Essex on the River Stour. The seaward boundary follows the 6-mile nautical limit measured from the 1983 baseline, which, due to drying sand banks, extends up to 15 miles offshore at its furthest point.

Upstream district boundaries

The up-river KEIFCA boundary in the Thames includes the waters adjacent to Kent County Council and Thurrock Council, with the district boundary running from Dartford Creek (River Darent) on the south shore to Mar Dyke on the North Shore.

The other district limits for the rest of the rivers located within the boundaries of Kent and Essex are to their tidal limit (including, the Medway, the Blackwater and the Colne).



Focus and Priorities for KEIFCA 2025-2026

Balancing the needs of a wide range of different fisheries and assessing and managing their impact on Marine Protected Areas has been an ongoing challenge for our Authority ever since our inception in 2011. Add in a new government and its new priorities and the beginning of the implementation of the first round of Fisheries Management Plans and there are a lot of demands on our time and resources. In addition, there are long list of regional and local issues that our stakeholders and members would like the IFCA to lead on. The annual plan tries to make sense of these competing priorities and identify and outline some of the key tasks we would like to address over the year.

With the publication of an ever-increasing number of Fisheries Management Plans, the UK fisheries architecture for the next decade or so is starting to take shape. As the focus moves from developing the plans to delivering them, there is a significant and ongoing workstream to ensure that the needs of our local KEIFCA fishing industry are embedded in the implementation of the plans.

The priorities highlighted below outline some of the key workstreams for KEIFCA over the financial year 2025-2026, although it is important to recognise that the implementation and running of the new Thames Cockle Fishery Order 2024 is going to account for a significant proportion of KEIFCA officer work during the first half of the year.

The first year of the new Thames Estuary Cockle Fishery Order

The Thames cockle fisheries provide income and jobs for a large number of fishermen and, with coastal towns like Leigh-on-Sea and Whitstable, provide tourism, cultural and historic links between the cockle fisheries and wider society. The fisheries also take place within a complex mosaic of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) and the cockle stocks provide food for a wide range of bird and fish species, whilst also providing other wider environmental benefits such as filtering seawater and CO₂ capture.

Since the 17 September 2021 the Authority engaged in a detailed process to review and develop future cockle management, and with the creation of the new Thames Estuary Cockle Fishery Order (No. 2) 2024 (T24), which came into force on the 18 December 2024, the management framework for the fishery is now laid out for the next 28 years.

Building on the work of the previous regulating order, the new Order keeps the same annual management cycle as the previous Order (annual surveys, management meetings, authority papers etc) as well as the day-to-day running and management of the fishery. With an increased number of licences and a new southern boundary there are obvious changes to the fishery and officers will work hard to

ensure there is a smooth transition. With our new dedicated cockle officer, we are hoping to deliver the objectives of the fishery (as laid out in the management plan) and continue to develop the fishery over the coming years.

Manila clam trials

Although KEIFCA had been monitoring the steady growth in the manila clam populations since 2018, it was the spring cockle survey in 2024 that highlighted a significant jump in the adult population over the national 35mm size. Working with the local industry, officers ran a trial in October 2024 to understand the impact and economic potential of different types of manila clam harvesting gear and operations.

Building on this successful trial KEIFCA are intending to run a further trial with some of the successful gear types to monitor the impact of this new gear on the seabed. The trial is due to start in March 2025 and probably continue into the autumn. Results from the trial will be used to inform MPA habitat assessments. If all goes well, we are hoping to run a 'fishery level' trial in the late summer or early autumn 2025. Hopefully we can run a longer trial this year and get a better understanding of how a future fishery might work.

Developing new sustainable fisheries is vital for the future survival of our local fleet and helping them adapt to the impacts of climate change. Whilst this is a vital project, running the trials, briefing and coordinating efforts with fishers, and collecting evidence is hugely resource intensive and has meant that we have had to deprioritise some of our other workstreams (e.g. oyster work, small fish surveys). In addition, a lot of our capacity to develop new management and legislation will be focused on this potential fishery and developing options for small scale cockle permit fisheries.

Fisheries Management Plan workstreams

With the next five FMPs coming on stream, most of the important commercial species in the KEIFCA district will come under an FMP. KEIFCA is working closely with other IFCA's and the AIFCA to help create new ways of working within and across organisations to deliver FMP actions.

Over the last year we have been working closely with the AIFCA and the MMO and DEFRA implementation teams to start the process of delivering the actions of the first five FMPs. The national election and the acclimatisation of a new government has slowed down the process, however progress is being made and IFCA officers are feeding into relevant national working groups. Gradually discussion papers or consultation documents are starting to emerge, and officers are working with our local communities and other IFCA's to feed into this process and help shape future management.

Progress with data collection to help inform future FMP management has also progressed and KEIFCA have been working closely with the Whelk science group and intend to feed into any cockle FMP science and research groups moving forwards. As the resourcing and the

structures and processes for delivering FMPs become clearer, KEIFCA could undertake a strategic FMP review to identify which are the priority actions for KEIFCA across all the FMPs.

Marine Protected Area management - next steps

After over a decade of working with our partner organisations and our community to develop fisheries MPA management measures in our district, we are now reaching the final stage of this work as our 2024 Bottom-towed gear byelaw passes through its last checks. Moving forward our challenge becomes one of better understanding, managing and where possible reducing the impact of fishing gear, especially higher impact gear like dredging, that takes place within MPAs. The main focus over the next few years will be working with the cockle fishery and the emerging clam fishery, to develop methods of monitoring and accurately assessing the footprint with new technologies and working to reduce damage rates and impact of the gear on the seabed.

KEIFCA will continue to enforce management measures that protect sensitive features within Marine Protected Areas (MPAs). As with all enforcement the ultimate objective is compliance, and this is achieved by combining intelligence led risk-based enforcement with deterrent and disruption achieved by maintaining a visible presence within the MPAs. Rigid Inflatable Boats (RIBs) are the primary enforcement vessels for this workstream and are ideally suited for the creeks and rivers covered by the Essex Estuaries bottom trawling byelaw. Offshore areas will primarily be monitored by the larger patrol vessels, both during routine patrols and whilst traversing MPAs during surveys. The shore officers will also play a significant role in enforcing the byelaws by monitoring activity in ports and on the coast and by speaking to the general public to obtain information on activities which may potentially be in breach of the byelaws.

Marine operations

With the introduction of Workboat Code 3 in 23 December 2023, KEIFCA officers have been working closely with their counterparts in other IFCAs to understand and implement its prescribed changes which include changes to ways of working, policies and procedures. Officers are in the process of receiving specialist training to bring themselves up to speed with these changes and will be working over the coming year to embed a new organisation-wide safety management system, associated processes and documentation specific to each vessel that we operate. Both Nerissa and Tamesis are due to be inspected over winter 2025/2026, which is when WBC3 will apply to those vessels from.

In October 2024 work started on building a new 10.5 m RIB, overseeing the build and commissioning process will be an important and resource intensive process, and we have been working closely with Southern IFCA to learn from their vessel, on which ours is based. The vessel is due to be delivered prior to the start of the 2025 cockle fishery. The summer will then be used for operational development of

the asset prior to accelerating to full capability over the winter. It is anticipated that the vessel will give KEIFCA a significant advancement in capability with regards to compliance operations across the District resulting from its combination of seagoing capability and efficiency.

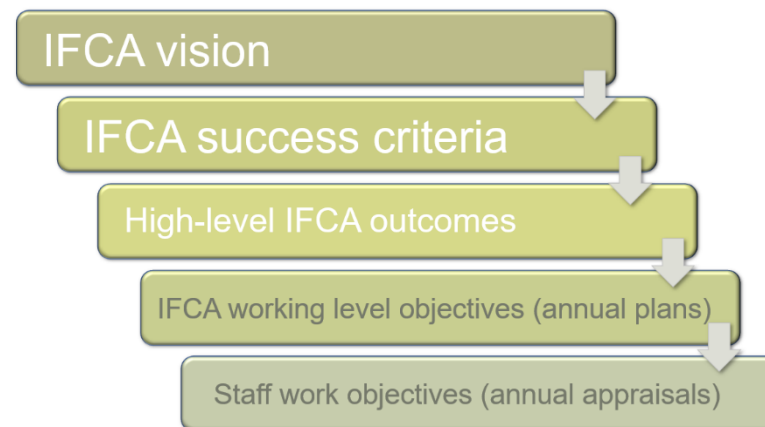
Helping to deliver national DEFRA priorities

As part of the Government's spending review settlement, DEFRA agreed to fund IFCA an additional £140K this year to help further a series of national priority workstreams (FMP engagement and implementation, MPA management, additional input into marine planning and licencing). KEIFCA is using funding to support two officer posts which will directly help KEIFCA deliver national priorities. The first is an officer that is leading on the evidence gathering for MPA assessments required for the emerging manila clam fishery. The second is part-funding an officer to provide additional input into the marine planning development and to provide more input into marine licencing applications. For FMP work, the fund will help back fill senior officer time, as our engagement in this workstream is detailed and technical and requires experienced officers with significant knowledge of how specific fisheries work in our district. Hopefully IFCA will be successful in getting additional funding in the next 3-year spending review, and if we are, we might need revisit how we deliver our DEFRA priorities.

Delivery of Priorities

The vision for IFCA's encapsulates the core role of the organisations; and the success criteria outline what is expected of IFCA's in achieving the vision. Five success criteria have been developed by all ten IFCA's through the Association of IFCA's. It is incumbent on KEIFCA to plan and report against these success criteria in a manner which it sees fit and it is the priorities which this guidance identifies that we have used as priorities in our annual plan.

In order to meet the outcomes of the success criteria, DEFRA's guidance recommends that working level objectives that should form the basis of each IFCA's annual plan and that the objectives should inform the work of individual IFCA staff. Making the monitoring staff performance much easier and outlining how each staff members can clearly see how they are contributing to the overall success of IFCA's.



The five tables that follow; one for each success criteria, provide a detailed description of the work plan for the year from April 2023. Also included under the relevant success criteria are the Annual Communications Plan, the Annual Enforcement Plan/Risk Register, and the Annual Science & Research Plan. A glossary is included at the end of this document.

CIFCO - Chief IFCO	PCEO - Principal Compliance and Enforcement Officer	Snr IFCO (S) K - Senior IFCO Skipper (Kent)	S IFCO (S) E Senior IFCO (Skipper) Essex
DCIFCO - Deputy Chief IFCO	PSCO - Principal Scientific & Conservation Officer	IFCO (CE)* - IFCO (Compliance and Enforcement) *Licence & marine planning	IFCO (CO) - IFCO (Cockle Officer)
OM - Office Manager	IFCO (SC) - IFCO (Science and Conservation)	IFCO (CE) - IFCO (Compliance and Enforcement)	
AO - Administration Officer	PVOO K - Principal Vessel Operations Officer (Kent)	PVOO E - Principal Vessel Operations Officer (Essex)	

The workstreams shown in the table below are categorised into two types of activities. The first, ongoing workstreams, are those which have already been existence and the second, new projects, are new workstreams.

