

# Annual Research Plan 2026-2027

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# 1. Introduction

This Annual Research Plan sets out NIFCA's work priorities and research plans between April 2026 and March 2027.

The areas of work and research that have been identified and prioritised for this year fall under the three main work areas, they have been developed based on: on-going priorities carried forward from NIFCA's 2025/26 Annual Research Plan, and work developed through emerging issues/knowledge gaps, national priorities and/or policies (section 3). Specific areas of research have been decided on and prioritised through revision of NIFCA's Strategic Environmental Assessment, and Environmental Risk Register, and cognizance of national priorities under the IFCA remit.

The main work areas and function of the Environmental Team are listed below:

- Research and monitoring work
  - Fisheries monitoring work
  - MPA monitoring work
  - Projects and emerging work
  - Licencing and consents
- Management development and review
  - Development of byelaws
  - Review of byelaws and permit conditions
  - Review of non-statutory measures
- Engagement and community support
  - Fisher Forums / Patrols and port visits
  - Actions from engagement work
  - Recreational Sea Angling

## 1.1 Personnel and Resources

Northumberland IFCA has 16 members of staff comprised of a Chief Officer, six enforcement officers, five environmental officers, and four financial and administrative staff. Enforcement officers and partner organisations assist the environment team with the collection of data.

The members of the Environmental team are:

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Please see Appendix A for a detailed breakdown of all NIFCA survey resources.

## 2. NIFCA Research Priority Work Areas

### 2.1 Research and Monitoring work

The Environmental Team conducts research and monitoring to improve understanding of the sea fisheries resources managed by NIFCA and the marine environment on which they depend. This work directly informs the decisions made by the Authority.

The team has developed a programme of surveys and assessments that are carried out either continuously throughout the year, at fixed times annually, or on an ad hoc basis in response to specific evidence needs. Wherever possible, this work is planned in advance and is outlined in more detail in Section 2, Table 1.

The research plan is detailed in Table 1, which is organised into key work areas. Each area includes specific research projects, survey, monitoring or engagement activities that result in data collected to contribute to the broader objectives. A timeframe is provided for each piece of work; however, this is intended as a general guide and activities may occur outside the specified periods depending on operational circumstances.

Work areas have been prioritised based on NIFCA's current research objectives. Officers aim to complete all tasks assigned a Priority 1 rating. Some unconfirmed projects are also included in the table; these may not be carried out if time or resources are limited.

Research and monitoring activities are aligned with national priorities and workstreams. Further details are provided in Section 3, with links between NIFCA's workstreams and each national priority outlined in Table 1. All data collected through research and monitoring efforts are submitted to the ERIC North East records centre, where they are accessible to other organisations and individuals for future use. NIFCA is also working towards developing the capacity to share data with a MEDIN-accredited Data Archive Centre, all metadata will be available through MEDIN by March 2027.

NIFCA prioritise partnership working where possible and Table 1 lists partners involved in the research and monitoring work carried out. NIFCA are also involved in various partnership projects which advance our research priorities or further develop our knowledge base in relation to our remit. NIFCA support a number of student projects and placements to both generate useful research and support future marine/fisheries researchers early in their careers.

Table 1 Northumberland IFCA Annual Research Plan 2026/27 showing individual projects, objectives, outputs, methods, partners, links to national priorities, and a timeline for the work. Each project has a NIFCA priority: 1 – Statutory requirement or essential evidence for management 2 – High importance for key workstreams 3 – In development or opportunity-led.

