



Department
for Environment
Food & Rural Affairs

Report to Parliament about Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authorities' (IFCAs) conduct and operations 2018-2022.

Call for evidence

Date: 23 February 2024

Version: 1.0

We are the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs. We are responsible for improving and protecting the environment, growing the green economy, sustaining thriving rural communities and supporting our world-class food, farming and fishing industries.

We work closely with our 33 agencies and arm's length bodies on our ambition to make our air purer, our water cleaner, our land greener and our food more sustainable. Our mission is to restore and enhance the environment for the next generation, and to leave the environment in a better state than we found it.



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Why we are consulting

The Secretary of State must prepare a statutory report into the conduct and operation of the ten Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authorities (IFCA's) every four years, which must be laid before Parliament.

This third report covers the period from September 2018 to September 2022. The report will assess the IFCA's against their five high level objectives set out in the IFCA Vision and Success Criteria document set out in the [2014-2018 Conduct and Operations Report on the IFCAs](#).

Success Criterion 1: Communications and Engagement

- IFCAs are recognised and heard, balancing the economic needs of the fishery whilst working in partnership and engaging with stakeholders.

Success Criterion 2: Compliance and Enforcement

- IFCAs implement a fair, effective, and proportionate enforcement regime.

Success Criterion 3: Management measures

- IFCAs use evidence based and appropriate measures to manage the sustainable exploitation of sea fisheries resources and deliver marine environmental protection within their districts.

Success Criterion 4: Governance and Training

- IFCAs have appropriate governance in place and staff are trained and professional.

Success Criterion 5: Evidence and Science

- IFCAs make the best use of evidence to deliver their objectives.

We anticipate that the final report will be presented to Parliament in 2024.

Your opportunity to contribute to the report

The feedback you provide in response to this consultation will contribute to the content of the third quadrennial conduct and operations report. This report will cover the period from September 2018 to the end of August 2022. The evidence you provide should only relate to this period.

This Citizen Space consultation invites contributions of evidence to a series of questions, structured around the IFCA Success Criteria. The Success Criteria form the basis of the

IFCAs' Annual Plans and Reports. IFCA Committees hold their executive and officers to account against these performance measures.

The Citizen Space consultation is aimed at representatives of organisations who wish to provide a coordinated response, as well as for members of the public. An additional survey is available for those that work closely with just one or a small number of IFCAs and is another opportunity to provide views. Please contact ifca.consultations@defra.gov.uk if you consider that the additional survey would be more appropriate for your use.

How to respond to this consultation

Duration of the consultation

The consultation will take place between 23 February and 22 April 2024.

Responses

We welcome your evidence about the IFCAs' conduct and operation between September 2018 and August 2022. Your responses to the consultation will be recorded through Citizen Space on the Defra consultation website.

If you are unable to use Citizen Space and would like to submit your views, please complete the Consultation Response Form by hand and email it to ifca.consultations@defra.gov.uk or post to:

IFCA sponsorship team

Marine and Fisheries

Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs

2 Marsham Street

London

SW1P 4DF

The consultation will close on 22 April 2024. Please ensure your comments are submitted prior to the closing date.

Confidentiality and Data Protection

Please find the Consultations Privacy Notice uploaded alongside this consultation. This consultation document and consultation process have been planned to adhere to the Consultation Principles issued by the Cabinet Office.

Representative groups are asked to give a summary of the people and organisations they represent and where relevant who else they have consulted in reaching their conclusions when they respond.

Information provided in response to this consultation, including personal data, may be published or disclosed in accordance with the access to information regimes these are primarily the Environmental Information Regulations 2004 (EIRs), the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA) and the Data Protection Act 2018 (DPA). We have obligations, mainly under the EIRs, FOIA and DPA, to disclose information to particular recipients or to the public in certain circumstances.

If you want the information that you provide to be treated as confidential, please be aware that, as a public authority, the Department is bound by the Freedom of Information Act and may therefore be obliged to disclose all or some of the information you provide.

In view of this it would be helpful if you could explain to us why you regard the information you have provided as confidential.

If we receive a request for disclosure of the information we will take full account of your explanation, but we cannot give an assurance that confidentiality can be maintained in all circumstances. An automatic confidentiality disclaimer generated by your IT system will not, of itself, be regarded as binding on the Department.

This consultation is being conducted in line with the Cabinet Office “Consultation Principles” and be found at [Consultation principles: guidance - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/consultation-principles)

If you have any comments or complaints about the consultation process, please address them to consultation.coordinator@defra.gov.uk .

About you

In what capacity are you responding to this consultation?