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

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

Outcomes

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

Indicators

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

Actions	Outputs	Member of staff responsible for outputs
ONGOING ACTION: 1A) Support the Association of IFCA's	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annually contribute to the funding and running of the AIFCAs • Attend AIFCA meetings and take forward action points from meetings • Feed into AIFCA annual plan and report 	CIFCO OM
ONGOING ACTION: 1B) Support national IFCA working groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attend and contribute to the Chief Officers Group (COG) • Attend and contribute to the Technical Advisory Group (TAG) • Attend and contribute to the National Inshore Marine Enforcement Group (NIMEG) 	CIFCO DCIFCO
ONGOING ACTION: 1C) Attend and contribute to external meetings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attend meetings with national partners (MMO, NE, CEFAS, EA, other IFCA's). • Help to inform and develop national policy. • Help information flow between organisations. • Minutes of meetings. 	CIFCO DCIFCO
ONGOING ACTION: 1D) Reply to Consultations/ Correspondence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Replies to national partners e.g. policy consultation on legislation, information requests asking for KEIFCA stats for national purposes. • Input into national databases • Responses and engagement with national policy consultations 	PSCO IFCO (CE)* IFCO (SC)
ONGOING ACTION: 1E) Maintain website, quarterly e-bulletin, and stakeholder database	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain and update website (monthly website content review) • Maintain an up-to-date list of addressed and email addresses of stakeholders, updated every 12 months • Design and distribute quarterly e-bulletin 	OM AO
1F) Support the transition to a new Thames Estuary Cackle Fishery Order 2024 (T24)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Officers will work closely with the new T24 licence holders to ensure that the regulations and licence conditions are understood and complied with. • Officer work with any new entrants to make sure they understand the T24 cackle management processes. • The Cackle Officer will work with the industry to further the objectives of the management plan (reduce damage rates and group impact, collect socio-economic data etc). 	CIFCO DCIFCO OM/ AO
1G) Engage with the local fishing communities in the running and outcomes of planned Manila Clam trials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with the local industry to update fishers and interested stakeholders of progress and outcomes using an easy-to-read newsletter. • Work closely with trialists, so that they clearly understand the detail of the trial and what is expected of them • Coordinate with partner organisations like Natural England to share evidence and outcomes of the trials. 	IFCO (SC) PSCO CIFCO
1H) Review and update the KEIFCA website	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review the current KEIFCA website and identify what currently works and what can be improved. • Working with technical experts' design and build a new KEIFCA website • Transfer content from the old website to the new website 	DCIFCO OM
1I) Produce an Annual Communication Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication plan is produced each year and contained within the Annual Plan. 	CIFCO

Annual Communications Plan

At a local level, our aim is to create a community that is well informed about the marine environment, the work of the KEIFCA and to engage them in helping make decisions about their local marine environment and resources. At the national level, our goal is to participate fully in promoting engagement with Fisheries Management Plans and the SE Marine plan.

With the introduction of new cockle fishery management and the setting up and running of Manila clam trials the 2025/26 communication plan is dominated by these two key regional priorities. Away from the issues of cockle and clam management, the day-to-day work of KEIFCA staff, particularly the enforcement officers, represents one of the best forms of effective engagement with our stakeholders, and usually happens in an informal 'one-to-one' manner and involves KEIFCA officers fostering links, engendering trust and maintaining a presence in the district. KEIFCA members are also a vital conduit between the Authority and the local communities around our coast as well as with national networks and organisations. The KEIFCA website is a key component of our communication strategy and helps provide information about who we are, what we do, the current legislation as well as the development of new management measures. Overarching all these components, it is the promotion and running of the quarterly Authority meetings with easily accessible and promoted papers (e-bulletin), that helps communities engage with, and contribute to, effective decision making.

Nationally, the Association of IFCA's (AIFCA) and operational officer groups (COG, TAG and NIMEG) help IFCA's coordinate and promote key messages. At a regional level, KEIFCA officers sit on local groups such as the Essex Native Oyster Restoration Initiative (ENORI) and the North East Kent Marine Protected Area (NEKMPA) and support regional partnership projects like the Thames Estuary Partnership. Attendance and presenting at conferences and workshops, as well as working with bodies like the Shellfish Association of Great Britain (SAGB), also provide useful forums for KEIFCA to promote key messages.

In general, there are three main strands to our communication work and associated messaging;

- a) General promotion of who we are and what we do
- b) Promoting engagement in development of management measures that affect the exploited marine species or protected habitats in our district (e.g. byelaws, regulating orders, input into national legislation or policy, marine planning or licencing)
- c) Education of stakeholders to achieve high compliance with legislation.

These different strands tend to engage different types of stakeholders, so where our general promotion engages more with the general public or interested marine user, the development of management measures or enforcement education needs to reach the people that are working and fishing in the district. In addition the effective methods of primary communication vary between these groups with general information being best communicated through websites, social media, print media, harbour days and short videos; detailed management engagement focusing on tailored local meetings and specific communications (emails, letters, consultation documents); and enforcement legislation targeted specifically at users by face-to-face contact, notice boards, stickers and handouts and tide tables, as well

as being supported by our website. With these different stakeholder needs there is inevitable tension and resourcing conflicts between focusing on the production of general information about how we work and what we do, against the production of very specific and detailed information concerning legislation or byelaw technical measures.

Although KEIFCA has a relatively small annual communications budget and limited staff resource with officers also involved in our core enforcement and conservation work, our overview of activities below identifies and prioritises the key topics, actions and communication techniques we intend to focus on over the coming year.

Overview of key communication activities 2025/2026

Topic/ Issue	Key target group	Key Action/message	Website	Brief Officers	Brief members	KEIFCA meeting	National meetings	Local meetings	Community event	Poster/ Notice board	Sticker	Tide table	Media launch	Twitter	e-bulletin	Newspaper	Consultation/ Handout
Introduction of new cockle fishery management	Fishing industry	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engage local communities in understanding and working within the new management system 	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓						✓		✓
Running Manila Clam trials and communicating outcomes	Fishing industry and interested local stakeholders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engage local communities in the running of the trials and discussing outcomes 	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓							✓	✓	
MPA enforcement	Fishing industry and wider public	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Raise awareness of the closed areas management measures in MPAs 	✓	✓							✓	✓					
Fisheries Management Plans	Fishing industry and recreational anglers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Raise awareness of the new FMPs and help facilitate local engagement for draft FMPs. 	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓							✓		

Success Criterion 2: Compliance and Enforcement - *IFCAs implement a fair, effective, and proportionate enforcement regime*

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

- 1.** 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.
- 2.** The IFCA will have developed consistency in regulations (byelaws) with other organisations
- 3.** 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.
- 4.** Warranted Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Officers (IFCOs) will be trained and accredited to nationally agreed standards. They will maintain professionalism and make appropriate interventions to deliver efficient, effective enforcement activity

Indicators

- SC2A** The IFCA will ensure its enforcement risk register and strategy are published and available on its website from 1 April each year
- SC2B** The IFCA will demonstrate in its Annual Report how it has worked with other regulators to achieve consistent quality, application and enforcement of management measures
- SC2C** The IFCA will compile records of enforcement activity in a standard format; provide them to the National Inshore Marine Enforcement Group (NIMEG) and publish them on its website.
- SC2D** The IFCA will adopt the national Code of Conduct for IFCOs, which will be reviewed annually and published on its website by 1 April.
- SC2E** The Code of Conduct for IFCOs is reflected in work objectives and annual appraisals for all Warranted Officers.
- SC2F** Warranted Officers attain accreditation. All undertake Continuing Professional Development (CPD)

Actions	Outputs	Member of staff responsible for outputs
ONGOING ACTION: 2A) National updates and strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reviewing compliance and enforcement strategy, risk registers, data, information and enforcement processes to incorporate emerging issues and current best practice. • KEIFCA annual risk register is included with the Annual Plan • Attendance and involvement in the National Inshore Marine Enforcement Group (NIMEG) to generate consistency, improve processes and promote best practice. • Work with partners to develop and maintain national enforcement systems including Clue, Mobile Working and I-VMS. • Further Bass FMP compliance goals via NIMEG: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Represent compliance and enforcement interests on Bass Management Group and Task and Finish Sub-groups. ○ Work with MMO to develop bass gear trial proposal in East Area. 	PCEO DCIFCO
ONGOING ACTION: 2B) Information and Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creation and implementation of strategic and operational plans for key enforcement issues and risks as listed in the schedule for enforcement below. • Organisation and hosting of bi-weekly KEIFCA tasking and coordination (TCG) meetings. • Explore the introduction catch data, intel gaps, and RAG VOI to TCG process. • Use spatial data to assist with enforcement review and planning via GIS software. • Completion of annual enforcement plans and reports. 	PCEO DCIFCO
ONGOING ACTION: 2C) Enforcement systems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gathering and analysis of intelligence, evidence, and other enforcement data to feed into KEIFCA databases and national systems (MCSS while still operational, Clue) • Ensure intelligence collection, process and requirements are understood by all officers. • “Clue” software - national IFCA and MMO intel and investigation management system: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ engage with MMO development and support officer training to maximise effectiveness of the new system. ○ Prioritise rapid dissemination of information relating to officer safety. ○ Work with MMO to move TCG process onto Clue output. • Use the national standardised case file management system, with a view to moving onto Clue as case management database in line with national approach. • “Mobile Working App” new digital inspection recording system: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Continue work on trial MWA use and provide feedback. ○ Work with MMO and other IFCA to develop Mobile Working App to be fit for purpose for IFCA inspections and move away from MCSS. • Working with partner organisations to enhance sharing of relevant external intelligence and improving effectiveness of information sharing via IR dissemination and TCG meetings. • Use internal SharePoint systems to record inspections, vessel information and cockle fishery data with Mobile Working App is still being developed. • Review, update and improve CRIB books to enhance officer knowledge and performance. 	PCEO All IFCOs
ONGOING ACTION: 2D) Case Files and Prosecutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building prosecution case files to fair and proportionate outcomes in line with KEIFCA policy, applying evidential and public interest tests via legal advice. • Enhance front line enforcement skills, within IFCOs through formal and workplace training, particularly on gathering of evidence and building of case files. 	PCEO All IFCOs

ONGOING ACTION: 2E) Sea-going enforcement asset management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision and maintenance of KEIFCA vessels for the purposes of enforcement activities. • Provision and maintenance of vessel-based equipment used for sea-based enforcement. • Explore best available equipment options. • Planning and reporting to the Authority of operation, maintenance and refit of vessels 	PVOO K PVOO E SNR IFCO (S) K SNR IFCO (S) E
ONGOING ACTION: 2F) Enforcement activities – sea-based	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain a visible patrol presence at sea to promote compliance, gather intelligence and detect offences. • Undertaking enforcement activities: boarding and gear with the aim of achieving full compliance with all local and national regulations. • Collection of information related to KEIFCA responsibilities and partner organisations • Prioritisation of detection and prevention of offences and operations as specified in the risk register. • Intelligence-led enforcement taskings. • Use body-worn video to promote with compliance and sound evidence gathering. • Support MMO/DEFRA in national taskings by providing charter patrols when required. 	PVOO E PVOO K SNR IFCO (S) E SNR IFCO (S) K All IFCOs
ONGOING ACTION: 2G) Shore based enforcement asset management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision and maintenance of vehicles for shore-based compliance and enforcement. • Maintain shore-based equipment capable of carrying out surveillance and enforcement. • Introduce systematic checks for upkeep of shore-based enforcement equipment. • Planning/reporting to Authority of operation, maintenance, and refit of key equipment • Explore best available equipment options (including PPE, scales and drones) 	SNR IFCO (S) E SNR IFCO (S) K PCEO
ONGOING ACTION: 2H) Enforcement activities – shore-based	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain a visible patrol presence on shore to promote compliance, gather intelligence and detect offences. • Undertake enforcement activities, landings of vessels, inspections of vehicles and premises with the aim of achieving full compliance with local and national regulations. • Collection of information related to KEIFCA interests and those of partner organisations. • Intelligence-led enforcement taskings. • Use body-worn video to promote with compliance and sound evidence gathering. • Day-to-day maintenance of vehicles used for shore patrols and enforcement. 	IFCOs SNR IFCO (S) ERCM
ONGOING ACTION: 2I) Enforcement training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to support development and implementation of the accredited program. • Officers to attend IFCA Competent Officer training course on a regular rotating basis. • Ensure updates to legislation and procedure are shared and processes updated internally. • Review, update and improve CRIB book for officer training and to maintain consistent enforcement approaches in the field. • Officers attend regular external training courses to refresh skillsets. • Run a refresher course for EA cross-warrants. • Internal and on-the job training delivered to maintain enforcement skills, regular feedback given to officers to uphold best practise. 	DCIFCO PCEO PVOO K PVOO E
2K) Marine Protected Area enforcement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MPA byelaws included in risk register • Development of operational planning for MPAs in line with schedule of enforcement below. • Identify MPAs that require increased patrol effort via TCG process. • Include new MPA bottom towed gear prohibited areas in patrol planning. 	PCEO