Work-stream	Project	Objective	Key Outputs	Methods	Partners	Strategic link	Timeline	Priority
Lobster and Crab	Lobster Biometric Sampling	Monitor lobster population structure (size distribution, sex ratio, exploitation levels)	Annual biometric dataset Contribution to Cefas stock assessment evidence Annual 'Stock Status' reports	Offshore, wholesaler and quayside sampling (carapace length & sex recorded)	Fishing industry Cefas	FMP	Year round sampling  Annual analysis in Q1	1
	Brown crab Biometric Sampling	Monitor brown crab population structure (size distribution, sex ratio, exploitation levels)	Annual biometric dataset Contribution to Cefas stock assessment evidence Annual 'Stock Status' reports	Offshore, wholesaler and quayside sampling (carapace width & sex recorded)	Fishing industry Cefas	FMP	Year round sampling  Annual analysis in Q1	1
	V-notching programme	Protect reproductive female lobsters to support stock sustainability	Dataset on number of lobster v-notched and released  Annual summary report	Purchase, notch and release programme	NIFCA Fishing industry	FMP	August-September	1
Nephrops	Nephrops monitoring surveys	Estimate inshore Nephrops abundance	Density estimates through burrow counts  Comparative data to offshore surveys  Annual report	Underwater TV surveys in line with Cefas survey methodology.	Cefas	FMP	Data collection May-June	1
	Semi-pelagic otter board gear trial	Assess potential for reduced seabed impact gear while maintaining catch rates.  Phase 2 of survey work carried over from 2025 to determine differences in catch composition and fuel consumption.	Report detailing catch comparison, gear effectiveness, and fuel consumption	At sea trials of gear and comparison of catch, bycatch and fuel consumption to regularly fished gear.	Fishing industry Wildlife Trust	MPA	Data collection June/July	2
Molluscs	Intertidal surveys	Assess impacts of periwinkle collection on populations and community structure	Updated time-series dataset  Monitoring summary report	Quadrat surveys, timed searches and shore patrol observations.	NE Marine Nature Partnership	MPA	Data collection in June and November	2
	Mussel surveys - Fenham Flats - Holy Island - Blyth Estuary	Monitor percentage cover and spatial extent of mussel beds.	Annual condition assessment	'Walker and Nicholson' method and Dutch wand.  In 2025, mussel inspections replaced full surveys to eliminate sample removal due to declines in presence of mussels.	Natural England	MPA	Data collection in March	2
	Code of Conduct Monitoring (Periwinkle & Blyth Bait Collection)	Monitor compliance with agreed Codes of Conduct	Patrol compliance summary	Shore patrol observations	-	MPA	Ongoing throughout year	1
Angling / Finfish / Bait collecti	Recreational Sea Angling (RSA) Strategy Delivery	Improve engagement with angling sector and increase finfish data collection	Patrol records and engagement summary  Updates RSA Strategy	Angling focussed patrols Fish measurements Engagement meetings	Angling sector	FMP	Ongoing throughout year	1

	Bass Scale Project	Inform on age of bass caught locally	Length / age dataset	Fish scale analysis	Angling sector NEIFCA	FMP	Ongoing throughout year	2
	Aln Estuary Fish Survey	Assess species composition and size structure of fish communities	Updated time-series dataset Summary report	EA TRaC survey method	-	MPA	Data collection in May and September	2
	UAV survey of bait collection devices (tyres); Aln Estuary with possible surveys in other estuaries.	Quantify tyre presence and compare with 2022 baseline	UAV imagery Monitoring dataset Summary report	UAV survey	-	MPA	Data collection ongoing throughout year over suitable tides	2
	Intertidal Bait Collection Monitoring	Monitor intertidal activity throughout the district.	Patrol records	Shore patrol observations	-	MPA	Ongoing throughout the year	1
<b>Marine Protected Areas</b>	Remote Electronic Monitoring project	Quantify trawling effort (hours, swept area) within MCZ	Spatial effort analysis Monitoring summary	GPS tracker and gear in/gear out technology.	Fishing industry	MPA	Ongoing throughout the year	1
	Trawl impacts on subtidal mud	Assess ecological impacts of otter trawling on subtidal mud feature	Sediment and benthic analysis report	Grab sampling (field) and laboratory processing	NIFCA Natural England Cefas	MPA	Data collected April/May, samples processed June-October	1
	Coquet to St Mary's MCZ Trawl Management Plan	Deliver adaptive management of trawling activity	Monitoring updates Stakeholder engagement summary	Mixed methods, monitoring and review	Fishing industry	MPA	Ongoing throughout the year	1
<b>General</b>	Vessel Sighting Data / iVMS	Improve understanding of fishing activity footprint Develop iVMS analysis methodologies	Spatial fishing activity dataset Contribution to MPA assessments and Monitoring and Control Plans	Sea patrol sightings Analysis of iVMS	MMO	MPA / FMP	Ongoing (subject to national iVMS rollout)	1
	Develop communications with the fishing industry Fisher Forums	Strengthen communication and collaboration with industry	Meeting summaries Agreed actions	Working groups / stakeholder meetings	Fishing industry	FMP	Ongoing throughout the year	1
	Temperature loggers	Develop time series of at-depth temperature logs	Time series dataset	Deploy loggers	Fishing industry	FMP	Ongoing throughout the year	2
<b>Habitat</b>	OLEX data collection	Improve understanding of seabed habitat extent in relation to fishing activity	OLEX data which can be used in future habitat mapping work	WASSP multibeam sonar during patrols	-	MPA	Ongoing throughout the year	3