Are you submitting a coordinated response on behalf of an organisation?

If you are submitting a coordinated response on behalf of an organisation, please state the organisation you are representing as well as your role within the organisation.

Representative groups are asked to give a summary of the people and organisations they represent and where relevant who else they have consulted in reaching their conclusions when they respond.

This information will be published within an annex of the final report.

Please identify which IFCA(s) you interact with:

Single IFCA only – all responses refer to this IFCA (*drop down box to select its name*)

Cornwall IFCA
Devon and Severn IFCA
Eastern IFCA
Isles of Scilly IFCA
Kent and Essex IFCA
North Eastern IFCA
North Western IFCA
Northumberland IFCA
Southern IFCA
Sussex IFCA

All IFCAs – all responses apply across all IFCAs and should be based on your experience between September 2018 and August 2022. If you have comments about specific IFCAs please include the name of the IFCA.

This Citizen Space consultation is designed for respondents that are representing or coordinating the views of others and members of the public.

If you interact with one or small number of IFCAs on a day-to-day basis you may wish to complete the Qualtrics survey instead which is designed for mobile devices.

Consultation questions

Success Criterion 1: Communications and Engagement

In practice this means:

- IFCA's are recognised and heard, balancing the economic needs of the fishery whilst working in partnership and engaging with stakeholders.
- IFCA's are visible, respected and trusted regulators within coastal communities.
- They communicate their vision and responsibilities effectively.
- IFCA's engage effectively and openly with appropriate stakeholders such as policy makers, industry, Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), recreational and commercial users and other regulators. IFCA's work jointly and collaboratively with partner organisations across district boundaries.
- IFCA's participate and contribute effectively to the development and implementation of regional and national marine policy.
- IFCA's take long-term strategic decisions and manage risks effectively.

Please answer the following questions. All of the questions in this section ask about the IFCA's activities between September 2018 and August 2022. If you interact with more than one IFCA please identify the IFCA when making specific comments.

1.1. Which of the following activities are you aware that the IFCA(s) carried out?

- Byelaw development
- Enforcement Activities
- Conservation activities that protect, habitats and species in the marine environment
- Introduction of voluntary local agreements to manage fisheries and protect the marine environment
- Other (please specify)
- Not sure

1.2. Which methods did you use to engage with the IFCA(s)?

- I have attended Authority meetings
- I have spoken at an Authority meeting
- I have read Authority meeting papers
- I have interacted with an IFCA website
- I have contacted the IFCA using social media
- I have emailed the IFCA
- I have contacted an IFCA Authority member directly
- I have contributed to an IFCA consultation
- Other (please specify)
- I have not engaged with the IFCA(s)

1.3. How did the Covid-19 pandemic impact your engagement with the IFCA(s)?

1.4. How clearly have the IFCA(s) explained fisheries and marine management measures to those affected? Please circle a number below.

1.5. To what extent do you respect the IFCA(s) as a fisheries regulator?

1.6. To what extent do you trust the IFCA(s) as a fisheries regulator?

1.7. How well do you feel the IFCA(s) have communicated with the following organisations:

- MMO
- Natural England
- Environment Agency
- Cefas
- Seafish

1.8. What has been the most effective way(s) the IFCA(s) communicated or engaged with you or your organisation?

Success Criterion 2: Compliance and Enforcement

In practice this means:

- IFCA(s) implement a fair, effective, and proportionate enforcement regime.
- The IFCA enforcement regime is risk-based, makes appropriate use of intelligence and meets relevant legislative standards.
- IFCA(s) make effective use of the resources available to regulators. When possible, IFCA(s) complement and align with the regimes in adjacent IFCA Districts and management by other organisations including the Marine Management Organisation and Environment Agency.
- Consistency and fairness are important. Enforcement action is carried out by trained, professional officers working to clear standards of conduct.

Please answer the following questions. All of the questions in this section ask about the IFCA(s) activities between September 2018 and August 2022. If you interact with more than one IFCA please identify the IFCA when making specific comments.

2.1. Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Officers are employed by IFCA(s) to carry out inspections of marine organisms, fishing vessels, fishing equipment and vehicles to monitor compliance and enforce fisheries and environmental legislation both at sea (to six nautical miles) and ashore. To what extent do you agree with the following statements:

- “The IFCA(s) has carried out inspections professionally.”
- “The IFCA(s) has carried out inspections fairly.”
- “The enforcement policy of the IFCA(s) clearly explains how enforcement decisions will be made.”