2L) Remote Electronic Monitoring (REM)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Update the authority on benefits of REM as a cutting-edge fisheries management tool. • Engage with other IFCA's and DEFRA in quarterly meetings to share best practise in REM workstreams. • Work with FastView 360 to develop machine learning data for cockle fishery applications. • Review and analyse REM data applications for use in Geographical Information Systems. • Progress roll-out of REM across TECFO fleet on a voluntary basis in 2025 fishery. 	PCEO DCIFCO PVOO E
2M) Manila Clam trial fishery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allocate officer and patrol vessel resources to monitoring Manila Clam trial fishery in Autumn 2025. 	CIFCO PCEO PVOO K PVOO E

Annual Enforcement Plan/Risk Register - Schedule of planned compliance activity for 2025-2026

In undertaking its regulatory responsibilities, KEIFCA starts from the position that the vast majority of the community of people, organisations and industries using the marine area are compliant with the regulations and controls that affects them. KEIFCA works to try to ensure that all parties understand both what rules apply to their industry and the rationale for the regulation being necessary. Full compliance with national and local fisheries and marine conservation legislation is the overall aim of the Authority's enforcement regime. This aim is best achieved through the adoption of an adaptive co-management approach to fisheries management.

KEIFCA oversees a diverse range of fishing activities within the district, driven by the variety of marine habitats found in the North Sea, Thames Estuary, and Eastern Channel. These habitats support various commercial species in our waters at different stages throughout the year. At its inception, KEIFCA identified 18 key species as the focal point of its work, comprising both finfish of commercial and recreational importance and various shellfish species.

Unlike finfish, which migrate in and out of the District, inshore shellfish stocks—such as crab, lobster, cockles, whelks, oysters, and scallops—are typically more sedentary and therefore management at the local IFCA level is most appropriate for these species. In addition to the traditionally exploited shellfish stocks listed above. In 2024 we took steps to develop management strategies for Manila clams, which have recently proliferated in the Thames, and this trial fishery will resume in 2025. Key commercial finfish species managed by KEIFCA include sole, bass, thornback ray, smoothhound, and, to a lesser extent, cod, alongside species of less significance like tope and grey mullet. These stocks form the foundation of our enforcement strategy, with targeted, intelligence-led compliance checks tasked via the tactical Tasking and Coordination Group (TCG) process.

The recruitment of new officers in 2024, who will become warranted in 2025 will strengthen our enforcement capacity, enabling us to deliver broader and more effective operations across the District. Building and maintaining strong working relationships with partner agencies will remain a priority, as we continue to focus on shared targets with partners at the Environment Agency, Marine Management Organisation, and neighbouring IFCA's.

In Spring 2025, whelks and bass will be the key priority stocks within our risk register. June will bring a particular focus on the Thames cockle fishery, which will operate for the first time under the new regulating order. This milestone moment for KEIFCA's flagship fishery will require close compliance monitoring to ensure adherence to the updated spatial areas and regulations. Toward the end of the summer, the Cockle Permit Fishery will be scheduled to open, and like the TECFO this fishery will encompass new spatial boundaries which will create new fishing opportunities for permit vessels and will consequentially require a new compliance approach for our enforcement operations. As we move into the autumn there is likely to be the usual uptick in bass compliance activity alongside a new addition to the KEIFCA regulatory regime—the next stage of a trial fishery for Manila clams. While a full byelaw for this fishery is not planned for 2025, participating vessels will be subject to thorough inspections and monitoring on most fishing trips, generating a busy workload for patrol vessel crews. As the temperature drops off into winter our compliance efforts will switch to monitoring the whelk fishery again, which is a vital stock for many vessels to target during the colder months.

As the fisheries landscape continues to evolve, KEIFCA remains committed to staying ahead of the curve by embracing the latest technological advancements in fisheries management. Key initiatives include the deployment of the new Clue intelligence software, development of an IFCA-specific component within the MMO’s Mobile Working App for recording inspections, developing new methods of monitoring and targeting when I-VMS when it becomes a legal requirement, and furthering the development of REM in the Thames cockle fishery. Additionally, we will align our compliance objectives with those set out in newly published Fishery Management Plans (FMPs), particularly focusing on the review of bass regulations under the Bass FMP.

By combining strategic enforcement, innovative technology, and strong partnerships, KEIFCA is committed to safeguarding sustainable fisheries management through the delivery of an overt, fair and proportionate compliance regime.

Planning and operation

Ensuring that we get the right balance of compliance and enforcement alongside our other areas of work is a continual challenge, and one which requires a good level of base planning to achieve success. As a result, there is a structured approach to compliance activities which is best shown in Figure 1 below. This structure is designed to factor in the annual risks and proactive responses to those risks identified in this document and combine them with reactive responses to emerging risks throughout the year.

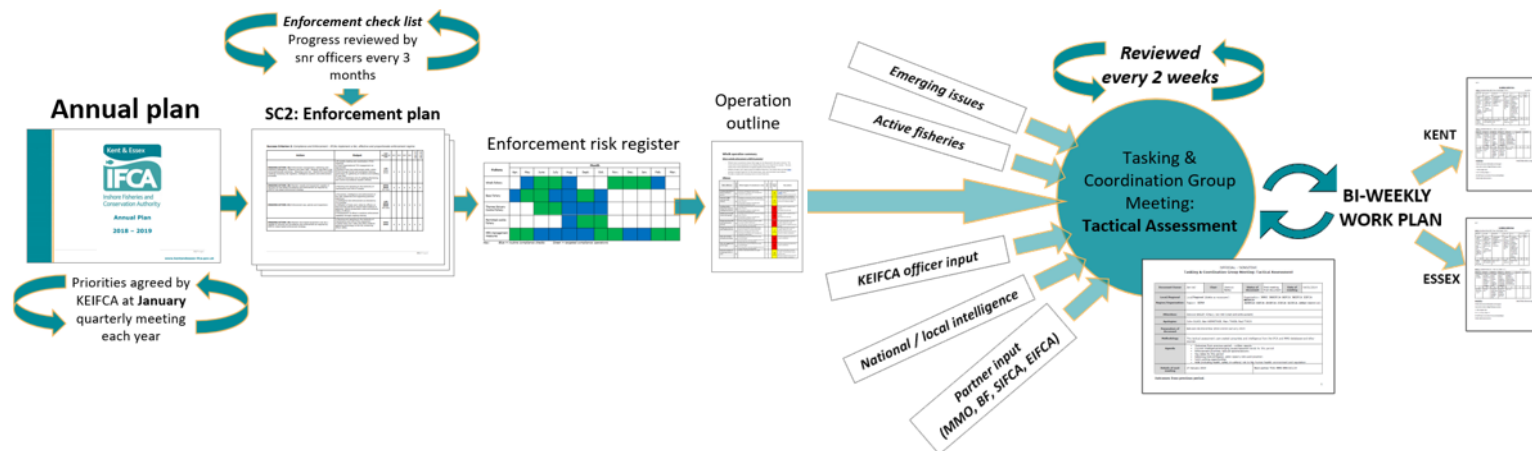


Figure 1. Diagram showing the structure of enforcement planning and operation

Risk register

KEIFCA officers carry out enforcement patrols throughout the year, responding to the changes in fishing effort for a range of key species subject to seasonal opportunities. The table below indicates our typical schedule for focusing on key enforcement risks in relation to local species of commercial (and recreational in some cases such as bass) significance. Green highlighted months show peaks in fishing effort for a fishery and therefore increased compliance risk, necessitating specific operations and proactive tasking of enforcement assets to monitor compliance and detect illegal activity. Blue highlighted months show times when a fishery is still likely to be actively exploited but compliance risk is lower, and therefore enforcement effort will be on a routine basis or in response to specific intelligence. This approach provides a basis for a seasonal, risk-prioritised enforcement regime throughout the year. It should be noted that in addition to compliance and enforcement work, this schedule balances with the other competing demands on staff and vessel time, particularly annual survey programmes. Working in partnership with partner enforcement agencies such as the MMO, Environment Agency, Border Force and Police work collaboratively to enforce the law in an efficient, effective, and proportionate way. This collaborative approach brings value for the taxpayer and makes best use of limited budgets and resources.

Key Fishery	Month											
	Apr.	May	June	July	Aug.	Sept.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.
Whelks	Blue	Blue						Blue	Green	Green	Green	Green
Bass	Green	Green	Blue			Blue	Green	Green	Blue			
Thames Estuary Cockle Fishery			Green	Green	Green	Blue						
Permit cockle fishery						Green	Green					
MPA management measures	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue
Manila clams							Green	Green				

Key: **Blue** = routine compliance checks **Green** = targeted compliance operations

Key fisheries

Cockle fishery compliance

The KEIFCA district, and particularly the Thames Estuary, is one of the most productive regions for cockle production both nationally and internationally. KEIFCA closely manages these key cockle stocks to achieve maximum economic benefit to fishers balanced with safeguarding stock sustainability and the protection of marine habitats. Cockle management encompasses two distinct fisheries management regimes that operate within the district: the Thames Estuary Cockle Fishery Order (TECFO) fishery which covers the main Thames Estuary, and the Cockle Fishery Flexible Permit Byelaw which manages cockle harvesting across the remainder of the district. Cockles are a lucrative commodity and therefore regulations are strict, meaning targeted operation orders to monitor compliance and ensure all regulations are adhered to is paramount to the continued success and future sustainability of these fisheries. There will be a new regulating order to manage the TECFO this year, with changes to spatial boundaries being the biggest change to previous year's fishing operations. As such spatial area enforcement to safeguard closed beds will be of paramount importance.

The TECFO operation will be implemented first in June, starting with biosecurity inspections and pre-emptive gear compliance checks. Officers will effectively communicate with licenced fishermen throughout, promoting understanding and positive working relationships with vessel operators. Once fishing commences officers will carry out a phase of intensive boarding inspections at sea to assess damage rates of the gear used by all vessels in the fleet. This seagoing effort will be complemented by teams on shore conducting landing inspections to ensure compliance with catch limits. Later in the season regular sea patrols will also be carried out by fishery patrol vessels in high-risk closed areas and at times of temporary closure, which will be tailored to the best available intelligence. If and when offences are detected during physical inspections, officers will utilise body worn video cameras to gather best evidence. Following offences involving fishing closed areas during the 2024 fishery, officers will also maintaining a more comprehensive presence at sea, particularly in boundaries between open and closed harvesting areas.