### 2.1.1 Collaborative Research Projects

NIFCA have contributed to multiple collaborative research projects in the past outside of the research plan (Table 1), these projects were not included in the plan as NIFCA participated as a partner in larger, externally led initiatives rather than serving as the lead organisation. For further details on these projects, please refer to previous Annual Research Reports. Participation in these collaborative projects has provided a range of benefits to NIFCA, including: use of the data and results; financial compensation for use of our time; vessels and equipment; experience for staff in different types of survey techniques; and the opportunity to work closely with key partner organisations.

This year, NIFCA have fewer collaborative research commitments with only one project continuing from last year. Please see below for further details:

- Fishing communities' resilience to climate change with an aim to facilitate adaptation with case studies in the UK and Caribbean. Partner: Newcastle University.
- PhD proposal: The impacts of electromagnetic fields from offshore cabling on lobster and crab behaviour. Partners: Newcastle University and Heriot Watt University
- Assisting with the Nephrops Underwater TV survey for the Marine Directorate of the Scottish Government.

### 2.1.2 Student placements

NIFCA aim to support university research where it aligns with our research priorities. NIFCA have worked with multiple students from undergraduate level to post graduate research on projects relevant to local fisheries and wider exploitation of sea fisheries resources.

This year the NIFCA plan to support university students through provision of placements with one undergraduate marine biology student joining NIFCA for a placement week in April 2026. NIFCA also run a paid summer internship where a student or recent graduate joins the team for six weeks between June and September working with the team on work set out in Table 1.

## 2.2 Management Development and Review

IFCAs have the powers to develop and implement management in line with the duties set out in the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009 (MaCAA<sup>1</sup>). Duties encompass the remit of IFCAs in that they set out the need for the protection of the marine environment alongside the need to balance the social and economic benefits of fishing. IFCAs also have duties in MPAs that fall within their jurisdictional area under MaCAA (s154) and the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017<sup>2</sup>, IFCAs must ensure that fishing activity does not significantly hinder the conservation objectives of MPAs and/or that conservation objectives must be met and furthered.

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<sup>1</sup> The Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009 <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2009/23/contents>

<sup>2</sup> The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulation 2017  
<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2017/1012/contents/made>

Management can be both statutory measures in the form of byelaws or voluntary measures such as Codes of Conduct. Management measures are developed and implemented in line with the statutory guidance provided by Defra<sup>3</sup>.

The Environmental Team contribute to the development of management measures through collection and collation of best available evidence (see Sections 2 and 3.1), informal communication and consultation (see Section 2.3), development of measures to draft byelaws, and completion of associated impact assessments. Some NIFCA byelaws are permit byelaws which include the requirement for a permit from NIFCA to fish using certain gears in certain areas. The permits can have conditions attached which can be varied through a review process or if information from monitoring processes, scientific or survey data, advice from partner organisations, or information from any other relevant source becomes available. The environmental team coordinate and feed into the review process for permit conditions within permit byelaws.

NIFCA has adopted a formal Byelaw Review Procedure to ensure all byelaws and associated permit conditions are reviewed at least once every three years, or in accordance with statutory requirements. The procedure provides a clear, evidence-based framework for internal review, assessment against defined core questions, and reporting to the Technical & Scientific Sub-Committee and Authority where required. This approach ensures that NIFCA's regulatory framework remains necessary, proportionate, aligned with national policy, and transparent to stakeholders.

This year, the team will:

- Review the following byelaws in line with the NIFCA Byelaw Review Procedure:
  - Dredges
  - Crustacea Conservation
  - Crustacea and Molluscs Permitting and Pot Limitation

Non-statutory measures must be monitored for adherence to the provisions set out within them. NIFCA have two codes of conduct: one for periwinkle collection throughout the district; and one for bait collection within the Blyth Estuary. The team collects information on activity in line with the terms of each code of conduct (see Angling / Finfish / Bait collection and hand gathering, Table 1). Non-statutory measures are reviewed periodically.

