Eastern Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority

Annual Report 2020-21

July 2021

Eastern Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority Report 2020-2021.

This document can be downloaded from: www.eastern-ifca.gov.uk

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Version	Date	Changes	Officer
First Draft	03/08/2021	Update for the new year	IC
Final Draft	23/08/2021	Final edits	IC

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

Special Protection Area	SPA
Special Area of Conservation	SAC
Study of The Wash Embayment Environment and Productivity	SWEEP
Tactical Co-ordination Group	TCG
Wash Fishery Order 1992	WFO

Foreword

We are pleased to present the tenth annual report for the Authority. The report provides an overview of the work undertaken by the Authority during the 2020-21 financial year to meet its statutory duties under the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009 (MaCAA 09) and to address the priorities identified in the Business Plan 2020-2025.

2020-21 has been a significant year for Eastern IFCA and our stakeholders. On a global scale, the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020 and, nationally, the final transition to EU Exit in January 2021 added complexity to the context in which we operate and as a consequence there were significant changes to our operations.

In the first months of the year, the Authority successfully transitioned to a home working model, as required under government guidance. Officers responded swiftly and effectively and as a result operational delivery was able to continue, albeit with some necessary changes.

The Marine Protection team faced new challenges to maintain an enforcement presence under new directives to monitor the impact of the pandemic on our stakeholders as well as maintaining fisheries regulation under new conditions. The impact of the pandemic on our stakeholders was recognised, and steps were taken by the Authority to mitigate this where reasonable and possible. Additionally, The Marine Science team successfully adapted established methods of research to novel forms of assessment in the absence of the annual cockle surveys, ensuring that the Wash cockle fishery in 2020 could go ahead.

Considerable progress has been made throughout the year on two high priority workstreams for key fisheries in our district. Firstly, on the replacement of the WFO 1992, an Aim and Objectives for policy and a draft byelaw have been developed together with input from industry, and subsequently the byelaw was made by the Authority in March 2021. Secondly, progress has been made on the assessment of potting fisheries on the Cromer Shoal Chalk Beds MCZ. A way forward has been established together with our research partners for considerations for management of potting activity on the MCZ., including plans to establish a series of groups to manage and carry out progress. This progress has been made alongside focus upon delivering management to protect the most vulnerable features in Marine Protected Areas across our district.

COVID-19 has notably impacted our capacity for in-person engagement during a period of critical importance for the Authority, and the impact of this on the workstreams noted above is acknowledged. As the year progressed however, confidence developed in holding online meetings with our stakeholders for several key issues, particularly surrounding the replacement of the WFO. Ongoing concerns from

industry about the replacement of the WFO and opposition to the use of a byelaw have been a key focus area for engagement over the year, and both, the Wash and the Cromer Shoal Chalk Beds MCZ, have been the subject of media attention about these management issues.

For the majority of the year membership of the Authority remained stable and Cllr Skinner (Lincolnshire County Council) continued in his final year as Chair of the Authority with Cllr FitzPatrick (Norfolk County Council) continuing in the position of Vice-Chair. The maximum tenure for MMO appointed members is 10 years in ordinary circumstances and five of the eleven MMO appointees reached this point during 2020-21. As a consequence of the pandemic and in an effort to retain relative stability among the committee, the MMO advised that two of these appointees would continue their tenure for an extended period. March 2021 was the last meeting for three MMO appointees whose knowledge and expertise over their time spent with the Authority was acknowledged and whose loss will be felt. We have subsequently welcomed three new members to the Authority, and we look forward to their contributions to our work. Cllr FitzPatrick succeeded Cllr Skinner in appointment as Chair of the Authority in June 2021, and Cllr Vigo di Gallidoro was appointed Vice-Chair.

The Authority is majority funded through a levy on the County Councils of Suffolk, Norfolk, and Lincolnshire, which is supplemented by New Burdens Funding (NBF) provided by Defra via a grant in aid to the constituent councils. NBF represents approximately 25% of the Authority's core funding and is central to the delivery of its mandated outputs. 2021 was due to be the last year that NBF was paid in its current form, and Defra and the IFCAs have been working on the 'co-design' of a replacement. However, as a consequence of the pandemic Defra have advised that there will be a single year funding settlement for 2021-22. The extension of this vital funding until 2022 is highly valued, and work is ongoing to develop its replacement.

A year of great change and challenge also held a record of continuity as Eastern IFCA reached its 10-year anniversary in 2021, a milestone that provides an opportunity to reflect upon the achievements of the IFCA over the last decade.

Cllr Tom Fitzpatrick
Chair

Julian Gregory
Chief Executive Officer

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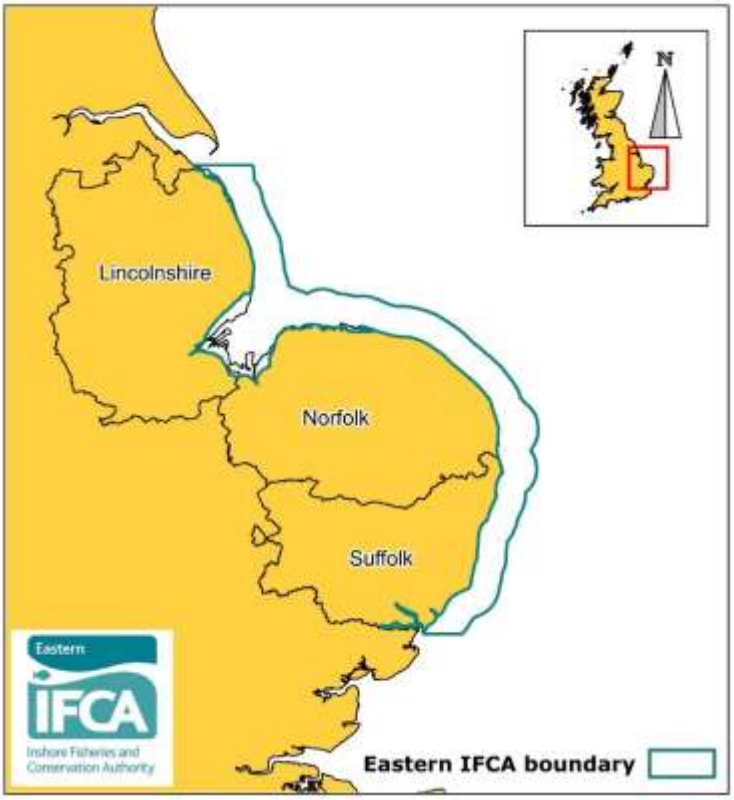
Introduction

The purpose of this Annual Report is to inform funding authorities (County Councils and Defra), local communities, local bodies and key delivery partners of the progress made to fulfil the statutory duties of Eastern Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority (Eastern IFCA).

Eastern IFCA was created under Section 150 of MaCAA 2009 as a successor to the Eastern Sea Fisheries Joint Committee (ESFJC) and was fully vested on 1st April 2011 via Statutory Instrument 2010 No 2189. The IFCA District was created under Section 149 of the Act and Section 178 requires every IFCA to publish an annual report. This is the tenth annual report of the Authority.

The Authority district extends seawards six nautical miles from the Haile Sand Fort off the coast of Lincolnshire to Felixstowe in Suffolk and encompasses the counties of Lincolnshire, Norfolk, and Suffolk. The area includes The Wash embayment and various river estuaries including the Stour and Orwell in Suffolk. The full breadth of UK and EU forms of Marine Protected Areas (MPA) including Sites of Special Scientific Interest, National Nature Reserves, Special Protected Areas, Special Areas of Conservation, as well as Ramsar sites, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and Marine Conservation Zones, are encompassed by the district; around 96% of the district is covered by at least one MPA designation.



Marine and Coastal Access Act (2009)

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

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

As a key delivery body in the marine area, the Authority is also guided by a number of drivers including HM Government's Marine Policy Statement, the 25 Year Environment Plan, Defra's Policy Objectives, East Inshore Marine Plan and the IFCA High Level Objectives, and the Fisheries Act 2020. More information on the key focus areas of the Fisheries Act as it impacts the IFCAs is discussed below.

The Fisheries Act 2020

The Fisheries Act 2020 replaced the European Union's Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) following the end of the EU Exit transition period. The Act presents high-level management objectives for the marine sector, which largely mirror those of the CFP. As a statutory regulator, the Authority will be guided by these objectives. Subsequent policy developed to achieve these objectives may have a direct impact on the work of the IFCAs in so far as they apply to the inshore area and will consequently inform Eastern IFCA's priorities.

Particularly, under the Act, the development of fisheries management plans will provide a new tool for management which will influence the development of advice for a particular fishery. This will be of importance to the IFCAs with the involvement of our own local fisheries research to feed into the plans' development.

Amendments to MaCAA 2009 under the Act that will also have relevance for the work of the Authority include extensions to the powers and duties of the MMO. Most notably, the Act confers power on the MMO to make byelaws in England, including the 0-12 nautical mile region, relating to fisheries exploitation and the conservation of the marine ecosystem.

The Authority

Eastern IFCA is funded by its three constituent County Councils: Lincolnshire, Norfolk and Suffolk. It also receives 'New Burden' funding from Defra.

The Authority is a statutory committee which meets quarterly to receive reports from the Authority's officers and to direct officers to conduct work on its behalf to discharge its duties. The Authority's 21 members comprise 7 County Councillors, 3 representatives from the MMO, Natural England and the Environment Agency respectively and 11 individuals appointed by the MMO for their expertise and knowledge of various marine related sectors.

The Authority's members and their attendance at Authority Meetings and Sub-Committee meetings are detailed on the following page. A total of seven Authority and sub-committee meetings were held during 2020-21, and members are expected to attend a minimum of 50% of meetings. Four Quarterly Fisheries and Conservation Management Working Group meetings were held. These take place 6 weeks prior to Authority meetings as an opportunity to informally discuss with and involve members in the development of workstreams, particularly seeking the input from those appointed by the MMO for their relevant expertise.

Member attendance at Authority Meetings and Sub-Committee Meetings 2020-2021

Name	% of meetings attended	Authority (3 meetings held)	Sub-Committee
			Finance & HR Sub-Committee (4 meetings held)
Cllr P Coupland	85	2	4
Cllr P Skinner	100	*3	*4
Cllr D Collis	85	2	4
Cllr M Chenery of Horsbrugh	29	1	1
Cllr T FitzPatrick	100	#3	#4
Cllr T Goldson	100	3	4
Cllr M Vigo di Gallidoro	100	3	4
Ms C Moffatt	100	1 of 1	
Dr I Hirst	0	0	
Ms G Roberts	100	2 of 2	
Mr J Rowley	100	2 of 2	
Mr P Tyack	100	1 of 1	
Mr S Bagley	100	3	
Dr S Bolt	72	3	2
Mr R Brewster	100	3	
T Davey	100	3	
Mr J Davies	100	3	
Mr P Garnett	100	3	
Mr K Shaul	67	2	
Mr R Spray	100	3	
Mr M Warner	67	2	
Mr S Williamson	86	3	3
Mr S Worrall	100	3	4

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

During the year, significant changes were made to the structure of Authority meetings in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. The 40th Authority meeting, scheduled for June 2020, was cancelled due to Covid restrictions. This decision was made following a review of priorities which concluded that most decisions could be delayed, without significant consequence, to the meeting scheduled for September 2020.

The 41st meeting in September, the 42nd meeting in December 2020, and the 43rd meeting in March 2021, were held using online conferencing technology: Zoom and Microsoft Teams. The capacity to run Statutory Meetings online was afforded by emergency legislation provided by the Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020 Statutory Instrument 2020 no.392, which came into force on 4th April 2020.

The transition to the use of these platforms for remote meetings was supported by officers, who provided guidance for members on attendance and offered support through trial meetings. Similarly, the quarterly Finance and HR sub-committee and the Fisheries and Conservation Management Working Group meetings were held remotely throughout the year.