Remotely, our officers will review Vessel Monitoring System (VMS) tracks to monitor potential non-compliance within closed area restrictions. Although VMS tracks are a vital tool in monitoring spatial restrictions in the Thames cockle fishery it is not without its limitations. In our efforts to ever improve compliance we will be ramping up our successful trials of Remote Electronic Monitoring (REM), tested on two cockle boats last season. Like VMS, REM incorporates a tracking device, but also is linked to sensors which detect when the dredge is deployed or retrieved from the water, and CCTV cameras which record real time footage of fishing gear. We are also planning to work with developers to create a machine learning algorithm which to be applied to REM cameras, making it possible to measure the quantity of cockles on board automatically. From an enforcement standpoint, REM stands to drive improved compliance and provide the best possible evidence in future investigations, while reducing the need for costly FPV patrols to monitor the cockle fleet at sea. With results from our initial 2014 trial being extremely promising, we aim to roll out REM across the rest of the cockle fleet on a voluntary basis during 2025.

The national proposed Cockle FMP has been published for to public consultation in 2024 with a final version to be published in 2025, and therefore the objectives of the next annual plan will align where possible to further any compliance goals outlined in the FMP.

Bass regulation compliance

Since 2015 the UK and EU have implemented a joint management approach to bass fisheries following a sharp decline in stocks across European waters. Since these measures were introduced, there has been an increase in adult stock biomass but recruitment of juvenile bass remains low. As a result, regulations which restrict bass fishing in both the commercial and recreational sector continue to apply and remain a high compliance priority in the district. IFCOs will continue to work closely with partners at the MMO to target non-compliance with bass regulations, focusing on high-risk areas of the district at peak seasonal times. Based on cumulative intelligence, we will continue to implement joint operations with neighbouring IFCAs and the MMO to target illegal activities such as drift netting and misreporting. Recreational bass fishers will also be inspected routinely to ensure that current catch limits and minimum sizes are adhered to.

Bass FMP

Since the publication of the Bass FMP in December 2023, KEIFCA and other regulators have been engaging with DEFRA leads on this commercially crucial species future management. This document proposes a wide range of improvements to bass fishery management, which also incorporate a number of targets that are relevant to KEIFCA bass compliance plans, including improving collaboration between regulators on targeted enforcement and improving communication and understanding of bass regulations.

The first tangible step in this process has been the establishment of the Bass Management Group (BMG) to facilitate stakeholder participation in management decisions. With the support of the National Inshore Marine Enforcement Group (NIMEG), KEIFCA will lobby for compliance expertise to be represented in this forum. With two IFCA representatives and a senior MMO Compliance and Enforcement representative now sitting on the BMG, we hope to work with stakeholders to try and improve the regulatory regime for bass. This will include getting KEIFCA representation on BMG Task and Finish Groups and pushing for compliance goals of the FMP to be prioritised. We will also work with the MMO to develop a proposal for a trial of bass fishing gear types in the East of England, in order to improve the evidence, base which will inform future gear regulations.

Whelk compliance

KEIFCA will be maintaining an effective enforcement presence on land and at sea focusing on sustainability of fishery by carrying out inspections to check gear and vessels are compliant with permit requirements, and that catches are compliant with the whelk fishery flexible permit byelaw. Gear inspections will be a high priority to ensure that extra pots are not being used by fishers operating inside the permit area, and that the correct configuration of escape holes are present to maximise survivability of juvenile whelks. Officers will also be looking to intensively target catch inspections with a dedicated operational order the 2025-26 period. We will continue to communicate with all permit holders to encourage catch returns to be submitted accurately to improve the reliability of data used for fishery management. Officers will support industry to explore methods of reducing undersize whelks in catches, chiefly via developments in riddle technology.

Whelk FMP

National management measures for whelk fisheries have until now been relatively modest, as despite whelks having huge economic importance to coastal fishing communities there are no catch limits, gear limits, or access restrictions. Unlike most IFCA districts where

tight permitting regimes manage whelk fisheries, the only national regulation for whelks outside the 6nm limit is a statutory minimum conservation reference size (MCRS) of 45mm. With the national Whelk FMP published, KEIFCA will continue to engage as much as possible with the development of these plans via the whelk management group, making sure our expertise in whelk management is communicated to facilitate best practise, and to safeguard the continued success of whelk stocks inside the district, and ultimately to push for similar successful regimes to be applied outside of the 6nm limit off the coast of Kent and Essex.

Angling education and compliance

Engagement with the recreational angling sector will remain a core priority for the compliance team during the upcoming year. We will seek to expand on educational initiatives focused bass regulations in particular, in line with FMP objectives, by developing engagement tools and promotional materials on a national scale with partner agencies. We will also publish information in local tide tables and make regular visits to angling shops to distribute free minimum size stickers. Targeted inspections of individuals and recreational vessels that pose a high risk to compliance objectives will be tasked through the TCG process as current intelligence emerges. Increasing effort to inspect recreational charter boat trips will feature in the coming year.

Marine Protected Area (MPA) compliance

Three additional MCZ areas due to be closed to bottom towed fishing gear in 2025: Dover to Deal, Goodwin Sands and Swanscombe. This will almost double the extent of prohibited areas for bottom towed gear from 236 km² to a vast area of 406 km² of sea area in Kent and Essex waters. This massive increase in protected areas will logically increase the need for regular sea patrols to cover these designations, however the timely arrival of the new Essex-based 10.5m cabin RIB "Nemo" (due to be delivered in May 2025) will provide the ideal platform for this work. The Essex RIB will provide the mainstay of compliance patrol effort within Essex and Medway estuaries, including the new Swanscombe site in the upper reaches of the Thames. Meanwhile FPV Nerissa will focus on the Eastern and Southern Kent areas including the two new sites Dover to Deal and Goodwin Sands, the latter which forms the inshore part of a wider protected area with management measures outside the 6nm limit regulated under MMO byelaws.

Inshore Vessel Monitoring Systems (IVMS) as a legal requirement is anticipated in 2025, and once in place our ability to monitor protected areas will be revolutionised, with live spatial data becoming available for the entire fleet. As such, we eagerly anticipate being able to monitor compliance and gatherer intelligence relating to protected areas in the Kent and Essex district more effectively than ever before.

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

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

Outcomes

- 1.** The IFCA will identify issues likely to affect sustainable management of the marine environment in the IFC District; undertake risk assessment and gap analysis; review appropriateness of existing measures; evaluate management options and develop and implement proportionate marine management solutions.
- 2.** The IFCA will support implementation of a well-managed network of marine protected areas by: developing a range of criteria based management options; implementing management measures to ensure that inshore fisheries activities comply with the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009 and the revised approach to managing commercial fisheries in European Marine Sites; and that local management contributes to delivery of targets for the Marine Strategy Framework Directive, Water Framework Directive and Marine Plans.
- 3.** The IFCA will develop Fisheries Management Plans for priority species where appropriate. Shared objectives will be developed with identified partners; actions identified, and best practice reflected so that management makes a contribution to sustainable development.

Indicators

- SC3A** The IFCA will record site specific management considerations for Marine Protected Areas and report progress to the Authority
- SC3B** The IFCA will publish data analysis and evidence supporting new management measures on its website.
- SC3C** Management information (e.g. sampling and/or survey results) will be collected periodically after new management measures have been implemented, to demonstrate the extent of the effectiveness of the intervention.
- SC3D** The IFCA will have developed a range of criteria-based management options that are explained to stakeholders through the IFCA website and reviewed by 31 March each year.
- SC3E** New IFCA management measures selected for development and implementation are delivered within agreed timescales.
- SC3F** The IFCA will include shared agreed objectives and actions from Fisheries Management Plans in its own Annual Plan, which will be published by 31 March each year.
- SC3G** Progress made in relevant Fisheries Management Plan areas, including Maximum Sustainable Yield commitments, will be noted in the IFCA's Annual Report.

Actions	Outputs	Member of staff responsible for outputs
ONGOING ACTION: 3A) Administration of KEIFCA licences and permits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Issuing of cockle licences/permits and update letters. • Hold cockle industry meetings and KEIFCA cockle management meetings. • Collecting and collating cockle catch returns. • Issuing of whelk permits, whelk tags and update letters. • Collecting and collating whelk catch returns. 	AO OM DCIFCO
ONGOING ACTION: 3B) Administration of new KEIFCA legislation (e.g. Byelaws and Regulating Orders)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reports to Authority meetings • When required seeking legal opinion and compiling legal papers. • Minutes of meetings and decisions • Advertising new legislation and providing admin support for consultations. • Sending documents to the MMO or DEFRA 	CIFCO OM AO
3C) Implement new cockle fishery management and start	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building on the TECFO 1994 annual management process, develop an annual management process for the new Thames Estuary Cockle fishery (No.2) Order 2024 (T24). • Engage with fishing industry to help develop a 'small-scale' cockle permit fishery outside the new T24 boundary. • Work with fishers to understand the potential for a long-term sustainable manila clam fishery 	CIFCO DCIFCO OM AO
3D) Take steps to explore the potential of a future Manila clam fishery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Run a benthic impact trial to monitor the impact of the Manila clam fishing gear on the seabed and it's the species it supports • Run an application process for the 2025 manila clam trial • Run the 2025 manila clam trials and report outcomes • Work with Natural England to create an evidenced based pathway, whereby a future clam fishery could pass a Habitat Regulation Assessment. • Start the process of developing future manila clam management options. 	CIFCO IFCO (SC) DCIFCO PSCO
3E) Provide support for process of SE Marine Plan review and update	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support DEFRA and AFICA in role to develop and update Marine Spatial Plans for southeast • Attend meetings and provide input and data required for marine planning 	IFCO (CE)* PSCO
3F) Respond to MMO marine licence applications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reply to MMO licence applications • Lease with the local industry if licence applications are of specific concern to local fishers 	IFCO (CE)*

3G) Provide input into national Fisheries Management Plan workstreams	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with the AIFCA to help represent IFCA's in national FMP discussions (FMP lead for COG) • Provide support to national oversight groups and when required attend national meetings • Work with other IFCA's to compile FMP outputs at a national level and feedback to DEFRA 	CIFCO PSCO DCIFCO
3H) Help DEFRA implement the short-term management measures from Fisheries Management Plans.	Bass – High priority <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feed into the new bass management group(s) and the review of the current domestic bass authorisation system. • Improve communication with stakeholders on bass management and enforcement and highlight joint working with the MMO. 	PECO CIFCO
	Whelk FMP – High priority <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take a led role in the introduction of a national whelk fishing permit scheme or entitlement • Take a led role in the potential introduction of regional minimum sizes for whelks. • Feed into the collection of whelk data and development of stock estimates and models. • Help develop a data collection programme and feed in KEIFCA data into national data sets. 	CIFCO PSCO
	Cockle FMP – High priority <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Help establish a national cockle FMP forum • Develop a framework to support the role of the FMP in realising sustainable cockle fisheries in English waters – Implement new Thames cockle regulating order • Help further the data collection framework for social and economic data used to inform management decisions. 	IFCO (CO) DCIFCO
	Southern North Sea and Channel skates and rays FMP – High priority <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sit on a skate and ray management group • Help engagement for minimum and maximum conservation reference sizes • Help engage and disseminate proposed voluntary guidelines • Support alternative approaches to the current group total allowable catches (TAC) 	CIFCO PSCO
	Channel / Southern North Sea demersal non-quota species FMP – Medium priority <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feed into emerging cephalopod fisheries work • To contribute to new cuttlefish, squid and octopus management decisions. 	CIFCO PSCO
	Crab & Lobster FMP – Medium priority <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with other IFCA's and local stakeholders to feed into future crab and lobster management as it develops. 	CIFCO PSCO DCIFCO
	Scallops FMP – Medium priority <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contribute to area-based closures/ area-based management discussions on scallop stocks. 	CIFCO PSCO DCIFCO

Success Criterion 4: Governance and Training - *IFCAs have appropriate governance in place and staff are trained and professional*

IFCAs are statutory authorities and sit within the local government family. Authority members may be either general members or local Councillors. They comply with Codes of Conduct and the Standing Orders that apply to meetings of local government committees. General members are appointed on merit, through open competition and for a term. They are subject to an annual performance appraisal. An IFCA is funded by levy, charged to its member councils. Funding originates in local taxation. An IFCA is accountable for its use of public resources and should ensure that a proper auditing regime provides confidence in its commitment and spend of public money. It should make effective use of its resources, including staff and assets. An IFCA has a statutory obligation to prepare and publish Annual Plans and Annual Reports. IFCA Committee meetings will be held in public unless material is either confidential, or exempt within the meaning of the Local Government Act 1972.