### 2.3 Engagement and Community Support

Another priority for the team is to engage with key stakeholders in the fishing industry including commercial fishermen, recreational sea anglers (RSA), and wholesalers. Building and maintaining these important relationships can improve the way NIFCA functions in order to most effectively fulfil the duties under our remit. The team carries out this important workstream in a number of ways.

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<sup>3</sup> Defra – IFCA Byelaw Guidance <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5a7b34e0ed915d3ed9062dce/ifca-byelaw-guidance.pdf>

Fisher Forums originated through increased engagement with the industry around a Highly Protected Marine Area (HPMA) consultation process in 2022. Through this process NIFCA funded research to, in part, better understand how to engage with the fishing industry, this research evidenced the value of 1-to-1 engagement with '*in-person at the quayside*' a preferred method of engagement<sup>4</sup>. The main aims of the forums are to: build relationships, understanding, and trust with fishers to enable effective communication channels, collaborate in developing management, learn from their knowledge of the marine environment and how its changing, and feed any contributions into management/policy development at a local and national level.

Engagement with recreational sea anglers was developed through the review of the RSA strategy in 2022 and continues into this year. The team attend key events and meetings to strengthen relationships, promote NIFCA's role and the regulations in place, and aim to involve anglers in data collection to increase our knowledge on the presence of key inshore fish species (see Angling / Finfish / Bait collection and hand gathering, Table 1).

### 3. Emerging Fisheries and Diversification Opportunities

IFCAs must balance the social and economic needs of local fishing communities with the long-term protection of marine ecosystems. This includes responding to emerging fisheries, new or expanding methods or target species that may not yet be fully understood or managed under existing regulations. The likelihood of such fisheries is increasing due to changing marine conditions driven by climate change, which are altering species distributions, migration patterns, and the availability of target stocks. IFCAs are expected to monitor these developments, assess the ecological implications, and, where necessary, introduce adaptive management measures to ensure that new fisheries are developed responsibly and in line with conservation priorities. In addition to 3.1 and 3.2 detailed below, NIFCA encourage fishers to communicate proposals for new sustainable fishing options or alternative gears and NIFCA will endeavour to support this through research and/or pilot schemes where possible.

#### 3.1 Scallop potting

Scallop potting is a relatively novel technique in English waters compared to traditional dredging, IFCAs must collect robust evidence on spatial distribution, catch rates, bycatch, and potential habitat disturbance. There have been a few local fishermen who have trialled lights in pots targeting scallop but with limited success, however there may still be some interest. For 2026/27 NIFCA plan to:

- work with the fishing industry to understand interest levels in using specialised pots for scallop,
- record level and spatial extent of scallop potting,
- record catch rates

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<sup>4</sup> Fisher-led perspectives on crab and lobster management in Northumberland: a regional contribution to the crab and lobster fisheries management plan consultation, July 2023. <https://nifca.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/A-regional-contributions-to-the-Crab-and-Lobster-FMPs-Northumberland.pdf>

## 3.2 Bass

The range of European seabass (*Dicentrarchus labrax*) is shifting northward in the North Sea, bass have been present in the region in small quantities however there are anecdotal reports, mainly from the RSA community, that the number of bass is increasing. For 2026/27 NIFCA plan to:

- continue to liaise and collect information from the RSA community on bass presence and location,
- carry out the bass scale project (further details in Table 1)
- continue to collate information from commercial fishers.

## 3.3 Squid

There has been growing local interest in jigging for squid, with several recent reports noting increased numbers of squid eggs attached to lobster pots. Previous research indicates that good water clarity is important for effective squid jigging, which may limit opportunities in the Northeast. North Eastern IFCA has scheduled trawl surveys for squid this year.

For 2026/27, NIFCA plans to:

- Record the presence of squid eggs on pots during offshore crustacean surveys
- Maintain communication with fishermen to gather information on any successful squid jigging
- Liaise with the North Eastern IFCA to review the results of their trawl surveys

# 4. National Priorities

IFCAs play a role in ensuring the sustainable management of fisheries resources and the protection of the marine environment. In doing so, IFCAs have been tasked with contributing to the development of national priorities and supporting their development in key areas. NIFCA have focussed planned work under these priorities and aligned ongoing work in order to assist in the delivery of work directly related to and relevant for these national priorities. More details on each of the priorities is outlined below, information in Table 1 shows how individual workstreams align with national aims.