Online and remote working, particularly when holding meetings, has been generally received as satisfactory. Many members found that attendance was made more possible remotely as there was no longer a potentially long commute to meetings in person. Some members had existing familiarity with remote meetings due to similar requirements in their own employment. Officers made considerable effort to monitor meetings to observe any members having difficulty with the technology or identify members waiting to comment, to ensure that all members felt that opportunity was given thereby mitigating any impact on participation as members adjusted to the new format.

Most members and officers quickly adjusted to the use of the platforms and meetings were held effectively and successfully using the technology available. Members who raised concerns about the use of technology to hold meetings remotely, or experienced some difficulty in using the technology initially, soon adapted to its use, understanding the necessity to continue business. Using remote technology for these meetings enabled officers to gain confidence in its wider applicability, progressing to successful remote industry meetings being held in the latter half of 2020.

The Authority is committed to operating in a transparent manner and as such all Authority and sub-committee meetings are open to the public. This remained the case throughout the year with advance notice of the meetings publicised on the Eastern IFCA website including information on how persons could attend through provision of a public link. Considerations were given by officers to the security of these meetings and to ensure that the same capacity for participation or non-participation of the public was in place as is the case during in-person meetings. Further attempts were made to make attendance easier through officers learning how to stream live recordings of the meetings to YouTube, accessible to those with a link to the stream.

In line with these efforts, agendas are published ten working days ahead of any meeting, with all papers distributed five working days ahead. Agendas, papers and agreed minutes of all Authority meetings are published on the Eastern IFCA website at www.eastern-ifca.gov.uk.

Delivery of Authority business is undertaken by Eastern IFCA's Officers, operating in four teams - Marine Science (8 Officers), Marine Protection (11 Officers), Support (3 Officers) and the Executive Team (3 Officers).

The Authority remains located at its primary base in King's Lynn with offices to accommodate staff and a local storage unit for its portable and transportable assets. A satellite office, co-located with MMO offices in the Cefas building in Lowestoft, was opened during 2016. Vessels (*RV Three Counties*, *FPV John Allen*, *FPV Sebastian Terelinck,* FPV Sea Spray) are based at moorings at Sutton Bridge and Lowestoft, being deployed according to operational requirements.

Adaption to ways of working, necessary as a consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic and in line with government advice, have included all officers working remotely from home, officers operating in 'bubbles' where face to face working was required, fixed allocation of vehicles, and provisions made to redirect or prevent incoming office calls, post, and in-person visits. It is intended that this dynamic adaptation continues in response to the changing requirements resultant from the global pandemic. More information about the operational, enforcement and research impacts of COVID-19 on Eastern IFCA is evident in the Case Studies below.

Delivery of Eastern IFCA Duties

The Authority's duties, as set out in MaCAA, are enshrined in the IFCA vision statement which is to:

> 'Lead, champion and manage a sustainable marine environment and inshore fisheries, by successfully securing the right balance between social, environmental and economic benefits to ensure healthy seas, sustainable fisheries and a viable industry'

'Annual Priorities' and 'critical workstreams' are what Eastern IFCA do pursuant of this vision statement. Eastern IFCA undertakes an annual Strategic Assessment of fisheries within the district to identify environmental and sustainability issues and to prioritise such based on the risk of not meeting the vision statement. These form the focus of work each year.

During 2020/21, priorities were dominated by work relating to the management of fisheries in marine protected areas. Progress against the 2020/21 priorities is set out in the next section.

In undertaking annual priorities, Eastern IFCA is guided by the IFCA Success Criteria and their indicators, which set out 'how' we will achieve the vision statement. The Success Criteria and Indicators were refreshed by the Association of IFCAs and Defra in 2018 to reflect the developing programme of work delivered by IFCAs and to demonstrate our contribution to the delivery of the UK Marine Policy Statement and the 25-year Environment Plan. Five case studies are provided to illustrate how each Success Criterion was delivered through 2020/21 and delivery against the Success Indicators is set out in Appendix 1.

Focus and priorities for 2020-21

The priorities for Eastern IFCA 2020-21 were identified by the Strategic Assessment 2020, which assessed the risk of environmental damage and sustainability issues associated with each fishery within the District. Due to the complexities involved, particularly where regulation is required, it is anticipated that some priorities will roll into the following financial years. The Strategic Assessment and 5-year Business Plan reflect priorities that will span multiple years and therefore enable more effective long-term planning.

Category	Work	Priority	Progress	Comment
1. To ensure that the conservation objectives of Marine Protected Areas in the district are furthered by:	a) Development of management measures for 'red-risk' gear/feature interactions in the Inner Dowsing, Race Bank and North Ridge SAC, and the Haisborough, Hammond and Winterton SAC.	High	Ongoing	The MPA 2019 byelaw, as agreed by the Authority in 2019 provides protection of 'red risk' features within the Haisborough, Hammond and Winterton site. Management measures for the site have been agreed and implementation awaits the imminent resolution of artisanal shrimp fishing management within a different MPA that is affected by the same byelaw. The Closed Areas Byelaw 2020 was agreed by the Authority in September 2020 to provide protection to 'red risk' features within the Inner Dowsing, Race Bank and North Ridge site. This byelaw is currently awaiting submission pending the submission of the MPA 2019 byelaw. Work has been undertaken throughout 2020/21 as Officers continue to scrutinise feature evidence to inform further closures to be proposed for future iterations of this byelaw: the Closed Areas Byelaw 2021, which proposes 'red risk' management in the Inner Dowsing, Race Bank and North Ridge site will be presented to the Authority in September 2021.
	b) Assessing the impact of fishing activities on the Cromer Shoal Chalk Beds (MCZ) and delivering management measures (if	High	Ongoing	Our initial assessment of fishing activity requires further assessment and information gathering to better understand the impacts of non-potting fisheries on the site. Management of bottom-towed fisheries within the MCZ

	required).			was agreed in 2019 under the MPA byelaw 2019, but during 2020-21 officers have undertaken further assessment to identify whether artisanal shrimp fishing can continue without hindering conservation objectives. Following receipt of formal advice from Natural England in August 2020, work has been ongoing to re-assess interactions between potting fisheries and MCZ site features. An Adaptive Risk Management Approach was agreed with Natural England to enable further research alongside the development of appropriate management. Collaboration with local fishermen, wider stakeholders, Natural England and research partners (University of Essex) is ongoing to help to inform management. As current evidence indicates the long-term effects from lost/stored gear can have the severest impacts, management measures are being developed in close collaboration with affected stakeholders to minimise risk.
	c) Developing monitoring and control plans for highest risk MPAs as identified in the Strategic Assessment 2020.	Medium	Ongoing	No progress was made towards publishing bespoke monitoring and control plans during 2020-21 with resource allocated instead to developing the 'red risk' management measures and those relating to shrimp fishing in The Wash and North Norfolk Coast. However the Authority routinely monitor and control fishing activity in MPAs as part of Eastern IFCA's core duties. For work relating to the assessment and management of potting on the MCZ, a steering group and task and finish group was established in February 2021. This included a Terms of Reference and aim and objectives for both groups. The groups are intended to oversee an ARM approach and the relevant site research. A management task and finish group will be established with initial focus

				on developing industry led measures for lost/stored gear. Dialogue with fishery stakeholders is ongoing.
	d) Completion of amber/green gear/feature interactions. Development of management measures where required.	High	Ongoing	Management has been agreed for “highest risk” amber/green gear/feature interactions, i.e. towed demersal fishing on subtidal sediment habitats, in Eastern IFCA MPA Byelaws 2018 and 2019. Amber/green assessments are to be completed for more recently designated MPAs and management developed if found to be required. The original suite of amber/green assessments is to be finalised (lower risk work that had been put on hold to enable focus on red risk and higher risk ambers). Members agreed in principle to implement two further shrimp permit conditions at the September 2020 Authority meeting. Consultation with industry on these additional measures, together with the proposed additional management measures for whelk fisheries (discussed below in priority 2c), was completed in February 2021. Review of responses and development of the measures on that basis has been delayed whilst resource is focussed on the replacement of the WFO and in the context of a reduction in resource within the associated team.
2. To ensure that sea fisheries resources are exploited sustainably and in accordance	a) Development of management measures in relation to shrimp fisheries sustainability.	Medium	Ongoing	Following the MSC accreditation of the Brown Shrimp Fishery in The Wash in January 2020, An MoU has been formalised and agreed between Eastern IFCA and industry to support the accreditation, collection of fishery information, and adherence to voluntary measures to aid sustainable management. These include a commitment from the Authority to inspect nets and fishing gear used in the fishery, and to monitor where the fishing activities are

with MSFD requirements				occurring with respect to sensitive seabed features The implementation of the voluntary scheme satisfies the Authority's responsibility to ensure the shrimp fishery is exploited sustainably and in accordance with MSFD requirements. Officers intend to continue to monitor the success of the regime with the view to implement regulatory measures if required. COVID-19 restrictions have limited our capability to conduct the full range of vessel inspections this year and the amount of vessel sightings data we have been able to capture. Our ability to provide accurate details of the fishery's spatial extent has been hampered by delays in the national introduction of I-VMS.
	b) Development of management measures in relation to crab and lobster fisheries sustainability.	High	Ongoing	Crab stock assessments conducted by the Authority indicate local stocks are not immediately threatened by the current level of fishing activity. Development of regulatory measures for sustainability reasons has paused, therefore, while work focusses instead on the higher priority management of the associated Cromer Shoal Chalk Bed Marine Conservation Zone. Following the downgrading of the Southern North Sea crab fisheries MCS Good Fish Guide's rating, the Authority has been supporting the industry with the development of a Fisheries Improvement Project (FIP). A 'needs assessment' of the fishery has been completed, detailing areas where the fishery would benefit from management – which will inform the objectives of the FIP. This has been provided to the industry, who will lead on its further development. By its conclusion, it is intended that the FIP will have addressed sustainability risks through the

				potential introduction of regulatory and/or voluntary measures.
	c) Increase scope of research project and voluntary gathering of whelk samples and undertake stock assessment and assessment of size at sexual maturity.	High	Ongoing	Whelk research has focused on analysing landings data provided from the whelk landings returns in order to monitor effort, landings and trends in Landings Per Unit Effort (LPUE) and determining the Size of Maturity (SoM) through bio-sampling. Initial analysis of landings data had revealed a large increase in effort over the past five years, most of which is focused in the Wash or along the North Norfolk Coast. In these two areas, LPUE values appeared to have passed a peak and had started declining, suggesting the stocks are now being fished at unsustainable levels. However, an issue with how catch caught outside of the district was being recorded in the returns forms was identified in February 2020, invalidating sections of the data. Work is ongoing to fully understand the impact of this will have on the overall results. This issue does not affect the SoM data, which relied on biometric data rather than returns forms. This study indicated the MLS of 55mm is appropriate for The Wash but too small for Lowestoft and Sea Palling. The results from this study suggested whelks from Southwold mature at a smaller size, but there were insufficient samples for this to be conclusive. It was hoped over summer to collect further samples from Southwold to strengthen that data, and also to sample more areas. Obtaining sufficient samples from these areas has been challenging throughout the study, however, and hasn't been possible with this year's COVID-19 restrictions. This aspect of the study has been paused until further samples can be obtained.

