Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authorities

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Southern IFCA District

- District stretches from Hampshire/Sussex border to Dorset/Devon border
  - Counties of **Hampshire, Dorset and Isle of Wight**
- Seaward limits 6 nautical miles from territorial baselines
IFCA Responsibilities

• The Marine and Coastal Access Act (2009) modernised inshore fisheries and environmental management in England

• SFCs were replaced by IFCAs on 1st April 2011

• IFCAs are responsible for the sustainable management of inshore sea fisheries resources
  – Increased fisheries to manage, including bait collection
IFCA Vision

“IFCAs will lead, champion and manage a sustainable marine environment and inshore fisheries, by successfully securing the right balance between social, environmental and economic benefits to ensure healthy seas, sustainable fisheries and a viable industry”
MPAs within the District

- 7 European Marine Sites (SAC and SPA)
- 2 Marine Conservation Zones
- 5 proposed Marine Conservation Zones
The Solent EMS

- Rich sheltered waters provide a diverse range of fisheries that can be exploited throughout the year
- Contains Special Protection Areas (SPAs), Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) and Ramsar Sites
  - Overlapping with a number of fishing activities
- Used widely for other commercial and recreational activities
Primary Solent Fisheries

- **Manila Clams**
  - Dredging
  - Southampton Water and Harbours
  - High value species
  - Minimum legal size = 35mm

- **American Hard Shell Clams, *Mercenaria mercenaria***
  - Dredging
  - Southampton Water and Harbours
  - Minimum legal size = 63mm

- **Oysters**
  - Dredging
  - Caught predominantly in the Solent and associated harbours
  - Fishing season runs from 1\textsuperscript{st} November – 1\textsuperscript{st} March
    - Restricted in 2013 and 2014
  - Minimum legal size = 70mm
• **Bait**  
  – Digging  
  – Caught all year round across the District

• **Whelks**  
  – Potting  
  – All year round activity  
  – Minimum legal size = 45mm

• **Fin fish**  
  – Bass, sole, mullet, bream, cod, whiting etc.  
  – Set nets, stern trawl, beam trawl, ring net, rod & line, long line  
  – Activity all year depending on individual seasons  
  – Minimum legal size depending on species  
  – Plaice and Skate/Ray Fisheries closed

• **Cuttlefish**  
  – Traps  
  – Activity late April to early June
Managing the Fisheries

- Range of options for fisheries management
  - Regulatory
  - Voluntary

- Byelaws are created by IFCAs to effectively manage inshore fishing and protect the environment

- All SIFCA byelaws are currently under review
  - Strategic review of important fisheries and priorities

- New byelaws are now being developed for management of European Marine Sites
  - Bottom Towed Gear Byelaw
  - Prohibition of gathering (sea fisheries resources) in seagrass beds byelaw
  - Poole Harbour Dredge Permit Byelaw

- Community/Stakeholder involvement key to development of byelaws
Enforcement

• Enforcement prioritised by **risk**
  – Likelihood of activity against impact
to stocks, environment or management/reputation

• High risk areas:
  – Poole Harbour
  – The Solent
  – Lyme Bay

• Patrons conducted by sea and land
  – Premises checks
  – Landings inspections
  – Closed areas
Managing Risks to EMS

• Two features in the SIFCA District identified as not compatible with certain fishing methods:
  – Seagrass
  – Reefs

• Management Developed:
  – Bottom Towed Gear Byelaw – *reefs and seagrass*
  – Prohibition on gathering (sea fisheries resources) in seagrass beds byelaw – *seagrass*

• Need for community engagement and partnership between organisations/authorities
Bottom Towed Gear Management

- Bottom towed fishing gear not compatible with Reef and Seagrass habitats
- Byelaw introduced = 25% of District closed to bottom towed fishing gear
- Aim to balancing fishing industry with conservation responsibilities
Solent Oyster Fishery

• Once the largest native oyster fishery in Europe
• Stocks are in decline
• Oyster season from 1\textsuperscript{st} November to 1\textsuperscript{st} March
• 2013
  – Wider Solent closed under ‘Temporary Closure of Shellfish Beds Byelaw’
  – Harbours open for 4 weeks
• 2014
  – Wider Solent closed
  – Harbours open for 2 weeks
Evidence Gathering

• Management should be well evidenced

• Solent Oyster Survey 2014
  – Using local fishing vessel
  – Work with Natural England and Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust
  – Contributing to annual stock surveys previously run by CEFAS
  – Low levels of small oysters and lack of spat
  – Reducing the likelihood of natural recovery
Bait Collection

• For the first time bait is subject to fisheries legislation
• SIFCA have been investigating bait collection in the District since April 2011
• Occurs across the District with a focus in Poole Harbour, Portsmouth Harbour and Southampton Water
• Both recreational and commercial collection occurs
• Collection for:
  – King Ragworm (*Alitta virens*)
  – Lugworm (*Arenicola marina*)
Legal Aspect of Bait Collection

• Digging for worms on the foreshore is a common law right.

• But this right to dig is subject to the following restrictions:
  – The right is ancillary to the public right to fish (a common law right).
  – The right can therefore only be exercised by a person who wishes to make use himself of the bait that has been dug.
  – The right does therefore not extend to digging for commercial purposes.

• Therefore a landowner can prevent digging for commercial purposes.
  – Collectors must ask for the landowners permission.
  – In areas of special protection the landowner must in turn ask permission of Natural England.
Evidence Gathering

• Evidence gathering data on extent and intensity of bait collection activity
  – Bait digging
  – Bait dragging

• PhD project work in Poole Harbour looking at:
  – Impacts of bait dragging on sediment
  – Quantification of effort of activity

• Development of **Bait Working Group** for Poole Harbour
  – Local harbour authority, council, Natural England, Wildlife Trust, stakeholders from recreational and commercial sectors

• Developed a **Memorandum of Agreement for Bait Digging in Poole Harbour**
  – Voluntary code with seasonal closures of key sensitive areas
  – Additional provisions on backfilling and adhering to local regulations

• Aim to investigate similar measures for Solent in 2015
Shellfish Dredging

- Shellfish dredging in the Solent occurs in two main forms:
  - Oyster dredging
  - Box dredging for clams

- More evidence required on impacts in combination with activity levels
  - Intertidal mud, estuarine bird communities

- Commercially and economically important sector overlapping with EMS habitats

- PhD project underway to assess impacts of harvesting of invertebrates
  - Extent of activities
  - Affects on bird populations
  - Affects on associated habitats
Future Work in Solent EMS

- Future focus on activities where more evidence is required to inform management
  - Identifying priorities through:
    - Activity levels
    - Impact on conservation features
    - Need for management
  - Tests of Likely Significant Effect and Appropriate Assessments = Habitats Regulations Assessment
  - Evidence gathering and survey work (where appropriate) to inform management
Thank You

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