Outcomes

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

Indicators

- SC4A** The IFCA will publish a plan on its website by 31 March, setting out the main objectives and priorities for the next financial year. A copy will be sent to the Secretary of State.
- SC4B** After the end of each financial year, the IFCA will publish a report on its website describing its activities, performance and a summary of audited financial information in that year, by 30 November. A copy will be sent to the Secretary of State.
- SC4C** IFCA staff will have annual performance management plans in place. Annual appraisals for all staff will have been completed by 31 May each year.
- SC4D** An efficient secretariat of IFCA staff support IFCA Authority meetings which are held quarterly and are quorate. Meeting documentation will meet Standing Orders.
- SC4E** The IFCA will have demonstrated, in its Annual Report, how marine, land and water management mechanisms in the Inshore Fisheries & Conservation District have worked responsively and effectively together.

Actions	Outputs	Member of staff responsible for outputs
ONGOING ACTION: 4A) Create and manage KEIFCA annual budget and reserves	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General admin - Inputting invoices, travel & expenses, purchase card etc. • Annual budget with quarterly updates - Compile budget, budget meetings etc. • Two meetings per annum with internal audit • Manage and coordinate funding applications 	OM AO
ONGOING ACTION: 4B) Produce an agreed KEIFCA annual plan and an accompanying annual report	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create and publish 2026-2027 annual plan and 202-2025 annual report • Document and present to Authority (display on website). 	CIFCO DCIFCO OM
ONGOING ACTION: 4D) Run and record IFCA meetings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Run and provide support for quarterly IFCA meetings and technical panel meetings. • Letters/actions from meeting. • Handbook for members 	OM AO
ONGOING ACTION: 4C) Address any HR staff matters and run the staff monitoring and assessment systems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Responsibility for day-to-day HR matters – contracts, payroll, pensions, timesheets etc. • Run current staff performance monitoring system and compile staff performance documentation. • Recruiting new staff. 	CIFCO OM AO
ONGOING ACTION: 4E) Facilitate appropriate training for all staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sea tickets/training • Survey training (ATV training) etc. • Compile official documentation proving training has been completed. 	DCIFCO OM
ONGOING ACTION: 4F) Run the KEIFCA health and safety systems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual reporting of H&S issues to Authority • Regular meeting of H&S committee 	OM DCIFCO
4G) Implement new MCA workboat code requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Skippers receive specialist MCA workboat training • Snr Skippers lead on developing and embedding a new safety management system and associated documentation • Skippers work with other IFCA's to share best practice and new ways of working 	DCIFCO CIFCO OM
4H) Implement new KEIFCA officer staff structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Embed new roles and responsibilities for staff, especially the new skipper and Snr skipper roles. • Develop the process for experienced IFCOs to pass the required stages to become Snr IFCOs. • Work with finance team to ensure that the annual pay award process is integrated into our budget setting process. 	CIFCO DCIFCO

Success Criterion 5: Evidence and Science - *IFCAs make the best use of evidence to deliver their objectives.*

Definition: IFCAs are statutory regulators for their Inshore Fisheries and Conservation District. Decision making should be based on evidence. All IFCAs are supported by officers who pool their expertise and share best practice as a Technical Advisory Group (TAG). A programme of research activity and monitoring is planned, developed, and updated in consultation with partners. The programme informs management decisions and supports justification for additional research and evidence gathering.

Outcomes

- 1.** A strategic research plan that contributes to greater understanding of the marine environment and delivery of cost-effective management of sea fisheries resources.
- 2.** Standard Operating Procedures describe how data is captured and shared with principal partners.
- 3.** A list of research databases held by the IFCA and the frequency of their review.
- 4.** Non-confidential meta-data collected through the IFCA research programme should be recorded in a database available to the marine research community.

Indicators

- SC5A** The IFCA will demonstrate progress that has been made towards identifying its evidence needs by publishing a research plan each year.
- SC5B** The IFCA will publish a research report annually that demonstrates how evidence has supported decision making.
- SC5C** The IFCA's contribution to TAG and progress that has been made towards a national evidence needs programme will be recorded in the IFCA's Annual Report.

Actions	Outputs	Member of staff responsible for outputs
ONGOING ACTION: 5A) Annual Research Plan & Report	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepare the annual research plan: Assess annual research priorities, plan time and resource. • Prepare the Annual Research Report: Report on achievement of objectives set in Annual Research Plan and demonstrating use of evidence for decision making 	PSCO
ONGOING ACTION: 5B) Participate in TAG meetings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Actively contribute to IFCA TAG meetings, providing KEIFCA updates & reporting back • Develop & co-shot section of material for Environmental Science Officer Training Course 	PSCO
ONGOING ACTION: 5C) Maintain scientific survey equipment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision and maintenance of KEIFCA vessels and equipment for the purposes of scientific surveys and data collection • Provision and maintenance of vehicles for shore based scientific surveys and data collection • Planning and reporting to the Authority of operation, maintenance, and refit of key equipment 	PVOO SNR IFCO (S)
ONGOING ACTION: 5D) MPA management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Address outstanding MPA Fisheries Assessments • Participation in update of regional Southeast Marine Plan • See Action 5J on Fishing Footprint in MPAs. 	KIFCO (SC)
ONGOING ACTION: 5E) Engagement with major marine developments in the district and reply to consultations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collate overview of all marine developments in the district of relevance • Evaluate and Prioritise engagement • Liaise with relevant Fishers Groups • Provide verbal and written feedback when there is a potential impact on local fisheries, MPAs or byelaws. 	IFCO (CE)* PSCO
ONGOING ACTION: 5F) Evidence gathering and reporting for the T24 licenced and permitted cockle fisheries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plan and carry out annual cockle stock assessment surveys (inc. cockle samples for MESL) • Delivery of recommendations relating to stock management (inc. data entry and analysis). • Organisation and delivery of pre-fishery stakeholder meeting (License holders): • Production of Habitat Regulations Assessment, including consultation with NE 	PSCO DCIFCO All IFCOs
ONGOING ACTION: 5G) Evidence gathering and reporting for the whelk permit fishery and National whelk FMP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collate, analyse and prepare whelk landings report and improve alignment with FMP objectives • Routinely collect water temperature data • Expand collaborative research with academic partners (University of Essex, Bangor University, Herriot-Watt) to better understand whelk environmental envelope through MSc/PhD studies. 	PSCO OSO SNR IFCO (S)
ONGOING ACTION: 5H) Native oyster fishery management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with fishers to continue work on understanding oyster populations • Continued membership of ENORI 	PSCO PVOO E
ACTION: 5I) Fisheries Management Plans (FMPs) delivery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Actively participate in delivering the FMPs especially data and research elements. • Continue to contribute to Whelk Management Group (WMG) and Whelk Working Group (WWG) 	CIFCO PSCO

ACTION: 5J) Evidence gathering for a potential clam fishery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trial fishery • Organising and mobilising the trial fishery • Fishing footprint in MPAs: Develop better data collection methods on fishing impacts using REM. • Analysis & write-up • Survey planning & delivery of stock assessment* • Ground Impact survey* • Engage with fishermen to communicate results and recommendations • Literature review of other clam fisheries 	KIFCO (SC) *PSCO CIFCO DCIFCO
ACTION: 5K) T24 cockle stock assessment database	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop the T24 cockle stock assessment data recording methods, database, data analysis & reporting mechanisms 	PSCO
ACTION: 5L) Host TAG 2025 symposium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organise and host the 2025 Technical Advisory Group of IFCA's bi-annual symposium 	PSCO CIFCO
ACTION: 5M) Project CHLE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Co-develop IFCA's role in Coastal Health Livelihoods Project with AIFCA's • Attend train the trainer event & make assessment of KEIFCA resource requirement to act as a coastal node 	DCIFCO PSCO

Annual Research Plan - 2025-2026

In 2025/2026 KEIFCA's core research priorities are centred around setting up the processes, planning and infrastructure to meet the evidence requirements for 1) the first year of running the TECFO 2024 (T24) cockle fishery, 2) the second year of the Manila clam trial fishery, and 3) developing a PhD study to assess the future shellfish fisheries in the Thames under climate change (requires additional grant funding). KEIFCA's research strategy categorises research and evidence gathering into three themes:

Theme 1: Marine Protected Areas - Develop and implement robust management measures for MCZs in KEIFCA's district.

In 2025/2026 KEIFCA hopes to obtain sign off to the updated No bottom Towed Gear byelaw to which Goodwin Sands, Dover to Deal and Swanscombe MCZs will be added to the schedule of restricted areas. This will complete a coherent suite of management measures aimed at protecting sensitive designated features in the network of MCZs in Kent and Essex IFCA's district.

This year we will switch our focus from developing management to improving our understanding of the location and impact on the seabed from the new cockle Regulating Order fishery and from the Manila clam trial fishery. These running of these fisheries will require the completion of Habitats Regulation Assessments (HRAs) and Appropriate Assessments where they overlap with MPAs before obtaining sign off from Natural England.

Furthermore, we plan to complete MCZ fisheries assessments for outstanding MCZs requiring sign off from Natural England. In 2025/2026 KEIFCA will commit resources to help update and develop the Southeast Marine Plan, to ensure IFCA responsibilities towards fisheries are considered when used for marine planning decisions and will be led by a dedicated officer. KEIFCA will continue to provide consultation responses to National Marine Infrastructure such as port development, telecommunications, windfarm and cable laying, as well as engage with local planning decisions as appropriate.

Theme 2: Sustainable Fisheries - Provide evidence to support sustainable fisheries management for key shellfish stocks.