				Consultation was held with industry on additional measures proposed in the context of concerns about the level of effort identified as discussed above and concerns of non-compliance from stakeholders identified in the permit review. This consultation was conducted together with proposed additional measures for the Shrimp Permit Byelaw discussed above and closed in February 2021. The responses to this consultation are now under review.
3. To ensure that the marine environment is protected from the effect of exploitation by reviewing district wide bio-security measures including management of invasive, non-native species.	a) Implementation of WFO Shellfish Lay lease conditions	Medium	Ongoing	No progress was made during 2020-21 with resource focussed instead on other priority workstreams. There is only a low level of activity on WFO lays at present and new measures are in place to monitor activity and prevent biosecurity issues and as such the actual risk posed is limited. Work to review and implement the lease conditions for the WFO lays will form part of the work undertaken as part of the replacement of the several order element of the WFO 1992, which expires in January 2023.
4. To develop management of the fisheries regulated	a) Continued development of WFO policies.	High	Ongoing	The WFO 1992 expires in January 2023; work is ongoing to replace the order with a byelaw. Outstanding work on the development and review of the WFO policies has been subsumed into the work for the replacement – the current WFO policies will remain until they are replaced by the

under the WFO 1992 by:				policies under the new byelaw. An aim and objectives were developed with input from industry in December 2020 and finalised this year (2021). These will guide the development of policies on the management of access to the cockle and mussel fisheries in The Wash under the new byelaw. Key concerns from industry raised in response to this consultation work were primarily focused on business security, new entrants, permit allocation and continuity and the overall purpose of change. Such has been the concern over the direction for the replacement that a large proportion of Wash fishermen have sought representation from a solicitor as a central point of engagement. In response to these considerable concerns raised, the Authority additionally agreed an overall policy objective in March 2021 which proposed a direction forward for engagement. Draft proposals for policy are in development, informed by these responses, the economic assessment and ongoing dialogue with industry.
	b) Replacement of WFO 1992	Medium	Ongoing	Significant challenges have been faced in engaging with Wash fishermen about the replacement of the Order since the decision to replace the Order with a Byelaw was taken by the Authority in March 2020, with many strongly opposing the replacement byelaw. Robust explanation for the change in management across multiple points of correspondence has been provided by Eastern IFCA, however ongoing difficulties in communication exacerbated by COVID-19 and the prevalence of inaccurate information about the work, is acknowledged.

				The nature of the work to develop new management is long and can often appear complex and convoluted and requires open and transparent engagement. The concerns of fishermen in The Wash, predominantley current WFO entitlement holders, are understood and we are committed to working with them to find resolutions and ensure that all fishermen are provided every opportunity to input to the development of the byelaw. A draft of the Wash Cockle and Mussel Byelaw 2021 that will replace the management of the WFO1992 cockle and mussel fisheries in The Wash was presented to members for their informal consideration at the FCMWG in January 2021. Subsequently, informal consultation on the Byelaw was undertaken in February 2021 to seek the views of industry on the proposed provisions of the new Byelaw. This consultation closed on 23rd February 2021. Finally, the Wash Cockle and Mussel Byelaw was presented to the Authority in March 2021. The formal consultation will inform any changes necessary to the byelaw before it is resubmitted to the Authority and to the MMO for review. Development of a replacement Several Order (to manage the WFO shellfish Lays) is underway including plans to consult with industry for comment on the management plan required for application in 2021.
	c) Implementation of proposed licence fees, fisheries management plan and Regulations.	High	Complete	The revised cockle fisheries management plan was reviewed and implemented in 2019. Whilst the Authority agreed licence fee structure was provisionally approved by the minister (for a staggered increase), decisions were taken to delay the implementation of the new fee structure following approval

				from Defra in 2020, in the context of mitigating impact of COVID-19 on industry. Subsequent approval required for further increases (as per the initially agreed plan) has been outstanding and has been the subject of significant delay. The revised WFO regulations are still under consideration by Defra who have now been significantly delayed in finalising the Regulations. Despite dialogue with Defra throughout 2020, some issues are yet to be resolved pending Defra legal consideration.
	d) Development of cockle fishery and mussel fishery management plans following their review for the WFO 1992 fisheries. Implementation of fisheries management plan and regulations.	High		Both the cockle and mussel fisheries have been managed using a suite of policies developed in 2008 after consultation with Natural England and the local industry. In 2019 a bespoke Handwork Cockle Fishery Management Plan replaced the cockle section of these policies with updated management. The mussel fishery at present is still managed using the 2008 policies but these are planned to be replaced with a Mussel Fishery Management Plan once a better understanding is gained of what may be causing high annual mussel mortalities.
5. Industry viability	a) Investigation into mussel die off.	High	Ongoing	High levels of mortality have been occurring annually on the Wash intertidal mussel beds since 2010. The mussels are known to have a high incidence rate of the intestinal parasite, *Mytilicola intestinalis*, but studies conducted by the Authority and Hull University failed to identify a link between the presence of these parasites and mortalities. In 2020 a new joint project was proposed with Cefas that would investigate the physiology and biochemistry of the mussels in addition to the pathology. This project was due to begin in March 2020, but COVID-19 restrictions meant it was unable to progress until restrictions eased after the summer allowing the Cefas

				laboratories to reopen. Since then, three sets of quarterly mussel samples have been collected and processed. The project will continue throughout 2021.
	b) Development of a Fisheries Management Plan for crab and lobster.	High	Ongoing	Last year industry members approached the Authority to help them develop a Fisheries Improvement Plan (FIP) following the MCS Good Fish Guide downgrading its scores for the Southern North Sea crab and lobster fisheries. FIPs are required to be industry-led and funded, but the Authority provided support by researching the required steps, developing a “Needs Assessment” and liaising with other IFCAs responsible for managing the Southern North Sea crab stock unit. The industry is currently seeking tenders for MSC accredited consultants to conduct a pre-assessment of the fishery, which is the next step in the FIP process. The Authority will continue to support the industry throughout the development of the FIP.
	c) Economic assessment of hand work cockle fishery viability in The Wash.	Medium	Ongoing	In late 2020 an independent fisheries economics consultant: MarFishEco Fisheries Consultants were selected to complete an economic assessment of the cockle fishery in the Wash (in the context of other interdependent fisheries), to better understand the viability and vulnerabilities of the fishery as an important part of the development of new management. Work is underway with the selected consultant to begin the assessment. Delays in starting the project persisted as resource was focussed on dialogue with industry about the replacement byelaw and access policies; voluntary industry involvement with the assessment is required to ensure that a high level of data is obtained to deliver the best possible assessment and provide a strong foundation

				from which management decisions can be informed.
6. Obtaining better fisheries data	a) Implementation of Inshore-Vessel Monitoring Systems (I-VMS) for all fisheries	High	Ongoing	Eastern IFCA continued to actively support the national approach to implementing I-VMS in partnership with the MMO and Defra. The national roll-out of I-VMS is still ongoing but delayed as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and Brexit preparation. Recent indications are that the project will start to gather momentum in the coming months.

‘Business-as-Usual’ – Critical Workstreams

In addition to identifying emerging risks, the Strategic Assessment also sets out which fishery or species-related risks are mitigated by established work streams. The cessation of such work streams has the potential to increase risk associated with that fishery or species. These include, for example, the annual cockle stock surveys without which, the cockle fishery would represent a much greater risk. This work is categorised as critical ‘business-as-usual’. An outline of the work that the Authority undertook as a necessity during 2020-2021 is given below.

Study of the Wash Embayment, Environment and Productivity (SWEEP)

Following high levels of unexplained cockle mortalities in The Wash in 2008, there were concerns that the mussels present on the Several fishery lays could be having an adverse impact on the food availability for wild stocks. The SWEEP project was instigated in 2010 to monitor the level of Chlorophyll in the water and meat yields of mussels as two proxies for food availability. This ongoing project has continued to monitor these two metrics, using an in-situ sonde deployed on a buoy to collect data continuously and a mobile sonde to take monthly samples from various other sites. Should chlorophyll and meat yields fall below minimum thresholds described in the associated Habitat Regulation Assessment (HRA) for the mussel lays, indicating available food levels were too low to support the wild and farmed shellfish populations, mussels may need to be removed from the lays.

The SWEEP project has been reviewed and it has been determined that evaluating the food carrying capacity is beyond our available resources/capability. Monitoring will continue of the chlorophyll and cockle mussel meat yields required by the model used as mitigation with the associated HRA. New sondes have been purchased to conduct this monitoring regime.

Wash Fishery Order Surveys and Management

Annual surveys of cockle and mussel stocks within The Wash are a significant undertaking, usually involving sampling approximately 1,250 stations for the cockles and 20 separate mussel beds. Due to the risks posed by COVID-19 Coronavirus, however, it was not possible for the Authority to conduct the usual cockle survey programme this year. Instead, a highly targeted series of samples were collected from 74 stations that could be used to show what changes had occurred at those sites compared to the 2019 survey data. These changes were then extrapolated to other beds, producing an estimated cockle biomass of 22,279 tonnes. Although it was possible to use this information to inform the necessary Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) and to open the fishery, the limited nature of the stock assessment meant the management of the fishery needed to be precautionary. This did not limit the size of the Total Allowable Catch (TAC) of 3,636 tonnes for the fishery but did mean the fishery needed to be restricted to beds in which high mortalities were predicted. Four beds were initially opened in which high levels of atypical mortality were anticipated, with a further bed being opened part way through the fishery that was susceptible to “ridging out”.

Despite the COVID-19 restrictions still limiting staff activities, it was nevertheless possible to survey most of the mussel beds during the autumn surveys. The previous surveys in 2019 had found there had been significant die-offs on almost all of the beds, resulting in the lowest mussel biomass since the 1990's. These low stock levels had not only prevented the 2019 mussel fishery from opening but had also meant a more precautionary approach had been required for the management of the 2020 cockle fishery. It was good news, therefore, when this year's mussel surveys found the majority of the beds had increased in biomass, albeit not sufficiently to reach the 12,000 tonnes Conservation Objective threshold required to open a mussel fishery.

Habitats Regulations Assessment of WFO fisheries

The stock data collected from surveys forms part of the evidence used in each annual assessment undertaken by Eastern IFCA to identify the impacts of proposed WFO cockle and mussel fisheries in relation to the conservation designations afforded to this area. These Habitats Regulations Assessments (HRA) consider the impact of the fishery on protected habitats and species and consider the overall integrity of the designated site. In consultation with Natural England (statutory nature conservation adviser) and with fishery stakeholder input, the Authority agrees updated management measures prior to these fisheries being opened each year, to ensure that the fishing activities do not prevent the conservation targets from being achieved.

This work is dependent on evidence relating to fishing activity, site condition (e.g. population status of protected species and extent of protected habitats), and fishing impacts. Within designated sites, regulators are required to apply precautionary management where evidence of fishery impact is poor or inconclusive. The continuation of commercial cockle and mussel fisheries in a conservation site as highly protected as The Wash reflects the availability of data and the shared understanding of activities and impacts in the site achieved through continual monitoring and dialogue.

The usual programme of cockle surveys provides all the stock information required to inform the HRA. The shorter assessment necessitated by COVID-19 restrictions in 2020, however, meant a more precautionary approach was required, particularly as the preceding mussel surveys in 2019 had shown their stocks to be low. Instead of being able to open most of the cockle beds to the fishery, as would usually be the case, only those beds thought to be highly vulnerable to high mortalities over the summer were opened. This precautionary approach ensured sufficient shellfish stocks would remain to feed the over-wintering bird populations and also concluded that the fishery would not occur in places that would disturb harbour seals during their most sensitive period (pupping and moulting). Natural England supported the conclusions of the assessment, that the fisheries would not adversely affect site integrity and provided conservation advice in a timely manner that enabled the fishery to open at optimum times.

Whelk Fisheries Management and Research

The risk associated with the Whelk fisheries was identified as being high by the 2015 Strategic Assessment. Subsequent development of management measures has significantly reduced the risk associated with the fishery. Management measures include the establishment of a permit system and new data collection regime which has required a significant resource to administer.

Minimum Landing Sizes (MLS) are introduced to ensure species can reach maturity and have a chance to spawn prior to being harvested. Nationwide, whelks are known to mature at different sizes around the country, and these can differ between fairly localised stocklets. As a consequence, a project was instigated to study the Size of Maturity (SoM) of whelks from our district to ensure the newly introduced 55mm MLS was appropriate for the district. This has involved measuring and dissecting thousands of whelks, voluntarily provided by fishers from four areas within the district.

