

CONSTITUTION

The Northumberland Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority (NIFCA) is a joint committee of Northumberland County Council and North Tyneside Council. It was set up on 1 October 2010 under the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009 ("The Act"). The purpose of this Constitution is to govern the working of the NIFCA, whose purpose is to regulate and manage sea fisheries and the marine environment in the district of the NIFCA as laid down in The Act and referred to in the National IFCA Vision and Success Criteria. The NIFCA district is described in the Order establishing the NIFCA (The Northumberland Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Order 2010 no. 2197).

NIFCA Membership

There are 21 members of the NIFCA, six of whom are appointed by Northumberland County Council, one by North Tyneside Council and twelve by the Marine Management Organisation ("MMO") (one of whom must be an employee of the MMO). The Environment Agency and Natural England must each also appoint one employee member to the NIFCA. Members are appointed for a 4-year term with the possibility of the appointment up to a maximum of 10 years including the first 4-year term served (and in certain circumstances that period may be extended by the MMO and with the approval of Defra). The role of the members is to attend the regular meetings of the NIFCA and such other meetings as may be called from time to time in accordance with the NIFCA Standing Orders and to undertake any agreed duties on behalf of the NIFCA as may be requested by the Chief Officer on behalf of the NIFCA.

Management and Regulatory Function of the NIFCA

NIFCA has a Chief Officer based at the Authority office at 8 Ennerdale Road, Blyth, NE24 4RT (or such office where NIFCA may be based from time to time) who is supported by an Administrative Officer, Finance Officer and secretarial staff to manage the work of the IFCA. The IFCA has the following Inshore Fisheries & Conservation Officers (IFCOs): - Two Lead IFCOs (Enforcement and Environmental), a Senior IFCO (Environmental), two Environmental IFCOs, an IFCO/Skipper/Engineer and other IFCOs currently four in number of whom two are part-time. The number of IFCOs from time to time is based on the operational commitments of NIFCA. The Lead IFCOs oversee and supervise the work of the other Officers, operating a weekly rota system. The Chief Officer and Lead Enforcement IFCO can also skipper the NIFCA patrol vessel "St Aidan" and also the NIFCA Cabin RIB "Robert Arckless MBE", along with three of the other IFCOs, one of whom is the IFCO/Skipper/Engineer.

IFCOs operate both from the Patrol Vessel and ashore.

The Authority operates a system of staff appraisal, which was originally developed in conjunction with Northumberland County Council and includes appraisal of the Chief Officer by the current Authority Vice Chair.

Meetings

Meetings of the NIFCA are usually held on the fourth Monday of the months of January, April, July and October although the July meeting may be held on a Saturday, which is decided at the January meeting each year. The April meeting is the annual meeting when

the office holders (Chair and Vice Chair), and members of main subcommittees i.e. the Watch and Finance Committees, are elected/confirmed. The Watch and Finance Committees are private meetings, as are other Authority Subcommittees and Working Group meetings, unless decided otherwise by the Chair as advised by the Chief Officer. Otherwise, the Quarterly meetings of the NIFCA (otherwise known as the "General Meeting") are public meetings and the press occasionally attend the General meeting when a report is delivered on the Watch and Finance Committee meetings.

Finance

Financial contributions are provided as to 83.37% by Northumberland County Council and 16.63% by North Tyneside Council. The NIFCA accounting year runs from 1st April to 31st March and the Accounts are subject to audit (internal).

Financial regulations are in place and these are kept up to date by the Authority's Finance Officer and kept under review by the Authority Finance Committee.

Prior to the January meeting an estimate of expenditure expected to be incurred during the following NIFCA year is prepared by the Finance Officer in consultation with the Chief Officer and following a meeting in December which is open to all of the Authority Membership. The estimate of expenditure is placed before the Finance Committee Meeting in January. This will also recommend the amount to be called for from the constituent Authorities which may, in some cases, be different from the actual amount of the estimate. Once the estimate is finalised by the Finance Committee and approved by the General Committee, the Councils are informed what their contributions will be during the following financial year.

Money from the constituent Authorities is received in two parts, normally two equal parts, the first during the half year commencing 1st April and the second contribution during the half year commencing 1st October.

Sub-Committees

There are two main sub-committees, the Watch Committee and the Finance Committee. The maximum number of members appointed to each is twelve and it is usual for the same members to be appointed to both Committees. In order to avoid expense, meetings of the Watch and Finance Committees are held on the same day as the main meetings but prior to them, and reports of these meetings are submitted to the main meeting for approval. The Authority also has a Technical and Scientific Subcommittee which may meet up to five times per annum depending upon the requirements of the Authority business and has its own Terms of Reference. Other Subcommittees and Working Groups can also be established and Constituted at a Quarterly or other members meeting of the Authority and as the business of the Authority may require and may meet from time to time as referred to in the Authority Standing Orders.

The duties of the Watch Committee concern the enforcement of the Bye-laws and other applicable legislation, as well as prosecutions and the maintenance and running of the patrol boat, as referred to in the Standing Orders, together with any other matters deemed appropriate by the Chair for consideration.

Occasionally it is helpful in connection with the supervision of the patrol boat to set up a Patrol Boat Committee.

Members' Allowances

The members of the Authority are entitled to be reimbursed their reasonable expenses in connection with attendance to Authority business and in particular the cost of travel to committee meetings based on the local government mileage rate or the standard rate of public transport fare and reasonable costs of accommodation and subsistence where that is required.

May 2024

Glossary/Addendum

“Statutory Members” are the employees of the MMO, EA and NE who are appointed as IFCA members by their employing organisation and have no fixed term of membership.

“Council Members” are the six Councillors from NCC and one from NT Council who are appointed by their Council who will determine their length of NIFCA membership whilst they are elected Councillors.

“General Members” are appointed by the MMO for a period of membership as referred to in this Constitution and as referred to in the Terms of Appointment from the MMO.