Sustainable fisheries work is presented under two components: namely, shellfish and fisheries management plans. The majority of KEIFCA resource set aside for carrying out surveys will focus on the commercially valuable shellfish species because these tend to be regulated under KEIFCA management, and as such stock assessments for these species are required. Finfish tends to be regulated under national or international legislature and consequently KEIFCA's research into finfish populations tends to be more in a supporting capacity, such as assisting or enabling Government bodies (EA, CEFAS), NGOs and academic bodies to carry out research and collect data valuable for informing national species management strategies.

Cockles: Stock assessments of cockles are critical to inform the catch limits (quotas) that ensures sustainable and responsible management of the two cockle fisheries in the district, namely T24 (TECFO 2024 – new Regulating Order fishery from this year) and Permit fishery, which target this key shellfish stock between June and October. Annual cockle surveys are consequently a high-priority ongoing activity, with a high resource requirement that dominates the research agenda between April and May, and again in early September to inform the annual spatfall. These surveys collect information on the spatial distribution, abundance, biomass and age structure of cockles. From this data, stock size, growth, mortality and recruitment trends can be estimated and is used to set annual catch quotas from fished beds in the district. Sea going surveys take place from FPVs Tamesis and Nerissa, and land-based surveys are carried out using customised quad bikes used to access the nearshore subtidal habitats.

We have recruited a dedicated Cackle Officer in 2024, who will expand on her role for 2025/2026 in charge of fisheries liaison and assisting management roles. KEIFCA will also be developing and adapting its Risk Assessments (RAs) and Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) to allow a smooth transition from TECFO 1994 to the new Regulating Order.

Continuing from the classification of a cockle bed on the North Kent Coast obtained 2024, KEIFCA will continue collecting cockle samples to facilitate the classification of two specific cockle beds by the Food Standards Association (FSA), during bi-weekly sampling on the North Kent Coast.

Manila clams: With the continued increase in size and abundance of Manila clams along the Essex and Kent coast, KEIFCA will continue ongoing survey and research commitment into its spatial and abundance and biomass distribution. This lucrative species co-occurring on some of the cockle beds in the district requires further investigation to understand the future fishery potential of this growing stock.

In 2025/2026 KEIFCA will run the second year of the Manila clam trial fishery, a second core priority for the year. Within the research component of the trail fishery, we will 1) carry out a stock assessment, 2) assess the depth in the seabed to which Manila clams bury themselves to, 3) assess the impact and recovery of the seabed to fishing gear used, and 4) assess the footprint of the fishery using Remote Electronic Monitoring (REM).

Stock assessments are carried out to monitor stock levels and ensure that sustainable catch quotas can be set. In 2025/2026 we will expand on our stock assessment surveys incorporating elements of age classification and size structure to obtain better direct estimates of the population size to improve setting catch limits. Burial depths of clams are critical to understand both the validity of our stock assessment survey methods and the efficiency of fishing gear when harvesting clams. Without this, we may underestimate the amount of stock on the ground and overestimate the amount removed from the fishery. It is critical for KEIFCA to understand the level of impact on the seabed and the associated organisms that are impacted by the fishery, and how long it takes to recover because these fisheries take place inside of MPAs. The seabed impact work, coupled with using REM to identify fishing activity will allow KEIFCA to quantify the fisheries' environmental footprint. This will provide critical evidence to inform the HRA assessment for the fishery. Breakage rates are critical to inform the additional damage and mortality that is caused by the fishery over and above that which the fishery removes as part of the catch.

In 2025/2026 KEIFCA will work with the University of Essex to better understand the effects of water temperature on feeding rates in Manila clams, as part of a larger overarching study to assess the future of shellfish fisheries in the Thames Estuary under climate change.

Whelks: In 2025/2026, KEIFCA will plan to prioritise research and management following objectives set out by the whelk Fisheries Management Plan (FMP). The most relevant FMP objective in relation to IFCA-research is to develop a national data collection programme to better understand the stock boundaries of whelks (including the spatial scale at which these are meaningful) and Catch-Per-Unit-Effort (CPUE), which requires a collaborative effort between the relevant IFCAs to align efforts towards this national goal. In 2025/2026 we aim to further develop our data collection programme to make more strategic, such as connecting our CPUE data with our more recent mark-and-recapture data to better understand the how well fisheries dependent data are reflecting stock status. KEIFCA will actively contribute to the FMP process and two working groups, namely the Whelk Management Group (WMG) and the Whelk Working Group to allow sharing of research plans and progress.

KEIFCA will continue its collaborative research with University of Essex into the effects of water temperature on whelks – this contributing to the top three objectives of KEIFCA's research plan. Ongoing projects include the survival, metabolic and egg laying rates of whelks under increasing water temperature regimes. KEIFCA will also be work with Heriot-Watt University to better understand survival from various size sorting methods, namely rotary riddles, flatbed riddles and hand sorting.

Native Oysters: The native oyster fishery in the Blackwater, Crouch, Roach, and Colne MCZ has been closed since 2015 because of concerns over its depleted stock-levels. A management plan was developed for the site, in which criteria were set out around the stock

status to decide whether IFCA should apply to reopen the fishery. Over the past 3 years KEIFCA recorded a significant decline in the abundance and spatial distribution of native oysters in the MCZ. The criteria set out in the BCRC MCZ management plan requires a minimum threshold biomass and a sustained increase in the biomass of native oysters to allow the fishery to be opened inside the MCZ – as such the fishery has remained closed. While the level of interest expressed in the reopening of the native oyster fishery in the BCRC MCZ has remained low, we will continue to work closely with industry to assess indications of increases in stock levels of native oysters in the Blackwater, Crouch, Roach, and Colne MCZ. We therefore maintain a watching brief, from which we will launch a stock assessment should there be positive indications from fishers regarding a rise in stock levels.

Fisheries management plans

As the process for implementing FMPs gathers pace, there will continue to be an ever growing need to attend meetings and feed in advice especially into the different science and research working groups. With so many different FMPs we will need to work closely with other IFCAs and CEFAS to ensure that we are kept up to date with any new approaches and to ensure that we can have access to any new evidence. As this is a still developing area the key task over the coming year will be to help shape and start implementing the new data collection systems that underpin each FMP. Hopefully the evidence we collect for our whelk and cockle fisheries can be added to national data sets and used to inform future decision making.

Theme 3: Access to Evidence - Streamline the infrastructure and process to provide more efficient access to evidence to support sustainable fisheries and MCZ management.

KEIFCA will continue to provide data, evidence and information as required or requested. KEIFCA is also committed to improving its own data infrastructure. In 2021 a project was started to develop a centralised database, which currently houses clam and oyster data along with numerous GIS (geographic) datasets. In 2025/2026 most of the work will be focussed on developing a new database for the T24 cockle fishery operating under a new regulating order and adapt current data collection schemes to FMP requirements as appropriate. This is a critical piece of work to allow a continued stock assessment that can draw and relate historic surveys to the new surveys and inform fisheries management. We will concurrently develop the Manila clam stock assessment database.

Research schedule

The following table illustrates the schedule for time bound research activities in 2025/2026. Activities coloured dark blue are ongoing actions and those coloured yellow are limited-time projects. The estimated number of days considers the time required to conduct the surveys and does not include time required for project planning, equipment maintenance or report writing. Some new projects are dependent on partnerships or collaborative working arrangements.

WORKSTREAMS WITH TIMEBOUND SURVEY ACTIVITIES	No. Days (No. Officer Days)	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	July	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar
5F & J: Annual cockle & clam stock assessment surveys from sea	22 (88)													
5F & J: Cockle & clam stock assessment surveys from land	20 (80)													
5J: Clam: ground impact assessment	20 (80)													
5J: Clam: Fishing footprint in MPAs: Delineating fishing tracks (REM)	10 (40)													
5J: Clam: Burial depth experiments	3 (6)													
5: Clam: riddle trials evidence to support bar spacing (Jan/Feb 2025?)	10 (20)													

ONGOING WORKSTREAMS/ NEW PROJECTS

Research report publication schedule

Publication theme	Anticipated date	Authors
Annual cockle survey report	May 2025	DCIFCO, PSCO
Annual Research Report	September 2025	PSCO
Manila clam trial fishery report	January 2026	PSCO
Whelk annual landings report	January 2026	OSO, PSCO

Structure and governance of the Authority

Structure

The Kent and Essex Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Order 2010 makes provision for the establishment of the Kent and Essex Inshore Fisheries and Conservation District and for the Authority for that district. The Order lays out the membership and proceedings of the Authority and makes provision in relation to the expenses of the Authority and to the reimbursement of members' expenses.

The Order states that the Authority is to consist of 21 members, comprised of nine councillors, ten "general members" or MMO appointees (of which one must be an employee of the MMO, and two additional members from the EA and NE. The Order also lays out how the expenses of the Authority should be divided between the councils.

Relevant Council	No. of members	Percentage payment of KEIFCA levy
Essex County Council	3	43.12%
Kent County Council	3	43.12%
Medway Council	1	7.55%
Southend on Sea Borough Council	1	2.42%
Thurrock Council	1	3.79%

Governance

Good governance is at the heart of sound decision-making, and it is because of this that KEIFCA have already adopted key working documents that will aid the smooth and transparent working of the Authority (i.e. Code of Conduct, Standing Orders, Financial Regulations, register of members' interests and a policy on Members' Allowances/Expenses). KEIFCA utilise Kent County Council for legal, constitutional, financial and HR support, as well as one-off support on procurement and other key activities.

Members

IFCA members are a vital component of helping KEIFCA deliver many of the key concepts expressed in the IFCA vision, but especially in helping to "secure the right balance between social, environmental and economic benefits to ensure healthy seas, sustainable fisheries and a viable industry".

IFCA members attend the quarterly IFCA meetings, with some members also attending specialist Technical Panel meetings where specific issues are discussed in greater detail; recommendations from these meetings are then taken forward to the next full meeting of the Authority. The member's role within the organisation is to decide and comment on the strategy and direction of the organisation and to make key strategic decisions (e.g. agree on budget, staffing levels, stock management measures, etc.).

<i>List of Members (**Chairman, *Vice-Chairman)</i>			
**J L Lamb	MMO Appointee	Cllr C Broadley	Kent CC
*P J Nichols	MMO Appointee	Cllr T Hills	Kent CC
E Gilson	MMO Appointee	Cllr D Crow-Brown	Kent CC
P Wexham	MMO Appointee	Cllr J Fleming	Essex CC
E Hannam	MMO Appointee	Cllr A Goggin	Essex CC
T Ferry	MMO Appointee	Cllr M Skeels	Essex CC
R Turner	MMO Appointee	Cllr G Coxshall	Thurrock BC
C Collins	MMO Appointee	Cllr S Curry	Medway BC
W East	MMO Appointee	Cllr S Curry	Medway BC
A Baker	NE Representative		
L Faulkner	EA Representative		
J Rowley	MMO Representative		

Staff

The officers and administration staff implement the strategic decisions that the Authority (i.e. members) have agreed. The IFCA staff, led by the Chief IFC Officer (Diagram 4), are responsible for the ongoing operations of KEIFCA (e.g. appointing staff, setting and managing staff performance, implementing the agreed stock management measures and enforcement etc.) and report back to the members on key issues and matters for discussion each quarter.

At present KEIFCA employs 13 full time staff, 1 part-time staff, a part time Clerk and a part time financial advisor. In addition to this the Authority also contributes to the services of the Chairman and Vice-Chairman. The structure and key roles of each member of staff are laid out in Fig.4. Officers across the organisation continue to be trained to undertake various tasks as this approach gives KEIFCA a huge amount of flexibility in being able to deliver all of KEIFCA's duties and react to events.