SOM is crucially important in informing an appropriate minimum size and data analysed from Sea Palling, Lowestoft and Southwold areas indicate that the minimum size currently in place is less than the size of maturity. The 2020 Whelk Technical Summary Report concluded that whilst there is sufficient data to draw robust conclusions in The Wash, Lowestoft and Sea Palling areas, this is not the case for Southwold, and recommended further sampling is needed in this area to improve the available dataset spatially and temporally. The study was due to conclude within the 2019-20 financial year but will continue until more robust conclusions can be drawn for the Southwold area.

In addition to studying the size of maturity, the project has also investigated whether the fishery is being targeted sustainably. This has been done by analysing the landings returns data to look at trends in landings, effort and Landings Per Unit Effort (LPUE). For stocks that are difficult to physically survey, LPUE can be used as a proxy for stock density. Trends showing declining LPUE values indicate a fishery is being fished unsustainably. However, an issue with how catch caught outside of the district was being recorded in the returns forms was identified in February 2020, invalidating sections of the data. Work is ongoing to fully understand the impact of this will have on the overall results. EIFCA are currently reviewing the permit conditions following the outputs of the 2020 research into effort and landings and the SoM project. Changes to the minimum landing size and the permitted level of effort are being considered and delivery is now planned for 2021-2022.

Engagement with industry was undertaken in August 2020 as part of the review of the Whelk Permit Byelaw, necessitated by the required scheduled reviews under the IFCA byelaw guidance. This review included a review of the permit conditions, involving consultation with industry following the assessment to propose additional management measures to address concerns about the level of effort and non-compliance. Following the development of proposed measures as a result of this consultation, a formal consultation was undertaken in early 2021, to seek final views

on the proposed measures that had been developed following suggestions from industry in August.

Crab and Lobster Research

In reports published by Eastern IFCA during 2020, MSARs detailing the effort and landings from the under 10m sector of the fleet between 2012 and 2019 have been analysed to track trends in LPUE for the crab and lobster fisheries. These have provided district-wide details and more focused information by ICES rectangles. The analysis of brown crab and lobster stocks district-wide suggests that they are stable, and recruitment is sufficient to replace annual depletion from fishing. However, more specifically, in the ICES rectangle within which the MCZ is located – the most important fishing ground for brown crab within the district – there is evidence to suggest a slight declining trend since 2016. This suggests that the amount of effort taking place in this area may be putting the stocks under pressure and be reducing their density on the ground. Overall the indication is that from a purely population sustainability perspective, the brown crab and European lobster fisheries in the EIFCA district are not under immediate threat, although some localised management may be required.

Development of regulatory measures for sustainability reasons has paused, therefore, while work focusses instead on management of the associated Cromer Shoal Chalk Bed Marine Conservation Zone, which could satisfy the requirement for any further sustainability measures. Following the downgrading of the Southern North Sea crab fisheries MCS Good Fish Guide's rating, the Authority has been supporting the industry with the development of a Fisheries Improvement Project (FIP) (see the case study on this and more information in the Future Priorities section). By its conclusion, the FIP should have addressed sustainability risks through the potential introduction of regulatory and/or voluntary measures.

MSAR recording methods are currently being updated by the MMO to an electronic reporting system which may impact future assessment of these fisheries in the short-term. The implications of this on future research and assessment will continue to be monitored.

Engagement in Marine Planning

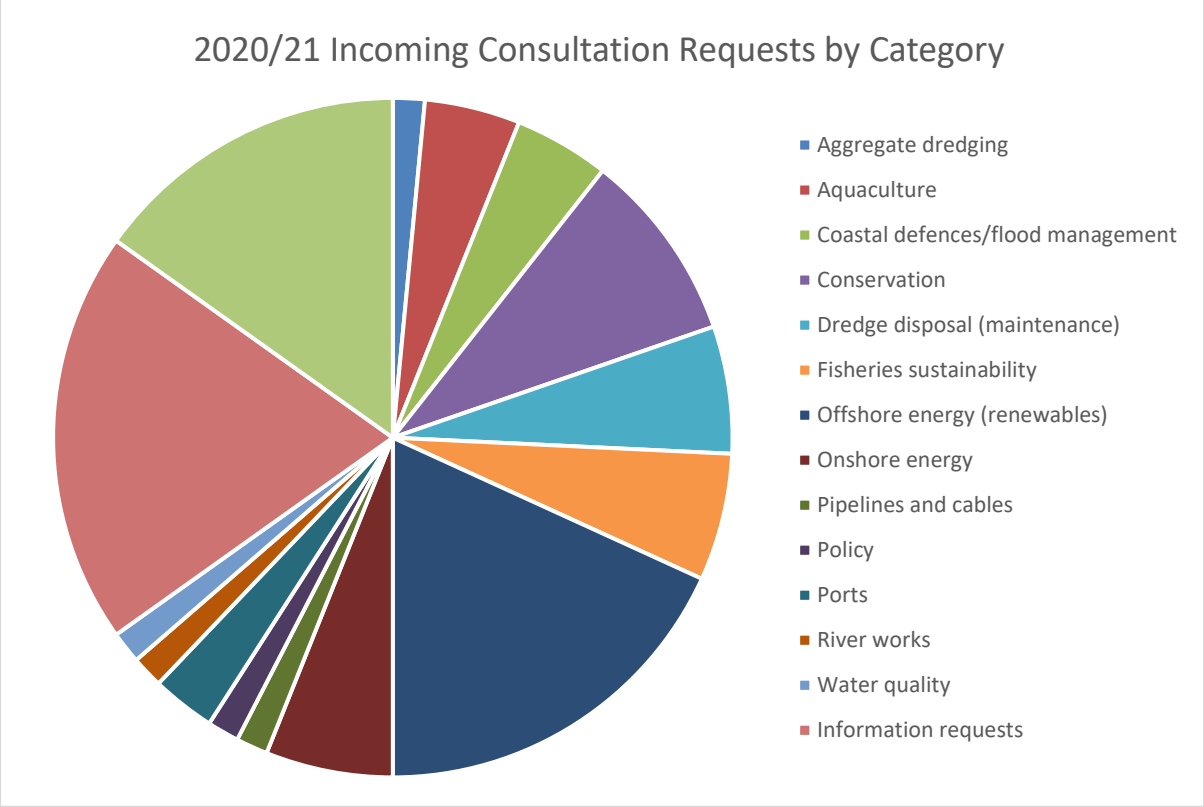
The East Marine Plans were published in 2014 and set out objectives and policies for sustainable development in the southern North Sea. The Marine Management Organisation is the main regulator responsible for licensed activity at sea. Large (infrastructure-scale) developments, such as offshore energy projects, are permitted through the Planning Inspectorate. Eastern IFCA plays a role in influencing development decisions by providing expert advice on inshore fishery and conservation matters relevant to an application.

During 2020/21 Eastern IFCA responded to an approximate total of 66 consultations on marine plans or projects. This is a significant reduction from previous years, a suspected consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic and resultant delays to external

projects. Input to these consultations is led by the Marine Science team, drawing on expertise of Marine Protection officers for fishing activity or regulatory considerations.

Examples of consultations that Eastern IFCA have been engaged with in 2020/21 include continuing involvement with compensatory measures for the planned offshore windfarm *Norfolk Vanguard*; the proposed extension to the Haisborough, Hammond and Winterton SAC within inshore waters to compensate for damage to sandbanks in the development of the windfarm. Eastern IFCA objected to the extension on the grounds of likely additional restrictions on fishing opportunities. A second large-scale project that officers have been involved with is the Sizewell C Development Consent Order in relation to the proposed nuclear power station's radioactive discharges, water discharges and combustion activities. Eastern IFCA's response to this work highlighted that the assessment of impacts on fish (entrapment or intake with cooling water) was not given at an appropriate scale; officers also queried the rejection of using particular fish screens. Eastern IFCA's involvement with the Sizewell C consultation work has been an important opportunity for cross-organisational collaboration by working together with other advisory bodies including Cefas and the Environment Agency to identify key issues and compare conclusions.

As well as large-scale marine development, Eastern IFCA has also engaged with multiple smaller scale projects such as proposed plans for aquaculture and scientific research, including an Oystercatcher tracking study led by the British Trust for Ornithology. The outputs from the study will be an interesting consideration in the wider review of The Wash 'Bird Food Model', a consideration in the annual management of the cockle and mussel fisheries in The Wash.



Enforcement

Enforcement activity is primarily driven through the Compliance Risk Register (an annual assessment of risk of non-compliance) and Tasking and Coordination Group meetings (which also considers intelligence and emerging issues). It is also influenced by the outputs of the Strategic Assessment as this identifies the fisheries most at risk of sustainability issues (and by extension, those potentially most vulnerable to negative impacts through non-compliance). Full reporting on Enforcement activity and outcomes is reported on in Appendix 3.

Shrimp Fishery Accreditation

The industry-led development of voluntary management measures under the Marine Stewardship Council accreditation scheme satisfies the Authority's responsibility to ensure the shrimp fishery is exploited sustainably and in accordance with MSFD requirements. While further sustainability measures are not currently required, a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) has been agreed between the Authority and the Industry, detailing tasks that each party needs to conduct in order to maintain the MSC certification. These include a commitment from the Authority to inspect nets and fishing gear used in the fishery, and to monitor where the fishing activities are occurring with respect to sensitive seabed features.

COVID-19 restrictions have limited our capability to conduct the full range of vessel inspections this year and also limited the amount of vessel sightings data we have been able to capture. Our ability to provide accurate details of the fishery's spatial extent has been hampered by delays in the national introduction of I-VMS.

Monitoring of district wide biosecurity risks

Previously this workstream has been identified as a high priority and progress has been made. The nature of the work, to reduce future risk, requires ongoing monitoring and therefore is now included as part of 'business as usual'. A monitoring plan for biosecurity issues co-ordinated by a lead officer has been implemented. Officers have been briefed about reporting biosecurity concerns, and if these occur potential action will be considered.

It is recognised that the spread and control of non-native species is outside of Eastern IFCA's remit, and we may be limited to reactionary action only. Officers implement mitigation measures on an ad hoc basis, including education and engagement in relation to identified risks.

Administrative Metrics

Administrative metrics 2020-2021	
Byelaw derogations (and extensions) issued to facilitate research purposes	18
Freedom of Information/ Environmental Information Regulation requests	4
Wash Fishery Order 1992 licences issued	52
Whelk Permits issued	30
Wash Restricted Area permits issued	0

Future priorities 2020-21

Given the finite resources available to the organisation it is necessary to prioritise work-streams. As such items that might be worthy of action but are of a lower priority will not be identified for action during a financial year. They may, though, receive attention if resources permit and may receive a higher priority in subsequent years, subject to the annual Strategic Assessment. These are referred to as secondary priorities and those identified by the Strategic Assessment 2020 are listed below.

Obtaining better fisheries data

a. Continue dialogue with MMO in relation to development of under 10m vessel reporting.
b. Development of relationship with RSA to obtain more fisheries data
c. Further develop the mechanism to obtain voluntary data from commercial fishers.
d. Continue dialogue with MMO and other partner organisations to develop 'joined-up' approach to gathering data from fishers in light of possible changes to important commercial species (reduced ability to depend on Bass and Cod).
e. Gather information regarding recreational hand gathering with focus on bivalve molluscs.

Progress

No developments were made in relation to data collection from RSAs. Engagement work was completed, and brief engagement materials were shared in person and on social media platforms, to inform and educate non-commercial stakeholders of safe and responsible hand gathering activity.

Whilst there remain delays to district wide development to collecting voluntary data from commercial fishers, including the delayed implementation of I-VMS on all vessels under 12m in length, localised developments in voluntary data gathering have been made. As part of the ARM approach to management of potting activity on the Cromer Shoal, voluntary participation in data collection efforts using vessel trackers to monitor activity are under development with plans to drive uptake among stakeholders.