## 4.1 Marine Protected Areas

The UK Government is committed to the protection of the marine environment and has established a network of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs), IFCAs are at the forefront of delivering protection to MPAs and the wider environment in order to meet the targets set out in national policy and legislation. There are multiple forms of MPA (Marine Conservation Zones MCZs, Special Areas of Conservation SACs, and Special Protection Areas SPAs) designated under different legislation for which IFCAs monitor and manage fishing activity and its interaction with protected sites.

For MCZs, under the Marine and Coastal Access Act (MaCAA) IFCAs have a statutory duty to ensure the conservation objectives of MCZs are met and furthered. For SACs and SPAs, IFCAs are the Relevant Authority under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulation 2017. There are 10 MPAs within the NIFCA district (Table 2, Figure 1).

Table 2 Breakdown of Marine Protected Areas within Northumberland IFCA's district.

Designation	Site name
Special Area of Conservation (SAC)	Berwickshire and North Northumberland Coast SAC
	Tweed Estuary SAC
Special Protection Area (SPA)	Lindisfarne SPA
	Farne Islands SPA
	Coquet Island SPA
	Northumbria Coast SPA
	Northumberland Marine SPA
Marine Conservation Zones (MCZ)	Coquet to St Mary's MCZ
	Aln Estuary MCZ
	Berwick to St Mary's MCZ

The sites outlined in Table 1 are in addition to several Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs), Ramsar Sites, the Lindisfarne National Nature Reserve (LNNR) and the Northumberland Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB).

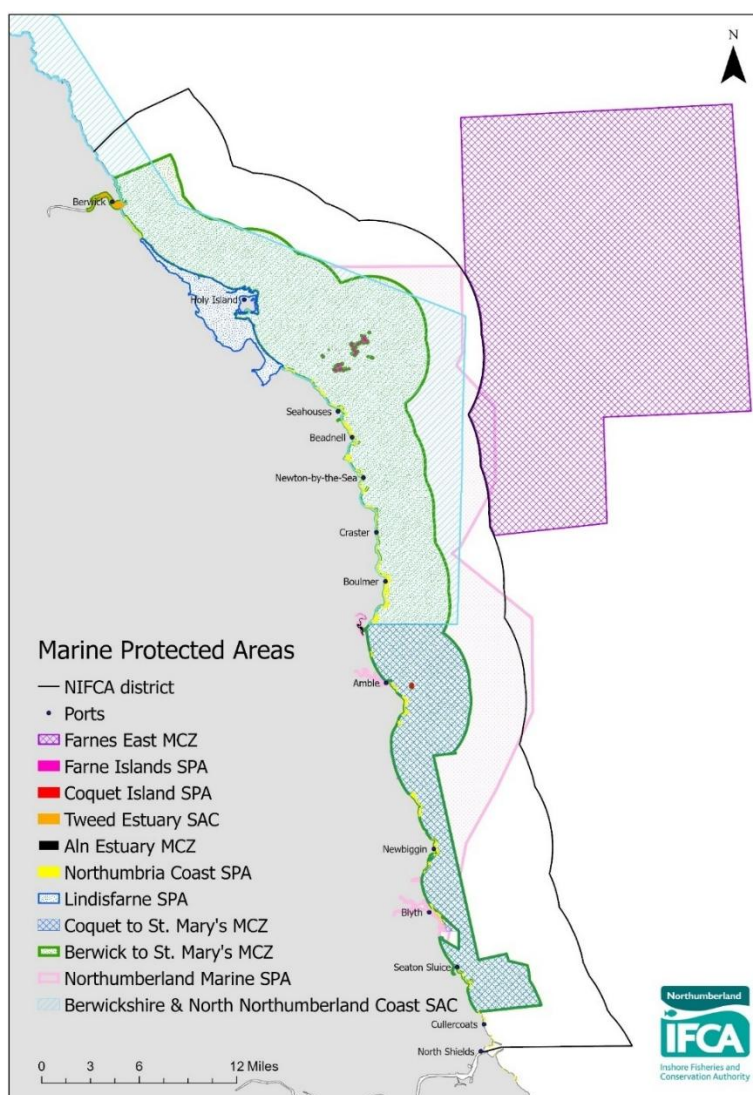


Figure 1 Map displaying Marine Protected Areas within and adjacent to the NIFCA district.