Staff performance and assessment

KEIFCA currently use a process similar to Kent County Council's (KCC) staff performance monitoring system. The system is based on a yearly review of an employee's performance using a series of objectives that are agreed between the employee's line manager and the employee. The objectives and the outputs of the employee relate back to the overall objectives in the annual plan. Depending upon how well an employee meets, or exceeds, the targets set during this process an employee may move up the incremental scale, this is dependant upon budgetary constraints and pay scale.

Training

There exists within KEIFCA a core understanding, level of experience and knowledge related to the range of work of the IFCA. Important training areas include; developing IFC officer enforcement and seamanship skills, building on survey skills within the organisation and developing officers' ability to undertake a range of surveys and helping staff expand their IT skills (including using GIS and website maintenance).



Staff Structure

Chief IFCO (Kent)

- Strategic direction for IFCA
- National representation
- Oversee KEIFCA operations and reporting to KEIFCA members
- Management implementation & evaluation of byelaws
- In charge of PR – strategy & implementation

Deputy Chief IFCO (Essex)

- Oversee implementation of IFCA strategy (day to day management)
- Coordinate planning and delivery with science and compliance leads & vessel skippers
- Lead technical input into annual plans and reports
- Lead Training Officer
- Lead officer for byelaw review

Principal Scientific and Conservation Officer (Kent)

- Lead planning, coordination, delivery and reporting of key environment, data and research activities.
- Develop and report on KEIFCA fisheries and MPA management measures
- Develop working relationships with partner organisations/ academic bodies
- GIS lead (storing & presenting evidence)
- KEIFCA lead in national research groups and projects (TAG)
- Task scientific and conservation staff
- Support officers in developing evidence & research skills
- Support compliance operations

Principal Compliance and Enforcement Officer (Essex)

- Lead planning, coordination, delivery and reporting of key compliance and enforcement activities.
- KEIFCA case file and prosecution lead
- KEIFCA lead in national compliance groups (NIMEG) and projects (Intel)
- Support officers in developing enforcement skills
- Lead and support compliance operations on land and at sea
- Oversee implementation of new vessel monitoring projects
- Feed into Bass FMP working groups representing NIMEG

Principal Vessel Operations Officer (Snr Skipper) (Kent)

- Leads for vessel policy development, Lead operational deployment and maintenance of the vessels
- Line manage IFCO's
- Tasking of Skippers and IFCO's at sea and ashore
- Responsible for managing vessel budgets
- Technical input into annual plans and reports
- Carry out enforcement and survey tasks
- Liaise with PCEO and PSCO for compliance and survey planning

Principal Vessel Operations Officer (Snr Skipper) (Essex)

Office Manager (Kent)

- Manage budget process (ordering system, oracle management etc.)
- Byelaw administration
- Admin support for annual plans reports and quarterly meetings
- Lead HR member of staff
- Management of general enquiries

Senior IFCO (Skipper) (Kent)

- Assist Snr Skipper and deputise for Snr skipper when required
- Undertake maintenance of patrol vessels
- Carry out enforcement and survey tasks
- Undertake strategic projects

Senior IFCO (Skipper) (Essex)

Administration Officer p/t (Kent)

- Lead licensing and permitting coordination
- Lead whelk fishery management process
- Provide administrative and clerical support
- Maintain files and record systems
- Assist in admin support for annual plans reports and quarterly meetings
- Administer the financial arrangements of the Authority

IFCO (Scientific and Conservation)* (Kent)

- Lead officer for manila clam trials
- Carry out Habitat Reg's Assessments
- Carry out byelaw impact assessments and support byelaw process
- Carry out consultation replies
- Support research and GIS projects
- Support compliance operations

IFCO (Compliance and Enforcement)* (Kent)

- Carry out enforcement and survey tasks
- Gather intel to feed into national systems
- Undertake investigations
- Support operation and maintenance of patrol vessels
- Undertake projects * *Licence & marine planning*

IFCO (Compliance and Enforcement) (Kent)

IFCO (Cockle Officer) (Essex)

- Support T24 implementation
- Liaise with the local cockle industry
- Carry out enforcement and survey tasks
- Support national Cockle FMP delivery
- Lead on specific cockle projects

Resources

Offices

KEIFCA currently rents 2 offices; a main office in Ramsgate in Kent and a satellite office in Brightlingsea in Essex. The location of the two offices allows the organisation to efficiently undertake all its duties and helps KEIFCA build and maintain strong links with all its stakeholders either side of the Thames Estuary. The remit of the offices revolves primarily around the spatial distribution of work, with the Brightlingsea office specialising in Essex based issues relating to enforcement, consultations and surveys; the Ramsgate office also undertaking the equivalent tasks on the Kent coast but is in addition the centre for core overarching organisational activities (e.g. administration support, legal support, HR work etc).

Vehicles

KEIFCA owns two Toyota Hilux pickup trucks and two Toyota Corollas, with one truck and one van based at each office. The vehicles are used to transport officers on enforcement duties and key equipment around the district. The Authority also owns four Honda All-Terrain Vehicles (ATV) that are based at Shoeburyness which are used for cockle surveys and other intertidal work.

Boats

KEIFCA has three fishery patrol vessels. The 'Nerissa' is based in Ramsgate and has a crew of four, is a 17m catamaran, and carries a RIB which can be launched from its ramp in various sea conditions to undertake boardings at sea. The RIB carried by Nerissa is a standalone vessel called 'Nereus', which is a 5.4m SeaRider which can take a crew of up to 3 officers to undertake boarding operations either from 'Nerissa' or independently.

'Tamesis' is a 12m catamaran which came into service in 2011 and which was partially EU grant funded. This vessel is based at Brightlingsea and has a crew of three which is supplemented by the Essex shore officer post to make a mustered crew of four, and can undertake enforcement, monitoring and survey duties.

'FPV Vigilant' is a 2020 7.8m Ribcraft RIB which operates completely independently of the larger vessels. Purchased new with EMFF partial funding in January 2020, it is used as a fast response enforcement vessel. Operating with twin outboard engines, it is an improvement in capability and with regards to officer safety compared to the vessel it replaces. Capable of in excess of 40 knots it provides effective coverage of all of the rivers and estuaries within the District and can be transported by road to launch sites close to where it is required.

Appendix 1 - Risk Management Strategy

Introduction

The management of risk is considered in all activities conducted by KEIFCA officers. All employees are familiar with the management of risk through developing risk assessments covering safe working practices through to scrutinising invoices and purchase orders to identify financial risks. Risk assessments are reviewed on an annual basis as a minimum. The risk matrix below is reviewed on a regular basis by the senior management team comprising the Chief IFC Officer (CIFCO), Deputy Chief IFC Officer (DCIFCO) and the Office Manager (OM). The matrix below highlights those risks identified for the financial years 2025/26.

KEIFCA Management and Governance risks

- Failure to meet Kent & Essex IFCA objectives. (CIFCO)
- IFCA decision challenged and overturned in court on the basis that the IFCA has not considered all of the relevant evidence or that one or more Members had a conflict of interest when taking part in making a decision. (CIFCO & Clerk)
- Injury to staff due to unsafe working practices. (CIFCO)
- Failure to maintain effective financial management and control. (CIFCO, Financial Advisor & OM)
- Failure to secure data. (CIFCO & OM)
- Failure of vessel assets. (CIFCO & DCIFCO)
- High turnover of staff. (CIFCO)

KEIFCA Operational risks – Failure to implement IFCA duties

- Failure to effectively monitor and enforce legislation. (CIFCO)
- Enforcement activities conducted in an unprofessional and uncoordinated manner. (CIFCO)
- Failure to maintain survey/sampling programme. (CIFCO)
- Degradation of environmentally sensitive/designated areas due to fishing activity. (CIFCO & DCIFCO)
- Shellfish stocks collapse. (CIFCO)
- Fisheries in the District impacted by the activities of developers/industry. (CIFCO)
- Insufficient time to fully consider environmental impact assessments for inshore developments. (CIFCO)
- Failure to fully engage with stakeholders. (CIFCO)

Description <i>(owner)</i>	Risk High 4 - 3 - 2 - 1 Low				Mitigation	Residual Risk
	Impact	Likelihood	Financial	Reputation		
Failure to meet Kent & Essex IFCA objectives (<i>CIFCO</i>)	4 Change to organisation structure and duties.	1 KEIFCA officers have worked with the Defra implementation team to set objectives that whilst aspirational are hopefully realistic. Defra have also indicated that the objectives can be reviewed.	4 New burdens money funded via Defra and the local authorities aims to cover the increased costs from the new IFCA duties. If additional funding is not passed to KEIFCA or funding from LAs is reduced, capacity to meet new duties would be limited. If KEIFCA fails to meet new objectives funding could be reduced.	4 Potential loss of faith in KEIFCA's governance and organisational structure by Defra and other key organisations	<p>Reflect Kent & Essex IFCA objectives clearly in annual plans and reports</p> <p>Communicate the requirements and duties of KEIFCA to all Authority members and staff</p> <p>Integrate objectives and tasks into staff structure and job descriptions. Make sure IFCA priorities are discussed at staff meetings and staff appraisals</p> <p>Introduce management systems to set up agreed tasks for each member of staff per quarter. Set up systems to monitor staff time spent on each success criteria.</p>	2 Possibility that although progress will have been made KEIFCA could fail to fully meet all its new objectives.
IFCA decision challenged and overturned in court on the basis that the IFCA has not considered all of the relevant evidence or that one or more Members had a conflict of interest when taking part in making a decision (<i>CIFCO & Clerk</i>)	4 KEIFCA might have to review decision making procedures. KEIFCA might need to review previous decisions.	1 The Clerk will advise on conflict of interest matters (and the Code of Conduct adopted by the IFCA requires all members to complete a register of interests) KEIFCA staff ensure that the reports to and minutes of IFCA meetings properly record the reasons for decisions.	4 KEIFCA could face financial loss if such a case was lost	4 Potential loss of faith in KEIFCA's governance and organisational structure by Defra and other key organisations	<p>All of reports to the IFCA will contain all of the evidence and information needed for the IFCA to make an informed decision</p> <p>The Financial Advisor and Clerk attend all IFCA meetings;</p> <p>Every decision must have a proper audit trail and be in writing, even if it is made and ratified afterwards by the IFCA;</p> <p>Consultation with affected individuals/industries will be carried out and the results of the consultations reported to the IFCA when they make decisions;</p> <p>KEIFCA have adopted procedures in our Standing Orders whereby members of the public and industries not represented on the IFCA can address meetings</p>	1 Limited potential for such a challenge due to extensive best practice mitigation measures.