Additionally, a data sharing agreement was implemented between Eastern IFCA and the MMO to facilitate the effective sharing of data where required to inform fisheries management.

Delivering fisheries management in relation to fisheries in MPAs

a. Re-assess need to deliver 'unregulated netting' in the context of bass nursery areas
b. Review the Humber estuary cockle byelaw (inherited from North Eastern Sea Fisheries Committee)

Progress

No progress made in relation to these items.

Delivery against success criteria and success indicators

Five Success Criteria and twenty-seven success indicators have been developed for all ten Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authorities (IFCAs) within England. Eastern IFCA seeks to deliver its annual priorities in the context of the Success Criteria, and this is illustrated in five case studies, which provide a flavour of the work undertaken which meets the Success Criteria. Appendix 1 provides illustrations of Eastern IFCA's progress against each Success Criterion and associated Indicators.

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

Building stakeholder relations and championing sustainable fishing through supporting industry in the adoption of a Crab and Lobster Fisheries Improvement Plan.

A consultation on the Marine Conservation Society (MCS) '19/20 Good Fish Guide winter rating review' highlighted a proposed decrease in rating for the Southern North Sea (SNS) brown crab fishery from a three to a four, stating that the 'stock should not be considered sustainable and that the fish is likely to have significant environmental issues associated with its production'. This new rating was reached following concerns about fishing pressure, stock status and a perceived lack of management, resulting in significant market impact on the crab fishery in the district that led to industry members approaching the Authority in search of a way forward.

The need for sustainability measures for the crab and lobster fisheries has been recognised and discussed with industry for some time; the East Anglia lobster (*Homarus gammarus*) stock also has a MCS rating of four. Following discussions with several industry members who had been affected by the rating change it was determined that the most appropriate way forward was to undertake a Fisheries Improvement Project (FIP) to identify and address sustainability concerns, work towards a more sustainable stock and improve the MCS ratings.

FIP's are defined as 'multi-stakeholder efforts to address environmental challenges in a fishery' which 'harness the power of the private sector to incentivise positive changes towards sustainability' (CASS, 2019). Whilst FIP's must ultimately be led by members of the supply chain, Eastern IFCA officers were tasked with conducting an assessment of the fishery to identify key areas that require improvement and inform a proposal for the FIP (both documents are available on our website: https://www.eastern-ifca.gov.uk/research-environment-plans-strategies-reports/).

Eastern IFCA is continuing to work with fishing industry members and relevant stakeholders to develop the FIP. It is hoped that this work will demonstrate the industry and Eastern IFCA's shared commitment to sustainable and viable fisheries and help improve the ratings for these fisheries in the Marine Conservation Society's 'Good Fish Guide'. The project is currently in the development stage with several quotes having been sourced for completion of an MSC pre-assessment to further inform the project and a preferred quote having been chosen. Whilst industry members are prepared to put some of the funding forward, other funding options are currently being investigated and the project has also been put forward as one the Marine Stewardship Council's (MSC) Project UK Tranche 3 FIP's.

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

Adaption to COVID-19 ways of working in enforcement.

The COVID-19 pandemic proved to be a significant challenge to the way IFCO's worked during the year. As the country went into the first national lock down, we had to quickly react and plan how IFCO's would continue with their work and provide a uniformed presence on the coast. Working with our Health and Safety partners at Norfolk County Council, risk assessments and policies were developed to identify risk and safe methods of working. Officers formed working 'bubbles' in which they would work together if required. Eastern IFCA also played a key role in developing protocols and establishing a national and regional covid response group between the MMO and all IFCAs in order to achieve a degree of consistency in compliance activity.

Shore patrols formed the backbone of Eastern IFCA's enforcement regime during the early part of the year. All patrols initially had to be authorised and targeted with a focus on gathering intelligence and information on the impact of COVID-19 and lockdown. Inspections were significantly reduced and authorised on a case-by-case basis.

As the pandemic continued officers gradually expanded their 'observational' patrols and began face-to-face engagement with fisherman and industry. Initially there was significant pressure placed on industry that supplied directly to the hospitality trade as the customer base virtually disappeared overnight. Some in industry made adaptations to enable them to make direct sales to the public and work was undertaken by Eastern IFCA to join Kent and Essex to attract funding for a Fish Local campaign but, unfortunately, the funding bid was not successful for our district. IFCO's made fisherman aware of any financial support available through DEFRA and were on hand to guide them through the application process.

The 2020 WFO cockle fishery was challenging but officers carried out inspections throughout the fishery and sea patrols were carried out to observe the fleets activity and to ensure compliance with the closed areas which were put in place to protect juvenile cockles. In addition, the Enforcement team worked with Norfolk Constabulary Drone Team to investigate alleged breaches of the 2-tonne daily Total Allowable Catch (TAC). Over the year, shore inspections were adapted and reintroduced through the use of Fisheries Inspections Points. These enabled officers to conduct efficient inspections with fisherman in a COVID-safe environment. Finally, vessel patrols were reintroduced with officers working within the discrete team bubbles to try and prevent spread across the enforcement team should an officer test positive.

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

Assessment of the Humber Estuary Eel Grass Closure as part of the Closed Areas Byelaw 2020.

Intertidal seagrass (*Zostera noltei*) beds are a designated sub-feature of the Humber Estuary SAC. Seagrass is an ecologically important habitat, stabilising and oxygenating sediment, sequestering carbon and increasing biodiversity, but seagrass extent declined significantly in UK waters during the 20th Century, driven by fishing and pollution pressures. Fishing with bottom-towed gear, dredges, intertidal handwork, crab tiling and digging with forks (bait collection) over seagrass beds are classed as 'red risk' interactions. Therefore, spatial closures to these activities are required to protect seagrass beds from damage.

As part of our ongoing programme of work to manage fisheries within MPAs, in 2014 Eastern IFCA closed a large, precautionary area (170.8 ha) in the Humber Estuary SAC to these activities, via the Protected Areas byelaw 2014. The only known seagrass in the restricted area was a very small patch covering less than 1m^2. Despite the absence of the prohibited activities, annual monitoring of the seagrass since 2014 has shown that the seagrass in the area has not extended its range since implementation of the closure, consistently occupying less than 0.0001% of the closure area.

Eastern IFCA are committed to balancing socio-economic considerations with environmental protection and must ensure that management is evidence-based, proportionate and fit-for-purpose. Using best available evidence and accounting for statutory conservation advice, Eastern IFCA introduced the Closed Area Byelaw 2020, which included a revision to the seagrass closure in the Humber Estuary SAC. This reduced the size of the existing closed area to 9.2ha, to better reflect the feature extent but still maintain a large buffer around the feature to allow for natural expansion and potentially active restoration work with partner stakeholders. The smaller closure will continue to protect seagrass from potentially damaging fishing activities and will remove a barrier to fishing in the surrounding area where seagrass does not occur. Eastern IFCA will continue to monitor the area.

Eastern IFCA are actively supporting the Humber Coastal Conservation Project. Trials of seagrass planting have been successful on the north bank of the Humber at Spurn point with a 0.2ha area already planted and new sites being explored. We are actively assisting stakeholders such as the Wildlife Trusts to identify potential sites for seagrass planting trials on the south bank, within the current closure area. Eastern IFCA will remain supportive of seagrass conservation efforts and will continue to support the national drive for seagrass restoration because of the value of the ecosystem services that seagrass habitats provide.

Case study - Success Criterion 4: ***IFCAs have appropriate governance in place and staff are trained and professional.***

The restrictions and impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in changes to the normal ways of working during 2020/21 to ensure the continuation of business.

Governance

The Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020 (SI 2020/392), made under section 78 of the Coronavirus Act 2020, were introduced to enable local authorities to carry out meetings online. Under these provisions, Eastern IFCA was able to carry out its business, including quarterly meetings and sub-committee meetings, during the pandemic.

Members and officers quickly adapted to the use of online meetings, with several online meetings being held, which included members of the public also remotely present at the meetings.

Business continuity

In addition to adoption of online meeting for members, staff embraced the technology to carry out their duties effectively, furthering the work streams of the annual priorities.

Managers utilised Microsoft Teams in particular to provide support and supervision through regular online meetings with the teams at all levels of the organisation to ensure effective planning and direction throughout. Online daily briefings have now become standard practice to ensure that staff have the guidance and direction needed to meet operational requirements. Additionally, online training courses were procured, particularly in relation to data protection and cyber security, during 2020/21.

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

Adapting cockle survey methods during COVID-19

The intertidal cockle stocks in The Wash provide an important resource for the local fishing industry. In addition to supporting the fishery, these stocks also provide an essential food resource for the internationally important communities of birds that reside or over-winter in The Wash. It is important, therefore, for both the wildlife communities and the sustainability of the fishery, to ensure the fishery is managed in a responsible manner that does not result in a crash in the stocks. Since 1993, these fisheries have been regulated under the Wash Fishery Order 1992 and guided by a suite of management policies that were agreed with the industry and Natural England in 2008 and subsequently updated into a Cockle Fishery Management Plan in 2019.

While these regulations and measures form a robust framework around which the fishery can be flexibly managed, they rely on sound, up-to-date evidence to be effective. Usually this is provided by a comprehensive stock assessment survey programme that involves analysing samples taken from approximately 1,250 stations, covering 24 beds. These surveys provide information about the distribution, biomass and age and size structures of the cockle stocks, from which the Total Allowable Catch (TAC) for the fishery can be determined and which beds can be opened or require closures. Information from the surveys is also used to inform a Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA), which is conducted to ensure the proposed management measures will not have an adverse impact on the site's conservation features. In 2020, however, the risk posed by the COVID-19 pandemic prevented the surveys from being conducted. Without fresh evidence to inform the management of the fishery, an alternative approach was sought. Due to the lack of evidence, this would have needed to be highly precautionary, particularly as the birds' other main prey species - mussels - were known to have declined significantly in 2019.

However, this is where the strength of the historic dataset, provided by over twenty years of annual surveys, proved invaluable. Cockle stocks in The Wash have suffered high 'atypical' mortality rates since 2008. Analysis of past survey records indicated with a high degree of confidence, not only that mortality would be high this summer, but also which beds would be worse affected. As these stocks were predicted to die over summer, and so not be available for the overwintering birds, Natural England agreed with our reasoning that they could be opened to the fishery. In addition to identifying areas in which mortalities would be high, the detail provided by previous surveys provided a firm foundation from which a 2020 stock assessment could be conducted. This involved sampling 74 strategically selected stations to determine what changes had occurred in cockle numbers and biomass since the previous survey. By extrapolating those changes over the site, it was possible to estimate a total cockle biomass, from which a Total Allowable Catch could be set for the fishery.

