



Devon & Severn Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority

The Devon & Severn IFCA replaced the Devon Sea Fisheries Committee and the Environment Agency as the organisation responsible for sea fish conservation within the Severn Estuary on 1st April 2011. There are ten IFCAs around the coast of England. Wales and Scotland have their own system for inshore fisheries management.

The IFCAs were brought into law through The Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009 (MACAA). MACAA deals with many aspects of conservation and fisheries management within the inshore area. It sets out how the IFCAs operate and gives them the necessary legal powers to undertake their new role.

The IFCA Mission statement shows the direction that the new IFCA is working towards and the change in focus from the old SFC structure is demonstrated by the mentioning of the environment and sustainability twice within the statement. The mission statement was arrived at by collaboration by the old SFCs, EA, Natural England and DEFRA.

The Devon & Severn IFCA's northern boundary runs from the Cornwall and Devon county boundary just west of Hartland Point along the coast of Somerset, North Somerset, Bristol, South Gloucestershire and Gloucestershire. The district extends as far as the tidal limits at Maisemore Weir and then to the boundary between England and Wales at Chepstow.

The IFCA is funded by the local Councils within its district. There are eight Councils within the Devon & Severn IFCA district. The Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Officers have enforcement powers within the whole of their district including the land but also have powers through cross warranting arrangements with Cornwall and Southern IFCAs and the Fisheries Department in Welsh Assembly Government.

The IFCA currently enforces EU, national fisheries and conservation legislation as well as 29 local byelaws inherited from the SFC and 10 byelaws inherited from the EA. There is a commitment to review all byelaws within the first two years of the IFCA to make sure all byelaws are fit for purpose. As well as byelaws currently in place the IFCA is responsible for the protection of the new coastal special areas of conservation (SAC) as well as all existing areas such as the Severn Estuary European Marine Site. The IFCA will also be responsible for protection on the new Marine Conservation Zones (MCZ).

The new district size is considerably larger than the former SFC district.

Partnership working is very important to the new IFCA and it will endeavour to work closely with all partners in the coastal area. It is very much a two way process with partners feeding information to the IFCA and the IFCA feeding back information and advice to others. The process of implementing byelaws is a bottom up approach where a need is identified through consultation before the IFCA implements any new legislation. With the new guidelines from the Secretary of State byelaws are seen as a last resort and education followed by voluntary codes should be explored before new legislation is brought forward.

The IFCA's already work very closely with other agencies such as the EA, Natural England and the Marine Management Organisation. There are Memorandum of Understanding with all these bodies which sets out how all the organisations will work together this is backed up with regular meetings of the officers to discuss work programmes for the individual officers and how joint working can be undertaken to give a better coverage of our joint areas of responsibility. Staff are able to be seconded by the IFCA to cover gaps in knowledge or manpower to help with enforcement or survey work. Joint enforcement plans are drawn up to maximise coverage of areas by a relatively limited number of staff. Joint survey work is undertaken to give a greater coverage of areas requiring survey and to prevent duplication of effort. The IFCA's sit on the management groups of estuary partnerships to help share their expertise and knowledge.

There are high expectations of the new IFCA's around the country from the many users of the marine and coastal environment. There is also wide spread support for the new organisations from the local wildlife trusts and members of the local angling clubs. There will be a need for the IFCA to address many new issues for which it may not currently have the expertise to deal with. There is a need to manage some of this expectation as in the early stages of the new organisation there is a very steep learning curve but the officers of the IFCA will try the hardest to live up to the expectation and many have already begun additional training to meet some of the new needs and where practicable expertise from outside agencies will be called upon to help the IFCA reach decisions.

More information about the Devon & Severn IFCA can be found at the website –

www.devonandsevernifca.gov.uk

Or by contacting the office email account – office@devonandsevernifca.gov.uk