

July 2015 update

Introduction

Now the general election has been and gone, the focus for the IFCAs and the Association remains to deliver our statutory duties and UK marine policy against a background of uncertainty with regards to short, medium and long term funding. The Association is re-doubling its efforts to engage at all levels to ensure the IFCAs are seen and heard and that the value for money and our “can do” attitude is recognized. Both our major funding streams, from our local funding authorities and the “new burdens” monies from Defra are continuously under review, with the new Government placing strong emphasis on reduced central government and the importance of spending cuts across the board. Nevertheless, with commitments to deliver the marine “blue belt” and the continued importance of European Union marine measures high on the international agenda, the workload for the IFCAs continues to rise and shows no signs of slowing.

Future funding for the IFCAs:

The Association intends to continue to engage and has recently written again to George Eustice, the Minister of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) both to congratulate him on his promotion from Undersecretary of State and also to underpin the importance to the IFCAs of continued sustainable funding into the future. In addition, the Association is working closely with the Chief Officers Group to produce a four year report on the effectiveness of the IFCAs. In particular the report will focus on:

- Value for money – including the contribution made by the 111 unpaid MMO appointees.
- The combined effectiveness of the IFCA enforcement efforts
- Joint working with our delivery partners (MMO, Natural England, the Environment Agency and CEFAS)
- Working at a local level with stakeholders to provide support to communities and stakeholders.
- Joint working with Defra to deliver national UK marine policy including or role in delivering:
 - Well managed network of Marine Protected areas
 - Delivery of Tranche 2 and 3 MCZs beyond 2016
 - The revised CFP including the discard ban
 - The Marine Strategy Framework Directive
 - EU, National and local bass management

The report is intended to complement the Defra statutory report on the IFCAs conduct and Operation 2010-2014, presented to parliament pursuant to Section 183(1) of the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009. (see the Association website: <http://www.association-ifca.org.uk/Upload/About/ifca-review-2010-2014.pdf>).

The IFCAs are currently two thirds funded by the local funding authorities (totaling approximately £6m per year) and one third funded by Defra through the “new burdens” funding (£3m per year). At an Association meeting in 2014, the Minister announced an extension of the new burdens funding until April 2016. Both funding streams are essential to allow the IFCAs to continue to deliver their ever expanding remit. In addition, at an Association meeting in 2015, the Minister announced an additional £300k funding to assist with the increased workload demanded in order to achieve a revised approach taken by the UK on European marine sites in order to deliver the well managed network by the end of 2016.

Joint working with the MMO:

On 12th May 2015, Defra wrote to the IFCAs and the MMO seeking a review of joint working between the two organizations with a view to exploring potential cost savings and areas where effectiveness and efficacy could be enhanced. The letter sought an initial response by the end of July 2015. The Association and the Chief Officers group are liaising closely with the MMO, responding with a scoping reply to Defra on 15th June and are intending to respond as requested by the end of July. It is clear from the work with the MMO that it is unlikely that we will be able to identify short term savings, but that there is a clear need to explore how our two organizations can and should work more closely together to deliver a better and more efficient marine management package for the benefit of all stakeholders.

Conclusion:

The IFCAs continue to demonstrate cost effective delivery of both local and national priorities in the 0-6 nautical mile zone with an ever increasing list of tasks and duties. The Association continues to seek to support the IFCAs by working with Defra and our delivery partners as well as the wider stakeholder community to enhance and support at a national level. The next six to eighteen months will be critical for the IFCAs and the Association as we all seek to ensure that the IFCA model can be enhanced and supported. Working with our delivery partners to improve the marine environment in order to deliver healthy seas and sustainable fisheries for the benefit of all remains our top priority.

Dr Stephen Bolt

<http://www.association-ifca.org.uk/>