Risk Management Strategy

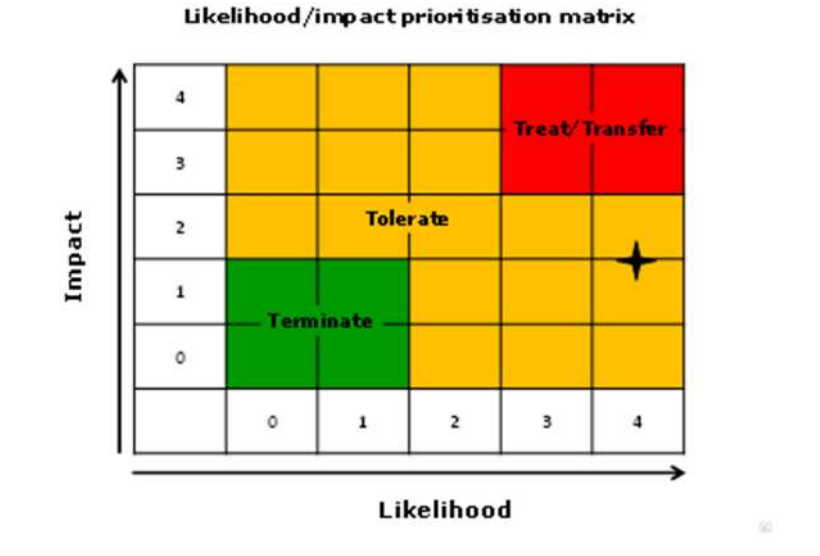
Pages 31-37 of the 2020 – 2025 Business Plan outline the Risk Management Strategy of Eastern IFCA. The risk matrix sets out the magnitude of the risk to Eastern IFCA from an organisational viewpoint, incorporating these amongst other reputational and financial risks. The matrix also sets out the likelihood of an identified risk occurring. Mitigation which is in place or to be introduced is identified. Risk is ranked on an arbitrary scale from 0 (low risk - coloured green) to 4 (high risk - coloured red). The average of the combined financial and reputational risk is taken and plotted on to the matrix below, the likelihood of that risk occurring is also plotted. Mitigation action is noted. In most cases there are already many actions being undertaken as part of routine working practices to reduce the risks to the Eastern IFCA. In 2020 it was agreed that an update on managing risk would be a standard agenda item at full Authority meetings to ensure that members are fully sighted on progress and any developments.

The four actions that can be applied are:

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

Risk matrix with worked example

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



Risk Description	Risk	Action	Mitigation	Residual risk
Eastern IFCA fails to secure funding to replace assets		Tolerate	• Current level of reserves provides a short-term buffer to cover replacement of RV Three Counties. • Seek efficiencies and promote cost effectiveness. • Demonstrate value for money. • Advertise/promote Eastern IFCA output and effectiveness to funding authorities through regular engagement with Council leaders and Financial Directors. • Engage with partner agencies to identify alternative funding sources. • Explore asset sharing initiatives. • Agreement in place with funding authorities for capital funding contributions each year. Confirmed at the annual meeting with representatives of the Finance Directors on Tuesday 10th November 2020.	Potential for any future changes in the funding of County Councils to have an impact upon Eastern IFCA funding.
Impact of EU exit on Eastern IFCA duties and the wider economic environment		Transfer	• Monitor EU exit developments – Defra lead on development of the post-EU exit landscape. • Engage in national fora to help inform and influence developments (e.g. IFCA Chief Officers Group, Association of IFCAs). • Continue “business as usual”. • Prepare for change. • Ensure Eastern IFCA is “match fit”. • Maintain communication with partners. • Eastern IFCA is fully engaged with the MMO in terms of operational readiness for a ‘no deal scenario. MoA in place for the provision of vessels and joint patrols. Also engaged with Cefas to support the export of live shellfish. • Officers engaged in future of inshore fisheries management work	Uncertainty on future arrangements for fisheries and conservation management post EU Exit.

			with Defra and other stakeholders. Officers are also seeking engagement with the REAF initiative.	
Eastern IFCA fails to maintain relevance amongst partners		Tolerate	• Provide a leadership function. • Be proactive and identify issues early. • Engage with all partners routinely. • Use Business Plan to prioritise and communicate outputs, measure progress/deliver outputs. • Represent community issues to higher authorities. • Effective business planning process in pace. Leading role where appropriate e.g. Op Blake. Proactive approach to raising issues with Defra (e.g. Bass management, proposals for effort management trial). • DSA agreement in place between Eastern IFCA and the MMO to facilitate collaborative working.	Disparate stakeholder aspirations introduce complexities which may drive perceptions of disengagement or inefficiency. Focus on delivery of MPA protective effect introduces perceptions of bias towards conservation remit from stakeholders. Workload to service MPA protective effect diverts resources from fisheries management tasks. Perceptions of Authority powerlessness in the face of EU Exit affecting the inshore fishing sector.
Negative media comment		Tolerate	• Actively and regularly engage with all partners including media outlets. • Utilise full potential of social media and web-based information. • Embed professional standards and practices. • Deliver change efficiently and effectively. • Promote activity. • Assure recognition and understanding through community events.	Disenfranchised stakeholders seek to use the media to introduce doubt as to Eastern IFCA professionalism, utility and effectiveness. One off event prompts disproportionate media spotlight.

			• Routine updating of news items on website. • Active on social media with demonstrable improvements in 'reach'. • Monitoring of ongoing industry expression of dissatisfaction regarding the replacement of the WFO, explanatory information provided where possible and appropriate.	
Degradation of Marine Protected Areas (MPA) due to fishing activity		Tolerate	• Proposed fishing activities authorised by Eastern IFCA are assessed per Habitats Regulations. • Eastern IFCA is fully engaged in national fisheries/MPA project, prioritising management of highest risk fisheries in MPAs and implementing new management measures. • Effective monitoring of fishing activity and enforcement of measures. • Adaptive co-management approach to fisheries management – i.e. engagement with fishing and conservation interests in the development of management measures, and appropriate review of measures to respond to changing environmental and socio-economic factors. • Ongoing, close liaison with Natural England regarding all conservation matters. • Review agreed Wash Cockle & Mussel Policies. • Develop the use of iVMS as a management tool by the Authority. • Continue to progress research into the impact of fishing activities on MPA features to ensure the Authority has an up-to-date evidence base to inform its management decisions. • MPA management has been a high priority since 2012 with substantial progress made. Current workstreams (e.g. Cromer Shoal MCZ, remaining 'red risk' sites) are a high priority and are being progressed.	Attempts to broker balanced solution to provide protective effect whilst mitigating impact on local fishing activity are ignored by fishing community. Fishing vessels fail to adhere to management measures including closed areas introduced through new byelaws.

			• Established steering group to carry work forward collaboratively for work relating to potting on the MCZ to ensure that the conservation objectives of the site are furthered.	
Shellfish and fish stocks collapse		Treat	• Annual stock assessments of bivalve stocks in Wash. • Annual review of the level of threat via the Strategic Assessment. • Ability to allocate sufficient resources to monitoring of landings and effective enforcement. • Consultation with industry on possible management measures. • Use Project Inshore Phase 4 output to inform MSC pre-assessment review of fisheries and validate management measures. • Develop stock conservation measures for crab and lobster fisheries through engagement with Cefas and fishing industry • SWEEP research into primary productivity levels within the Wash. • Regular engagement with the industry to discuss specific matters. • Continued research into the cockle mortality events. • Maintain whelk management measures. • Introduce shrimp management measures. • Consider bass management measures, if necessary, in light of EU/UK measures. • Annual surveys of Wash cockle and mussel stocks alongside innovative approach to management of the cockle fishery. • Ongoing workstream to identify cause of mussel mortality. • Closure of cockle fishery in Nov 2019 due to emerging findings of mussel surveys in order to mitigate impact on 2020 cockle fishery. • Innovative approach to surveys enabled the 2020 Wash cockle fishery.	Failure of biosecurity controls introduces disease in the Wash fishery. Unregulated fishing behaviour threatens stock status. Current management measures fall short of required protective effect.

			• 2020 fishery came to an end after the TAC had been taken. • Management measure implemented in 2020 fishery reduced risk of sustainability issues and delivered a fishery in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic precluding the regular stock assessment. • Work to support industry in establishing a FIP for crab and lobster is ongoing.	
Failure to secure data		Tolerate	• All computers are password protected. Individuals only have access to the server through their own computer. • Secure wireless internet. • Remote back up of electronic files. • Access to electronic files is restricted. • Up to date virus software installed on all computers. • Important documents secured in safes. • ICT equipment and policies provided by public sector provider – including encrypted laptops/secure governmental email system. • All Eastern IFCA personnel undergo DPA and cyber security training. • Electronic backup of all Eastern IFCA documents held by ICT provider offsite. • Policies and processes developed to ensure compliance with GDPR. • New policies to manage data security developed through DSAs with partner organisations.	Malicious release of privileged information. Negligent release of privileged information. Invasive techniques constantly evolving.
New Burdens Funding discontinued		Tolerate	• Defra and the IFCAs have been working on the ‘co-design’ of a replacement – concluding that funding is to remain at current levels, with the allocation to each IFCA unchanged. • The replacement was due to form part of SR 2020 but as a consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic there will be a single year funding settlement for 2021-22.	Uncertainty over future funding costs. Inability to meet obligations.

			• Defra included IFCA funding in their bid to Treasury. • Finance Directors representatives briefed and understand that in the event that the funding is discontinued there may be a desire to increase levies.	

Resources

The following resources belonged to Eastern IFCA on the 31st March 2021.

Vessel name	MCA Work Boat Code	Length	Commissioned	Replacement cost
FPV Sebastian Terelinck	Cat. 2 (60 nm offshore)	11.5m	2015	£420,000
FPV John Allen	Cat. 2 (60 nm offshore)	11m	2013	£420,000
RV Three Counties	Cat. 2 (60 nm offshore)	18m	2002	£1,400,000
FPV Sea Spray	Cat. 4 (up to 20 miles to sea)	6m	2018	£51,000

Vehicle details	Entered service	Replacement date	Replacement cost
Ford Tourneo bus	2016	2022	£18,000
Skoda Yeti 1.6	2014	2021	£15,000
Skoda Yeti 1.6	2014	2021	£15,000
Skoda Yeti 4x4	2014	2021	£18,000
Skoda Yeti 2.0 TDi	2017	2024	£18,000
Skoda Yeti 2.0 TDi	2017	2024	£16,000
Skoda Fabia	2017	2024	£11,000
Skoda Karoq	2020	2027	£23,000
Isuzu DMax Eiger	2015	2022	£20,000

Description	Purchased	Replacement cost
Side scan sonar	2013	£60,000
Underwater camera	2013	£30,000
Video ray	2013	£15,000
Sonar software	2013	£15,000

In addition to the assets identified above, the Authority leases an office in King's Lynn (a new short-term lease has been renegotiated to afford time for alternative accommodation to be found), moorings at Sutton Bridge for its vessels and a storage facility (close to the offices) in King's Lynn.

Expenditure

The Authority had a budget of £1,597,996 for 2020-2021. This figure includes £394,145 in New Burdens funding[1] from Defra, £1,057,944 from levies and £145,907 from other sources. Use of New Burden money is not accounted for separately by the Authority due to the accounting and allocation complexities that this would cause.

Following a 25% levy reduction, delivered by 2012-13 and a standstill levy for several years, 2020-21 saw a further 2% inflationary increase to the County Councils portion of the Authority's income. The final outturn for 2020-21 showed a surplus of £68,259 over budget (4.3%). Key budget variances were:

1. Savings in salaries due to vacancy management with Eastern IFCA operating below full complement for part of the year amounted to £70,693.
2. General expenditure (operational overheads) was fractionally underspent as a result of savings in various areas, mainly Travel & Accommodation: £14,300.
3. Communication and Development, Marine Science and Marine Protection combined saving amounted to £541 (£4,052) due mostly to Marine Protection underspend offset by Marine Science overspend (un-budgeted contribution to bird survey £5k).
4. Asset operations were overspent by (£25,130) which was largely due to unforeseen gearbox repairs for Three Counties (£25k). Costs associated with "Operation Blake" (£64,609) offset by Grant Income included in income from other sources.
5. Budgeted surplus £6,119.
6. Asset purchases £181,831 were all in relation to the new Research Vessel this expenditure was offset by Asset Replacement receipts of £154,500 the remainder treated as in year expenditure.