2.2. Does the IFCA gather relevant and timely intelligence and evidence that supports enforcement action?

2.3. How have IFCA(s) enforcement activities compared to that of other marine regulators such as the Marine Management Organisation? Please specify which marine regulators you are referring to in your response.

2.4. How does the IFCA byelaw making process compare to other regulators?

2.5. If you interact with more than one IFCA and they manage the following activities differently, what impact does this have on you:

- enforcement
- byelaws
- stakeholder engagement

Success Criterion 3: Management measures

In practice this means:

- IFCA's use evidence based and appropriate measures to manage the sustainable exploitation of sea fisheries resources and deliver marine environmental protection within their districts.
- IFCA's should balance the social and economic benefits of exploiting sea fisheries resources with the need to protect the environment. The term "sea fisheries resources" means any plant or animal that lives in the marine environment, excluding migratory fish and freshwater fish (including salmon and trout).
- IFCA's support a network of well managed marine protected areas.
- IFCA's contribute to sustainable development.

Please answer the following questions. All of the questions in this section ask about the IFCA's activities between September 2018 and August 2022. If you interact with more than one IFCA please identify the IFCA when making specific comments.

- 3.1. To what extent do you think the IFCA(s) has balanced their responsibilities to contribute to sustainable fisheries and protect the marine environment?
- 3.2. How well has the IFCA(s) identified the needs of the sea fisheries resources within its district?
- 3.3. How well has the IFCA(s) responded to the local needs of the sea fisheries resources within its district?
- 3.4. When in an IFCA's district, is it clear which rules and regulations apply?
- 3.5. Where differing rules and regulations exist across neighbouring IFCA's, have the IFCA's taken steps to limit the impact on stakeholders?
- 3.6. What fisheries and conservation management measures have been implemented successfully by your local IFCA(s)?
- 3.7. How well has the IFCA you interact with the most taken relevant stakeholder views into consideration when making decisions over the past four years?
- 3.8. Please rate your satisfaction with the way IFCA's work with other government delivery bodies such as the Marine Management Organisation and the Environment Agency in order to implement sustainable fisheries and protect the marine environment:

Please give more detail or provide examples and specify which organisation(s) your answer refers to.

Success Criterion 4: Governance and Training

In practice this means:

- IFCA have appropriate governance in place and staff are trained and professional.
- IFCA are accountable for their use of public resources.
- IFCA should make effective use of their resources, including staff and assets.
- An IFCA should demonstrate professionalism, fairness and consistency.
- IFCA General Members are appointed on merit, through open competition.

Please answer the following questions. All of the questions in this section ask about the IFCA activities between September 2018 and August 2022. If you interact with more than one IFCA please identify the IFCA when making specific comments.

4.1. To what extent do you agree IFCA staff have been professional with their approach.

4.2. To what extent do you agree IFCA staff have been fair with their approach.

4.3. To what extent do you agree IFCA staff have been knowledgeable with their approach.

4.4. To what extent do you agree IFCA staff have been consistent with their approach.

4.5. Have you read the IFCA's annual plans and annual reports?

4.6. IFCA General Members must include people who are familiar with the needs and opinions of the fishing community within the relevant district and those that have knowledge or expertise in marine environmental matters. Between September 2018 and September 2022 do you think that membership of the IFCA(s) that you interact with the most has been balanced between these different groups?

If you answered yes, please indicate where you feel the gaps lie.

Success Criterion 5: Evidence and Science

In practice this means:

- IFCA's make the best use of evidence to deliver their objectives and decision-making should be based on evidence.
- Programmes of research activity and monitoring should be planned, developed and updated in consultation with partners. The programme should inform management decisions and support justification for additional research and evidence gathering.
- IFCA's decision making is based on evidence.

Please answer the following questions. All of the questions in this section ask about the IFCA's activities between September 2018 and August 2022. If you interact with more than one IFCA please identify the IFCA when making specific comments.

5.1. What types of evidence are you aware of that IFCA's collect to inform their decision-making?

5.2. Are IFCA's decisions well informed, supported by evidence that is fit for purpose, and balance social, environmental, and economic impacts?

5.3. Is it clear how evidence is taken into account during the IFCA's decision-making process?

5.4. Are you aware of the IFCA publishing the scientific evidence it has used to support its decisions?

5.5. When evidence changes, or new evidence emerges do you feel the IFCA's respond appropriately?

5.6. What partnerships with external organisations to gather evidence are you aware of (this may include academic organisations, Non-Government Organisations such as the National Federation of Fishermen's Organisation (NFFO) or the Marine Conservation Society (MCS) scientific bodies or Arm's Length Bodies)? What more could the IFCA do to make the most of external partnerships?