Injury to staff due to unsafe working practices (CIFCO)	4 Death or injury of staff.	2 Well trained staff. Provision of high standard safety equipment. Well maintained vessels. Well maintained vehicles.	4 Injury claims, tribunals. HSE/MCA investigations.	3 Poor morale of staff leading to problems with retention.	Mandatory safety training register maintained. Adequate training budget to cover all training requirements. Well trained staff. Risk assessments available and regularly reviewed for each task. High quality PPE issued to all staff. Safety drills conducted on vessels. Boarding procedure developed and implemented. Lone Working Policy developed and implemented. Conflict Resolution Policy developed and training provided.	3 Regularly working in hazardous environments. Difficult to mitigate for unforeseen circumstances.
Failure to maintain effective financial management and control. (CIFCO & OM)	4 Fraudulent activity leading to misuse and/or misappropriation of funds. Unforeseen expenditure, major mechanical failure or loss of large vessel assets. Cybersecurity attacks targeting payments	2 Limited staff access to financial information and authority to spend money. Vessel reserve funds maintained.	4 Lack of financial resources to carry out statutory obligations.	4 The Authority is funded through local taxpayer money, expectation to provide a best value for money service.	External audit of accounts by Audit Commission. Internal Audit conducted by Kent County Council. Restricted use for purchase cards. Kent & Essex IFCA Financial Regulations. Restricted authority to sign cheques. All staff undertake cybersecurity training Annual Plan and Report. Yearly reviews of inventories. Production of detailed accounts. Maintenance of reserve funds.	1 Very limited potential for large scale fraud or corruption. Small scale misuse of consumable items is still possible. Well maintained vessels.

<p>Failure to secure data. (CIFCO & OM)</p>	<p>4 Non compliance with Data Protection Act. Prosecution case Cyber security attacks could result in files compromised Loss of data in the event of fire or theft.</p>	<p>2 Limited staff access to both electronic and paper files. Offices secure and alarmed.</p>	<p>4 KEIFCA open to both civil and criminal action regarding inability to secure personal information.</p>	<p>4 Stakeholders no longer believe that confidential information they have supplied is secure. Personnel issues arise over inability to secure data.</p>	<p>All computers are password protected. Individuals only have access to their own computer. Two factor authentication is set up for all staff</p> <p>Secure wireless internet.</p> <p>Access to electronic files is restricted based on an individual's role.</p> <p>Up to date virus software installed on all computers.</p> <p>All staff undertake GDPR and cybersecurity training</p> <p>Important documents secured in safes.</p>	<p>2 Limited ability for personnel to access files.</p>
<p>Failure of vessel assets (CIFCO & DCIFCO)</p>	<p>3 Limits enforcement and research capabilities</p>	<p>2 Authority has three vessels. If one vessel fails, the other vessels can undertake its duties</p>	<p>3 Hiring of other vessels expensive. Significant mechanical failures time consuming and expensive to rectify.</p>	<p>2 Significant funding provided to commission vessels. High expectation that the vessels provide value for money.</p>	<p>Highly maintained vessels, with extensive annual refits of vessels.</p> <p>Annual Workboat Code survey.</p> <p>Highly trained staff.</p> <p>Replacement vessel reserves in place</p> <p>Insurance covers cost of initial purchase of vessel + 10% if beyond repair/salvage</p>	<p>2 Unforeseen events may still cause disruption to activities.</p>
<p>High turnover of staff (CIFCO)</p>	<p>3 Reduced efficiency and effectiveness Decrease in morale and increased workload for experienced staff</p>	<p>2 The clarity over IFCA funding has given staff a better long term view of their role in KEIFCA over the next 4 years.</p>	<p>3 Financial investment required to recruit, train and provide PPE to new replacement staff.</p>	<p>2 Authority no longer considered a good employer staff seek alternative employment.</p>	<p>High level of training provided to staff.</p> <p>Induction programme for new recruits.</p> <p>Staff appraisals.</p> <p>Competitive salaries (benchmarking).</p> <p>Provide safe and professional working environment and where possible flexible working arrangements.</p>	<p>2 Whilst staff leaving is always a possibility, quarterly meetings with each member of staff as well as an increased training budget have been identified as ways of reducing this risk.</p>

<p>Failure to effectively monitor and enforce legislation (CIFCO)</p>	<p>4 Unregulated fishery. Increased non-compliance with legislation. Reduced Fish Stocks. Impact on Environment.</p>	<p>2 Monitoring of fishing activity is high but complete coverage is not achievable.</p>	<p>4 Unregulated fisheries are unsuitable and unprofitable. Illegal landings reduce demand and price.</p>	<p>4 Authority's performance is judged on its ability to effectively monitor fishing activity and prevent illegal activity from occurring.</p>	<p>Adaptive co-management approach to fisheries improves understanding and compliance with management measures.</p> <p>Warranted Officers regularly monitoring landings and fishing activity throughout the District.</p> <p>Intelligence led / risk based enforcement planning.</p> <p>16m Patrol vessel & 12m replacement enforcement and fisheries monitoring vessel.</p>	<p>2 Large district means that full coverage is not possible to achieve. Small minority of fishermen will continue to breach legislation due to short term gain. Limited financial deterrent at present. Some legislation difficult to enforce effectively.</p>
<p>Enforcement activities conducted in an unprofessional and uncoordinated manner (CIFCO)</p>	<p>4 Inconsistent approach to fisheries enforcement. Enforcement problems and non-compliance with legislation. Poor morale amongst other IFCOs.</p>	<p>2 Misinformation may be given by IFCOs or information may be misinterpreted by fishermen.</p>	<p>3 Wrong interpretation of legislation may lead to loss of earnings of fishermen or gain from breaches in legislation going unnoticed.</p>	<p>4 Failure to carry out enforcement efficiently and effectively reflects poorly on the Authority.</p>	<p>Bi weekly tasking meetings with enforcement officers to report intelligence and direct activities</p> <p>Staff appraisals.</p> <p>All IFOs receive comprehensive in house and external PACE training.</p> <p>Issue of Warrants delayed (normally six months) until Senior Enforcement Officers are convinced the IFCO is capable of carrying out the enforcement role.</p> <p>Code of Conduct for inspections at sea and ashore developed.</p>	<p>2 Considerable resources are directed towards IFCO enforcement training but frequent changes to legislation and human error may lead to mistakes being made.</p>

Failure to maintain survey/sampling programme (CIFCO)	4 Lack of accurate data leading to poor management of shellfisheries. Collapse of stocks. Decline in bird numbers. Degradation of wider environment.	2 Well trained and qualified staff. 12m new patrol/ research vessel.	4 Closure of fishery due to over exploitation of stock or loss of shellfish water classification. Shellfish fisheries not opened to fishing as insufficient information available to gain consent through Appropriate Assessment procedure.	4 High expectation that shellfisheries are well managed by Authority. High expectation that additional research work will be completed.	Monitoring and research vessel. Work plans developed for research staff and vessel. Research staff well qualified and experienced with local fisheries. Good communication with fishermen and other relevant organisations. Snr. Conservation/ Research Officer assigned to co-ordinate bio-toxin and bacteriological sampling routines when required. Contingency plans developed.	2 Planned surveys lost due to poor weather or vessel breakdown. Research programme continue to expand year on year.
Degradation of environmentally sensitive/ designated areas due to fishing activity. (CIFCO & DCIFCO)	4 Loss of important habitat and species. Conservation Objectives for areas within EMS's not fully met.	2 Authority's fisheries management takes into consideration environmental issue.	3 Fisheries directly responsible closed. Increased pressure by conservation groups to stop other fishing activity.	4 Authority not meeting statutory duties under EU & UK conservation legislation.	Agreed cockle policies. Proposed fishing activity requires Appropriate Assessment. Effective enforcement.	2 Illegal fishing can damage habitat and stocks.
Shellfish stocks collapse. (CIFCO)	4 Collapse of fishing industry.	4 Bivalve stocks have high natural variation. Crustacean stocks not subject to effort control.	4 Local economy reliant on direct and indirect employment associated with shellfisheries.	4 Loss in confidence of the Authority's ability to manage fisheries.	Annual stock assessments of bivalve stocks in the Estuary. Fisheries management policies agreed for cockle stocks in the Estuary. Ability to allocate sufficient resources to monitoring of landings and effective enforcement. Consultation with industry on possible management measures.	2 Stocks will naturally fluctuate. Fisheries impacts may occur outside the control of the Authority, including climate change and over exploitation of stocks outside the district.

<p>Fisheries in the District impacted by the activities of developers / industry.</p> <p>Insufficient time to fully consider environmental impact assessments for inshore developments. (CIFCO)</p>	<p>2</p> <p>Shellfish fisheries impacted due to contamination or loss.</p> <p>Temporary or permanent loss of, or damage to, fish stocks, fishery habitats or fishing grounds.</p>	<p>2</p> <p>Lack of fishing activity data. Lack of baseline data. Limited understanding of impacts of developments on the marine environment.</p>	<p>3</p> <p>Reduced catches and income for fishermen, anglers and other stakeholders. Displacement of fishing effort, reduction in tourism.</p>	<p>3</p> <p>Expectation that Authority will represent stakeholders interests even though activities may be occurring outside of the district or not within KEIFCA's control.</p>	<p>Consultations responded to by Science IFCOs with local expertise and seen by CIFCO.</p> <p>Liaison with consenting agencies.</p> <p>Developer meetings attended by KEIFCA representatives.</p> <p>Database has been created holding information on current and historical fishing activities within the Authority's district (Work with MCZ project).</p> <p>Development proposals scrutinized by Defra and Natural England.</p> <p>Consents required for developments.</p>	<p>2</p> <p>Increased wind farm development and dredging. High reliance on modelling to determine impact of developments. Limited baseline data.</p>
<p>Failure to fully engage with stakeholders. (CIFCO)</p>	<p>4</p> <p>Conflict between differing stakeholders Non-compliance with fisheries and environmental legislation.</p>	<p>3</p> <p>Difficult to identify and consult with all relevant stakeholders.</p>	<p>4</p> <p>Stakeholder requirements are not adequately considered in the management of fisheries.</p>	<p>4</p> <p>Lack of trust in the Authority's management processes. Misunderstanding of the Authority's role.</p>	<p>Regular contact with fishermen and Natural England.</p> <p>Dissemination of all survey data and management proposals.</p> <p>Respond to all relevant Government/developer consultations or proposals.</p> <p>Improve website and provide interactive services.</p> <p>Regular/structured liaison with other enforcement bodies.</p> <p>Annual & research reports published. Publication of business plan.</p> <p>Stakeholder feedback questionnaire and analysis.</p>	<p>2</p> <p>Further improvement to contact with NGOs and other stakeholders needs to be achieved.</p>

Appendix 2 – Abbreviations

DCIFCO	Assistant Chief Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Officer	MCSS	Monitoring and Control Surveillance System
AIFCA	Association of Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authorities	MCZ	Marine Conservation Zones
ASFC	Association of Sea Fisheries Committees	MMO	Marine Management Organisation
Cefas	Centre for Environment, Fisheries & Aquaculture Science	MoU	Memoranda of Understanding
CFO	Chief Fishery Officer	MPA	Marine Protected Area
CFP	Common Fisheries Policy	MSC	Marine Stewardship Council
CIFCO	Chief Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Officer	MSP	Marine Spatial Plans
Defra	Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs	NE	Natural England
EA	Environment Agency	nm	Nautical Miles
ECC	Essex County Council	RSA	Recreational Sea Angling
EFF	European Fisheries Fund	RIB	Rigid Inflatable Boat
EIA	Environmental Impact Assessment	SAC	Special Area of Conservation
EIFCA	Eastern Inshore Fishing and Conservation Authority	SBC	Southend Borough Council
EMS	European Marine Site	SFC	Sea Fisheries Committee
GIS	Geographical Information System	SxIFCA	Sussex Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority
IFCO	Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Officer	SSSI	Site of Special Scientific Interest
IFCA	Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority	SPA	Special Protection Area
KCC	Kent County Council	TAG	Technical Advisory Group
MC	Medway Council	TBC	Thurrock Borough Council
MCA	Marine Coastguard Agency		
MCOSO 2009	Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009		