Reserve name	Amount held within reserve @ 31 March 2021
Research	£78,169
IVMS	£30,000
Operational	£150,000
Legal and enforcement	£75,000
ICT	£10,000
Vessel replacement	£1,850,016
Vehicle renewals	£60,000
Fixed Penalty Fine Fund	£21,750
Office Improvements Fund	£10,000
WFO reserve	£110,247
Defra grant	£18,292
Total "IFCA" reserves	£2,413,474

[1] Provided to enable the Authority to meet the additional duties proscribed under the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009

Remuneration of the Chair, Vice Chair and Chief Executive Officer 2020-2021

The Chair and Vice Chair of the Authority were not remunerated directly by the Authority for their work conducted on behalf of the Authority during 2020-2021 Remuneration of the Chief Executive for the year 2019/20 was in the band £75 – £80,000. Travel, accommodation, and subsistence were reimbursed in accordance with the Authority's policies (see table).

Travel	Accommodation	Subsistence	Total
£576	£238	£0	£814

Staffing

During the year the following changes took place:

- 1 Grade 6 IFCO/Project Officer left their post.
- 2 Grade 5 IFCOs left their post
- 1 Grade 5 IFCO recruited
- 1 Grade 5 Marine science Officer left their post.

<u>Outstanding vacancies as at 31/3/2021</u>

- 1 IFCO post
- 1 Marine Science Officer post

Organisational carbon footprint

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

	Estimated carbon footprint for the Authority in 2020-2021 compared against a baseline of 2008-2009					
Source	**2008-2009**	**2016-17**	**2017-18**	**2018-19**	**2019-20**	**2020-21**
Owned road vehicles	24.40 tCO_2e	19.83 tCO_2e	22.58 tCO_2e	17.07 tCO_2e	18.00 tCO2e	20.70 tCO2e
Owned ships	197.07 tCO_2e	88.37 tCO_2e*	52.26 tCO_2e*	31.16 tCO2e	34.00 tCO2e	32.80 tCO2e
Electricity	22.59 tCO_2e	15.08 tCO_2e	16.39 tCO_2e	13.82 tCO_2e	14.00 tCO2e	9.80 tCO2e
Train travel	**-**	0.57 tCO_2e	0.13 tCO_2e	0.17 tCO_2e	0.50 tCO2e	0.02 tCO2e
Flights	-	0.24 tCO2e	- tCO2e	- tCO_2e	- tCO2e	
Total tonnesCO_2e	**244.71 tCO_2e**	**124.09 tCO_2e**	**91.36 tCO_2e**	**62.22 tCO_2e**	**66.50 tCO2e**	**63.32 tCO2e**

Developed using the Carbon Trust online carbon footprint calculator

References

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

Legislation

The Fisheries Act 2020, c.22. available at:
https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2020/22/contents/enacted

Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009, c.23 available at:
https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2009/23/contents

Eastern Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Order (SI 2010/2996). Available at:
https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2010/2189/contents/made

Guidance

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

Defra: (2010) Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authorities: Vision, Success Criteria and High Level Objectives. Defra. London.
(2011) Guidance to Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authorities on Annual Planning and Reporting Requirements under s.177 and s.178 of the Marine and Coastal Access Act. Defra. London.
(2011) Guidance to Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authorities on the establishment of a common enforcement framework. Defra. London.
(2011) Guidance to Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authorities on evidence-based marine management. Defra. London.
(2011) Guidance to Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authorities on monitoring and evaluation and measuring performance. Defra. London.
(2011) Guidance to Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authorities on their contribution to the achievement of sustainable development

Eastern IFCA (2020), Eastern IFCA Business plan 2020-2025 available at:
https://www.eastern-ifca.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/2020-Business-Plan.pdf

APPENDIX 1 – SUCCESS INDICATORS

Success Indicator	Progress	
Success Criterion 1: IFCAs are recognised and heard, balancing the economic needs of the fishery whilst working in partnership and engaging with stakeholders		
SC1A: The IFCA will maintain a database of stakeholder contacts that will have been reviewed and updated by 31st March each year.	Ongoing	Eastern IFCA holds stakeholder databases which are reviewed on an *ad hoc* basis throughout the year. Privacy policies are in effect and reviews of existing data to remain compliant with General Data Protection Regulations is ongoing. All staff undertook training on data protection and cyber security.
SC1B: The IFCA will have completed a review of its communication strategy and implementation plan by 31st March each year.	Complete	Communication and Engagement report appended to this report (Appendix 4).
SC1C: The IFCA will have reviewed its website by the last working day of each month.	Complete	'News' Section of the website is regularly updated. Eastern IFCA news and information from partner organisations posted in the news area by request.
SC1D: The IFCA will have reviewed its website and ensured it meets the objectives of its communication strategy, by 31st March each year.	Ongoing	The website is under continual review and development.
SC1E: The IFCA will have reviewed all of its Memoranda of Understanding (MoU) by 31st March each year. There will be a clear plan in place to update MoUs where necessary, to an agreed timescale.	Not Complete	Established MoUs have not been reviewed this financial year, but collaborative working arrangements are working well. A new MoU was established in November 2020 as part of the MSC Brown Shrimp Accreditation in The Wash. Annual reviews of all MoU are considered unnecessary, and they are reviewed on an 'as required' basis.
SC1F: By 31st 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.	Complete	Head of operations attended NIMEG meetings during 2020-21. Marine Science officers attended TAG. Officers participated in a range of other regional and national groups. In response to changes made to European legislation, officers collaborated across IFCA's to develop the Minimum Sizes Byelaw 2019, this was

		implemented in March 2021 after a series of delays. This byelaw replaced the emergency Fish, Mollusc and Crustacea 2019 Byelaw (which was extended in August 2020) and implements rules relating to the minimum conservation reference sizes of fish and shellfish, reasonably replicating the previous protective effect of the European legislation. In 2020 Officers also developed the IFCA-wide data sharing agreement held between respective IFCAs and the MMO to facilitate cross-organisational collaborative working, to make data collection more efficient and productive.

Success Criterion 2: IFCAs implement a fair, effective and proportionate enforcement regime		
SC2A: The IFCA will ensure its enforcement risk register and strategy are published and available on its website from the 1st April each year.	Complete	Eastern IFCA's 'Enforcement Policy' and 'Regulation and Compliance Strategy', which cover the organisational approach to risk, compliance, and enforcement respectively, are published on the Eastern IFCA website. These are not updated annually but are reviewed when necessary.
SC2B: The IFCA will demonstrate in its Annual Report how it has worked with other regulators to achieve consistent quality, application, and enforcement of management measures.	Complete	Eastern IFCA coordinates activities in collaboration with partner agencies and the MMO through joint TCGs, and continues to strengthen collaboration with Border Force, Environment agency and the Police force through joint meetings and targeted operations/joint patrols. All IFCA's nationally developed a coordinated response to COVID-19COVID-19, together with the MMO. This included the formation of Regional Covid Response Groups to ensure strategic targeting of resources.
SC2C: The IFCA will compile records of enforcement activity in a standard format; provide them to the National Inshore Marine Enforcement Group (NIMEG) and publish them on its website.	Complete	Shore-based and seaborne patrol reporting is established and reported to NIMEG in agreed format.
SC2D: The IFCA will adopt the national Code of Conduct for IFCOs, which will be reviewed annually and published on its website by 1st April.	Complete	IFCOs adopted national code of conducts and policies published by NIMEG.
SC2E: The Code of Conduct for IFCOs is reflected in work objectives and annual appraisals for all Warranted Officers.	Complete	Annual IFCO Objectives and personal development plans incorporate national code of conducts and NIMEG derived policies.
SC2F: Warranted Officers attain accreditation. All undertake Continuing Professional Development.	Ongoing	Accreditation scheme not fully established due to delays surrounding role changes. New employees (IFCOs) attended accredited training courses, subject to course availability.

Success Criterion 3: IFCAs use evidence based and appropriate measures to manage the sustainable exploitation of sea fisheries resources and deliver marine environmental protection within their districts		
SC3A: The IFCA will record site-specific management considerations for Marine Protected Areas and report progress to the Authority.	Complete	Site-specific Marine Protected Area fisheries assessments and management considerations are reported at all full Authority meetings.
SC3B: The IFCA will publish data analysis and evidence supporting new management measures, on its website.	Complete	Scientific reports detailing Eastern IFCA research activities are published on the website. These include stock assessment reports from the annual WFO cockle and mussel surveys, crab and lobster stock assessments and results from habitat mapping surveys.
SC3C: Management information (e.g. sampling and/or survey results) will be collected periodically after new management measures have been implemented, to demonstrate the extent of effectiveness of the intervention.	Ongoing	In addition to supporting forthcoming management decisions, the annual cockle and mussel surveys demonstrate the effectiveness of previous management. Additionally, where sensitive seabed features (e.g. *Sabellaria* reef) has been closed, a review of the regulations is conducted periodically after closure in line with Byelaw review procedure. Habitat mapping surveys have been conducted over the past four years to assess the impact of these closures.
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 31st March each year.	Complete	Eastern IFCA undertakes an annual assessment of fisheries within the district to determine where management measures may be required. The Annual Strategic Assessment is published on the website each year in conjunction with the Business Plan.
SC3E: New IFCA management measures selected for development and implementation are delivered within agreed timescales.	Ongoing	Significant setbacks in implementation of management measures have occurred due to unforeseen complexities and revised legal advice provided by MMO and Defra.
SC3F: The IFCA will include shared agreed objectives and actions from Fisheries Management Plans in its own Annual Plan, which will be published by 31st March each year.	Complete	Eastern IFCA undertakes an annual assessment of fisheries within the district to determine where management measures may be required. The Annual Strategic Assessment is published on the website each year in conjunction with the Business Plan.
SC3G: Progress made in relevant Fisheries Management Plan areas, including Maximum	Complete	This work is covered in the 'business-as-usual' section of the annual report for key species such as mussels, whelks, crab and lobster.

Sustainable Yield commitments, will be noted in the IFCA's Annual Report.		

Success Criterion 4: IFCAs have appropriate governance in place and staff are trained and professional.		
SC4A: The IFCA will publish a Plan on its website by 31st March, setting out the main objectives and priorities for the next financial year. A copy will be sent to the Secretary of State.	Complete	All previous annual plans/business plans have been published on the Eastern IFCA website and provided to Defra within the agreed timescales.
SC4B: After the end of each financial year, the IFCA will publish a Report on its website describing its activities, performance, and a summary of audited financial information in that year, by 30th November. A copy will be sent to the Secretary of State.	Complete	This information is provided in the annual report. All previous annual reports are available on the Eastern IFCA website.
SC4C: IFCA staff will have annual performance management plans in place. Annual appraisals for all staff will have been completed by 31st May**.**	Complete	All Eastern IFCA staff are set annual objectives and personal development plans with mid-year reviews.
SC4D: An efficient secretariat of IFCA staff support IFCA Authority meetings which are held quarterly and are quorate. Meeting documentation will meet Standing Orders.	Complete	Eastern IFCA Meetings and Sub-Committee meetings effectively recorded in minutes. All meetings in 2020/21 have been quorate and minutes are published online once confirmed as per Standing Orders. The 40th Authority meeting, which was due to take place in June 2020, was cancelled due to the COVID-19COVID-19 pandemic, under emergency Coronavirus regulations 2020. Subsequent meetings, 41, 42, and 43 were all held using virtual conferencing technology. In-person meetings resumed for the 44th Meeting as per regulation.
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.	Complete	Whilst in-person collaboration has been limited due to the pandemic, Eastern IFCA has maintained collaborative working with stakeholder organisations, Natural England, and aquatic consultants to gather information, share expertise and deliver effective responses to management.

Success Criterion 5: IFCAs make the best use of evidence to deliver their objectives		
SC5A: The IFCA will demonstrate progress that has been made towards identifying its evidence needs by publishing a research plan each year.	Complete	The Eastern-IFCA 5-Year Business Plan and an annual Strategic Assessment, which prioritises the highest risk elements of all the fisheries in the district, including fisheries sustainability, viability and environmental impacts, is presented with updates at quarterly Authority meetings to record progress with specific work streams. The business plan incorporates research objectives identified in the strategic assessment to ensure that priorities and workstreams are aligned.
SC5B: The IFCA will publish a research report annually that demonstrates how evidence has supported decision making.	Complete	Scientific reports that support our decision making are published on the website.
SC5C: The IFCA's contribution to TAG and progress that has made towards a national evidence needs programme will be recorded in the IFCA's Annual Report.	Complete	The Eastern-IFCA TAG representative chaired the group between July 2016 and November 2017 and has remained an active member thereafter. The group is active in promoting IFCAs at the national level by liaising and working with scientists from other DEFRA-family organisations, enabling IFCAs to contribute towards national evidence gathering projects and to use recognised standards and procedures.