#### 4.1.1 Marine Protected Area Priorities

Following Defra's revised approach to fisheries management in MPAs, IFCA was tasked with carrying out assessments of fishing activity in SACs and SPAs within the area of their jurisdiction to bring them in line with other activities in the marine environment. Under section 154 of MaCAA, NIFCA must also decide whether fisheries management measures are required to further the conservation objectives of MCZ and document the process. If, through these assessment processes, conclusions cannot determine no significant impact on protected features or conservation objectives cannot be met or furthered, NIFCA must explore management options.

Under the Environment Act 2021<sup>5</sup> there is a statutory target to ensure that 70% of designated features in MPAs are in favourable condition by 2042, with the remainder in recovering condition. There is an interim target for 48% of designated features in MPAs to be in favourable condition, with the remainder in recovering condition by 31 January 2028.

#### 4.1.2 Key work areas related to MPA priority

To support this national priority and the targets set out in the Environment Act 2021, NIFCA has identified three key areas of focus for its work going forward.

1. Complete all outstanding MPA assessments

NIFCA has completed and agreed, in collaboration with Natural England, assessments for all commercial fishing activities with the exception of bait collection activities and fishing activity within Berwick to St Mary's MCZ. Assessments for Berwick to St Mary's MCZ remain outstanding as conservation advice for the site only became available in October 2024.

2. Continue the Monitoring and Control Plan process

NIFCA continues to implement the Monitoring and Control Plan process to assess fishing activity and its potential interactions with protected features after the conclusion of the MPA assessment (and addition of any management measures where necessary). Each plan includes pre-defined thresholds relating to fishing activity levels and environmental parameters. Where these thresholds are exceeded, a reassessment of the relevant fishery and any potentially impacted protected features is triggered. Monitoring and Control Plans have been developed by gear type and are designed to apply across all Marine Protected Areas. Plans for potting, trawling, netting, and hand gathering have been completed and are reviewed on an annual basis. Plans for bait collection are currently under development.

3. Implement the Coquet to St Mary's Trawl Management Plan and develop the Monitoring and Control Plan

In 2025, NIFCA developed an adaptive management plan for trawling in Coquet to St Mary's MCZ. The measures set out in the management plan have been rolled over to 2026. The plan continued from last year under the agreement with further evidence gathering work planned for this year (see Table 1). A

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<sup>5</sup> Environment Act, 2021 <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2021/30/introduction>

review of the current management plan is scheduled for this year and, if necessary, it will be updated for implementation in 2027. In addition, NIFCA have developed a dedicated Monitoring and Control Plan for this site to track both the spatial extent and intensity of trawling activity. Information to feed into this Monitoring and Control Plan will be collected throughout this year.

## 4.2 Fisheries Management Plans

The need for FMPs came from the Fisheries Act 2020<sup>6</sup> which provides the framework to manage our fisheries as an independent coastal state outside of the EU Common Fisheries Policy. The act requires the UK fisheries policy authorities (Defra, and the devolved administrations in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales) to publish fisheries management plans (FMPs) to help deliver our ambition for sustainable fisheries.

The plans are intended to be evidenced based action plans to deliver sustainable fisheries and will: describe aims for the fisheries and the actions needed to achieve the aims; set out policies to restore stocks to, or maintain them at, sustainable levels; allow for more flexible management that is tailored towards particular species, type of fishing, or region.

### 4.2.1 Key work areas related to the FMP priority

IFCAs have worked to support implementation of published FMPs and the development of other FMPs throughout last year. NIFCA will continue to support the development of further plans relevant to the fisheries in the NIFCA district.

To date, NIFCA have been most involved in the Crab and Lobster FMP given the importance of this fishery in the local area.

To support this national priority, NIFCA will:

1. Share data to support evidence gathering and contribute information required to answer evidence gaps

NIFCA have established workstreams which can assist in addressing the evidence gaps identified in the FMPs, they include crab and lobster biometric data collection, permit return analysis for lobster, crab and whelk. This information will be collected throughout the year and is available for use by relevant partners

2. Facilitate communication with local stakeholders and inclusion of local feedback in national priorities

Share information with key stakeholders and communicate any feedback from local industry to facilitate the 'co-management' goal of the FMP management measure development and the implementation of the 'short-term goals' for each plan. Specifically, feedback on the MCRS increase in lobster from locally industry to Defra.

3. Work collaboratively with ALBs and Defra

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<sup>6</sup> Fisheries Act, 2020 <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2020/22/contents/enacted>

Where required in FMP working groups and engagement/information sharing events.