APPENDIX 2 – WAYS OF WORKING

During the year work to progress the following Memorandum of Agreements (MoAs), Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), Partnership Agreement (PA), Informal Agreements (IA), Agreement in Principle (AIP), Service level Agreements (SLA), Information Sharing Agreements (ISAs), contracts (C) and directorships (D) was undertaken.

These documents set out agreed ways of working for the Authority and attempt to provide clarity for individuals and organisations on their respective roles and responsibilities.

Document	Signatory Organisations	Purpose
MoU	Natural England and IFCAs	Defines roles and responsibilities and ways of working.
MoU	Marine Management Organisation and IFCAs	Defines roles and responsibilities and ways of working.
MoU	Environment Agency and IFCAs	Defines roles and responsibilities and ways of working.
MoU	Kent and Essex IFCA	Defines roles and responsibilities in relation to the Stour and Orwell European Marine Site and the Outer Thames Estuaries Special Protected Area.
MoU	North Eastern IFCA	Defines roles and responsibilities in relation to the Humber European Marine Site.
MoU	CEFAS and IFCAs	Defines roles and responsibilities and ways of working.
MoU	Lincolnshire County Council	Transfer of Defra New Burden money to Eastern IFCA.
MoU	The Shrimp Producers Organisation Limited (SPOL)	To support the MSC accreditation of the Brown Shrimp Fishery in The Wash, with commitment to data sharing, monitoring and inspections.
AIP	Norfolk County Council	Transfer of Defra New Burden money to Eastern IFCA.
PA	North Norfolk Commercial Fisheries Liaison Group	Formally a FLAG, the group enable engagement between the District Council, Eastern IFCA and fishing industry representatives.
PA	CEFAS, King's Lynn and West Norfolk Borough Council Environmental Health	Defines working relationship between regarding the collection of water, cockle, mussel samples for shellfish waters classification within the Wash.

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

APPENDIX 3 - ENFORCEMENT REPORTING

Overview

On the ground, enforcement resource was focused on EU bass regulations, cockle fishery management measures and Eastern IFCA byelaws. Reporting against the targets for 2020/21 is set out in the tables below.

Seaborne Compliance Activity			
Objective	**Target Quantity**	**Quantity achieved**	**Comment**
Sea Patrol Days	50 (primary Enforcement) 40 (secondary enforcement)	57 (primary enforcement) 47 (secondary enforcement) 104	Seaborne patrol activity was restricted in Q1 and Q2 due to COVID restrictions however, utilisation of the RHIBs with lesser crewing requirements enabled continued presence at sea.
Monitor EMS closed areas	All visited within year on a risk-based approach	273	Large increase on previous years primarily reflects availability of *FPV Sebastian Terrelinck* within the Wash and North Norfolk Coast during the financial year where many of the EMS closed areas are located.

Shore Based Compliance Activity			
Objective	**Target Quantity**	**Quantity achieved**	**Comment**
Port visits	1 per month per port (min)	98% of target	1232 separate port of beach visits were undertaken on a risk-based approach. Covid mitigation measures enabled a continued presence throughout the district during lockdowns and restricted periods.
Monitoring EMS closed areas	1 per month (min)	58%	Land-based monitoring did not meet target which partly reflects lower risk associated with the EMS closed areas visible from land and increased sea-borne monitoring.
IFCOs to engage with the owner/skipper of all vessels which have recently entered the district	100%	100%	All 'new' vessels inspected, and skippers / owners engaged to ensure an understanding of Eastern IFCA byelaws.

Partnership Working			
Objective	**Target Quantity**	**Quantity achieved**	**Comment**
Attendance at MMO Area TCG meeting	100%	100%	
Joint patrols/inspections/ operations with the Marine Management Organisation	24 (min)	17	COVID mitigation measures precluded joint patrols for a significant proportion of the year however, Joint working is now embedded in IFCA ways of working facilitated by office sharing and attendance of partner TCG's.

APPENDIX 4 – REPORTING ON THE COMMUNICATION AND ENGAGEMENT PLAN.

Overview of activity

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

Our opportunities for direct engagement with our stakeholders was unfortunately severely impacted by the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020 and this impact continues to a certain degree to the present day. Of particular note is the impact that the pandemic had on engagement with industry on replacement of the Wash Fishery Order 1992. Opposition to the use of a byelaw to replace the Order was compounded by our inability to engage in person as was anticipated. However, the circumstances of the pandemic enabled focus and direction towards different and diverse methods of engagement – through online based activities, and more targeted patrols and calls to ensure the continued inclusion of our stakeholders.

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

- Informal Consultation: Whelk Permit Byelaw 2016 – Permit Conditions Review
- Formal Consultation: Closed Areas Byelaw 2020
- Informal Consultation: WFO Replacement – Managing Access to Wash Bivalve Fisheries
- Formal Consultation: Temporary Closures of Shellfish Fisheries
- Formal Consultation: Whelk Permit Byelaw 2016 and Shrimp Permit Byelaw 2018—additional permit conditions and eligibility criteria
- Informal Consultation: Wash Cockle and Mussel Byelaw 2021
- Formal Consultation: Wash Cockle and Mussel Byelaw 2021

To ensure that these consultations were effective, officers specifically engaged with stakeholders about each of these, with internal briefings to ensure consistency of messages and engagement materials produced to aid education and engagement.

For each of the above consultations, impacted stakeholders were written to or emailed and, for the first time, consultation questionnaires were made available as online forms. The uptake of the online format to meet the needs of different stakeholders has been very successful in generating greater responses to consultation as the burden of response is somewhat lessened on our stakeholders. Indeed, officers are keenly aware of the potential to ‘overload’ stakeholders with consultations no matter how necessary they are. Attempts to mitigate this are made wherever possible, such

limiting the length of questionnaires and making to process for response straight forward and easily accessible. Important efforts are made to ensure that the timing is considerate around fishing seasons and to therefore improve the likely capacity for response. Finally, news items are routinely uploaded to the website and fisheries associations are also contacted.

Social Media

As per the Business Plan, the Community Voice project had identified that stakeholders would value more feedback and information on Eastern IFCA's work. Accordingly, throughout the year Eastern IFCA uploaded 39 news articles onto the website, in addition to specific pages and updates. Social media was identified as a useful tool for driving this communication and, as such, was used extensively throughout the year. Below is a summary of the key statistics, with a comparison to the figures from previous years.

	Twitter Impressions* (thousands)	Facebook reach* (thousands)	Facebook engagements ** (%)	Overall impressions/reach (thousands)
2017-18	69.9	33.4	2.68	103.3
2018-19	155.2	92	6.32	247.2
2019-20	151,1	79	4.21	230.2
2020-21	89.1	140.6	7.85	229.7

**Impressions/reach: Number of times users saw a social media post.*
***Engagement Rate: The number of engagements (clicks, retweets/shares, replies, follows and likes) divided by the total number of impressions.*

In addition to these figures, the overall following of Eastern IFCA pages increased throughout the year on both platforms. The figures show that Eastern IFCA has mostly maintained social media engagement. There can be seen to be a slight decline in impressions on Twitter but on Facebook, the levels of reach from the past to current year have significantly grown. This is likely a result of targeting specific engagement on Facebook to fisheries stakeholders who are the main engagement base, in contrast to Twitter where the main base of engagement is with peer fisheries organisations and researchers. Engagement rate is not easily obtained from Twitter's reporting figures, so this data is not included above.

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

Engagement Plan Actions

Business plan Action	Update
Partnership working	With COVID-19 protections in place, IFCO's carried out joint patrols with partner agencies including the MMO, Environment Agency, Border Force and Police. Marine Science Officers frequently work with other government bodies including the MMO and Natural England, as well as various coastal management boards (Wash and North Norfolk Marine partnership and Suffolk Coastal Forum).
More even spread of IFCO's across the district	There has been a satellite office in Lowestoft since 2016. As IFCO's (and all officers) have been working from home for the majority of year, IFCO's have been directed to district based patrols more local to their immediate area. Effort has none-the-less been made to ensure that the district is reasonably covered with patrol activity.
Talk to people on their own ground	Whilst this action has been limited due to COVID-19, officers have been prioritising the quay-side engagement that has been possible. In the absence of patrols at the beginning of April 2020, officers made direct telephone calls to all known industry stakeholders to confirm their wellbeing. Particular efforts have been made with regard to specific engagement objectives – following the announcement of Natural England's advice on the impact of potting on Cromer Shoal MCZ, officers targeted engagement in the local area to provide direct opportunities for industry to discuss their concerns and views with the IFCA and to explain the context of the advice. This included working collaboratively with NE to organise joint patrols so that their own members could be better informed by stakeholder perspectives.
Maintain and improve a professional and up-to-date website. With regularly updated content (2 new news items or other updates per month)	A total of 39 news items were uploaded during the year.
Social media sites to be regularly updated; use social media posts in conjunction with website updates, to deliver key updates to the community	Regular updates were posted on social media, ensuring a good overall reach to Eastern IFCA stakeholders.
Engagement with key stakeholders around consultations	This year a high number of consultations were undertaken, in a year of other particularly challenging pressures for stakeholders such as Covid and EU Exit. Therefore, additional work (on top of resource that is usually invested on getting meaningful engagement) was undertaken to

	develop novel methods for engagement, such as through online meetings. Attempts were also made to share, within a reasonable timeframe, the summarised responses to consultation work and what changes have been made as a result. Additionally, with all consultations, follow up calls/visits (where possible) were made to individuals who may have not involved themselves with initial consultation but may have a view/opinion they want to express. Particular progress was made through small meetings with stakeholders in-person and online throughout the year, maintaining direct lines of communication and building relationships to ensure productive and transparent communication.
Establish working groups on key fisheries issues.	Success with working groups that were established towards the end of March 2020 was unfortunately stalled due to the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. Following ongoing monitoring of the situation working groups have been established for MCZ workstreams online, and informal meetings have been arranges for other workstreams with stakeholders. The value of in-person communication is not underestimated, and it is intended that returns to in-person engagement can be made in the future.
Maintain the stakeholder database	As is required under SC1A above, databases are maintained on an *ad-hoc* basis throughout the year.
Key engagement messages reflected in officer duties	Engagement priorities were established through the tactical and coordination group meetings. Guidance documents were produced for IFCO's for each engagement priority, following engagement officers routinely logged comments in 'message forms' of which 208 were written and logged during the year.
Review outputs of the Community Voice project to inform and develop how the organisation engages and communicates with stakeholders	A formal review was not carried out during the year; however stakeholder preferences were used to inform engagement at all levels.

<u>Examples of other meetings and workshops attended (online)</u>

Eastern IFCA was still able to attend a variety of events throughout the year where these were hosted online, encompassing the full breadth of the authority's remit, below is a list that gives a flavour of the events attended:

- Norfolk Coastal Forum
- North Norfolk Commercial fishing forum
- Advisory groups associated with the Wash and North Norfolk Marine Partnership

- Suffolk Coastal Forum
- Suffolk Marine Pioneer
- Southern North Sea managers meeting
- Suffolk Saltmarsh Group
- Humber nature forum
- East of England Plastics coalition
- Agents of Change
- Big Picture Two Benthic Imagery
- Hornsea 3 – Compensatory Measures
- Humber Coastal Conservation Project (with The Wildlife Trust)
- Greater Lincolnshire Nature Partnership