## 4.3 Sustainable Development

Marine planning and marine licencing play a role in supporting sustainable development in English seas which are set to get busier into the future.

### 4.3.1 Marine Licencing and Planning

Marine licences are issued by the Marine Management Organisation (MMO) and applicants for a marine licence must go through a formal application process. IFCA's play a role in this process as statutory consultees. NIFCA reviews relevant licences and responds with information on impacts to local fisheries, commercial species, or the wider environment they are dependent on.

Marine planning and spatial prioritisation are important areas of work for the sustainable use of the marine area. The first iteration of marine plans in England are published and in operation with the second round in development. NIFCA will continue to engage in and assist this process.

### 4.3.2 Permitting and Consents

NIFCA issue scientific dispensations against our byelaws for any research work carried out in the district. Dispensations are only issued if work will not contravene any of our duties as listed in section 2.2.

### 4.3.3 Key work areas related to the Sustainable Development priority

To support this national priority, NIFCA will:

1. Marine Licencing

Respond to relevant marine licences and include information from the fishing industry, members and other key stakeholder where necessary and relevant. Continue to engage with the MMO Marine Licencing team to support developments in the marine licencing process.

2. Marine Planning

Continue to have regard for relevant marine plans and policies in key areas of our work such as byelaw making. Support the next iteration of marine plans and their development.

3. Consents

Review applications for scientific dispensations against NIFCA byelaws and grant where appropriate.

## 5. Partner Organisations and Working Groups

The Research and Environmental Projects (Section 3) outline the key workstreams that will be carried out by NIFCA this year. Partnership working is vital to ensure this work is carried out and disseminated effectively.

Key partner organisations for the NIFCA's research and environment team include:

- Northumberland County Council (funding authority)

- North Tyneside Council (funding authority)
- The Marine Management Organisation (MMO)
- Natural England
- The Environment Agency (EA)
- Newcastle University
- Heriot Watt University
- The Centre for Environment, Fisheries and Aquaculture Science (Cefas)
- Berwickshire and Northumberland Marine Nature Partnership
- MARINElife/North East Cetacean Project
- Northumberland Rivers Trust
- Wildlife NGOs including the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) and the Wildlife Trusts
- Blue Marine Foundation / Berwickshire Marine Reserve / St Abbs Marine Station

NIFCA benefits from collaborating with other relevant authorities on the management groups for the Berwickshire and Northumberland Marine Partnership.

The environmental team sits on a variety of focus and working groups relevant to NIFCA's work which involve key partners listed above (Table 3).

Table 3 Focus and working groups attended by environmental officers.

Group	Area	Other members	Frequency
IFCA Technical Advisory Group	National	IFCAs	Quarterly
ICES Working Group on Nephrops Surveys (WGNEPS)	International	International ICES members	Annually
Joint Working Arrangement	Northumberland	MMO; Natural England; Environment Agency	Annually
Berwickshire and Northumberland Marine Nature Partnership steering group	Northumberland	Natural England; MMO; Northumberland Wildlife Trust; Berwick Harbour Commission; Eyemouth Harbour Trust; Scottish Natural Heritage; Scottish Borders Council; Environment Agency	Quarterly
Berwickshire and Northumberland Marine Nature Partnership research group	Northumberland	Natural England; Environment Agency; Newcastle University; Berwickshire Marine Reserve; Scottish Natural Heritage	Ad-hoc
Lindisfarne Joint Advisory Committee	Lindisfarne	Natural England; Berwickshire and Northumberland Marine Nature Partnership; British Association for Shooting and Conservation; Royal Yachting Association; RSPB, Environment Agency	Biannual
IFCA and MMO Licensing Engagement	National	IFCAs; MMO	Quarterly
Mussel Bed Restoration Network	National	NEIFCA, Natural England; Natural Resources Wales, Northumberland County Council, Marine Conservation Society, Blue Marine Foundation, Universities (NCL, Durham, Southampton, UHI), Solway Firth Partnership, Tees River Trust, Groundworks, Yorkshire	Quarterly

		Wildlife Trust, Environment Agency, DAERA, St Abbs Marine Station, The Roslin Institute.	
Northumberland Rivers Catchment Partnership	Northumberland	NRCP; Northumberland Wildlife Trust; Environment Agency; Port of Blyth; Tyne Rivers Trust; Natural England; Northumberland Coast AONB; Berwickshire and Northumberland Marine Nature Partnership	Quarterly