



UK Inshore Fisheries Sustainability Project

'Navigating the Future'

A sustainable fisheries sector is essential for delivering the Government's vision of clean, healthy, safe, productive and biologically diverse oceans and seas. To achieve this bold aim Defra, in 2007, developed a long-term vision for sustainable fisheries 'Fisheries 2027'. This vision notes the importance of having "plentiful and sustainably harvested" stocks.

If we are to achieve this vision there is an urgent need to support inshore managers in developing management strategies that enable them to plan, take decisions and clearly demonstrate fisheries under their control are truly sustainable in respect to local exploitation.

'Navigating the Future' The UK's Inshore Fisheries Sustainability Pilot demonstrates an approach to the strategic assessment of coastal fisheries, encompassing a single inshore region of less one thousand square nautical miles; the Sussex Sea Fisheries District (Sussex Inshore Fisheries & Conservation District from Oct 2010). All significant fisheries, twenty six in total, were individually assessed against the Marine Stewardship Council's three principles of sustainability; stock status the environmental impact of the fisheries and the existing management regime.

The UK Pilot illustrates the value of a '*strategic fisheries audit*' by highlighting priority key areas for future activities including research and management activities. The initiative explores the challenge of strategic assessment for inshore fisheries where biological data is not comparable with those of commercial stocks traditionally managed through total allowable catches. The process has identified existing inshore fisheries which if submitted could readily attain MSC certification; the remaining fisheries have been prioritised in terms of additional work required to attain standards of sustainability associated with certification.

Clearly well managed inshore fisheries can support a certification standard thereby strengthening public recognition and support of locally sourced sustainable fish and shellfish products. The future role of certification for sustainable inshore fisheries has obvious potential given issues of local supplies, reduced food miles, lower carbon foot print and the environmental impacts of less industrialised fishing methods. Critically these opportunities can translate into improved market access for fishers and increase revenues and profitability for the sector.

In April 2011 the Inshore Fisheries & Conservation Authorities (IFCAs) came into existence replacing the existing Sea Fisheries Committees in England. The Marine & Coastal Access Act 2009 places clear duties on the IFCAs in respect to sustainable management of fisheries and marine conservation. IFCAs are obliged to identify their objectives in annual plans and also report on a four year cycle to the Secretary of State. Thus developing a template roadmap to sustainable management within a coastal region offers great value to IFCAs.

The potential for using strategic fisheries management plans to deliver more coherent and effective fisheries management has been widely discussed, to the extent that the 1996 UN Fish Stocks Agreement and the FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries clearly call for their development. The Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) also provides an explicit legal basis for developing fisheries management plans. Successful implementation of such a management plan will enable the IFCAs to:



- provide a strategic framework for management;
- move away from reactive management;
- plan any necessary stock assessments, management and practice changes in a structured, goal-orientated way.

Small-scale inshore fisheries constitute a unique sector that, despite scale enlargement and intensification in the fisheries sector throughout the second half of the 20th century, has been sustained throughout the UK. In England the vast majority of the fleet comprises of vessels below 12 metres working inshore. Landings from all inshore fisheries within six nautical mile limits (the current IFCA Districts) including intertidal gathering operations represent a significant proportion of the present English catch.

The inshore sector provides an exclusive product that continues to stand for quality and freshness and, with a strong tradition in fisheries; this sector provides an important source of labour and income and defines a profound part of the social and cultural landscape. But being sustainable is not enough; certification of fisheries and labelling of products that come from sustainable sources are ever more becoming a requisite for processors and retailers when sourcing product to demonstrate sustainability credentials. Increasingly, environmentally-minded consumers are seeking these assurances too. 'Net Benefits', the Prime Minister's Strategy Unit report on the UK fishing industry, prescribes that the '*Fishing industry should maintain and enhance its market opportunities by aiming to achieve Marine Stewardship Council (or equivalent certification) for all stocks of major interest to the UK by 2015*'.

Although the majority of UK inshore fisheries are being managed appropriately, and many are undoubtedly being harvested responsibly, it is not certain how many would currently reach the standards required to qualify for MSC certification. Other factors also restrict greater up-take of certification in this sector, including; the perceived high costs of certification (both fiscal and resource), the lack of understanding of how to begin the process, and the lack of co-ordination of fishers.

Against this backdrop, the Sussex SFC (now the Sussex IFCA), the Shellfish Association of Great Britain and the Marine Stewardship Council came together to explore what guidance can be given to progress the certification of well-managed fisheries, and the develop species and area specific fisheries management plans – through the **UK Inshore Fisheries Sustainability Project**, and the Sussex Pilot reported on here.

The present review of the Common Fisheries Policy; due to be implemented in 2012, recognises the importance of inshore fisheries and the need to take a new approach to their management. The Green Paper rightly identified the value of sustainable inshore fisheries and protection of vulnerable communities. Domestically, Defra has instigated the Sustainable Access to Inshore Fisheries (SAIF) Programme, intended to review inshore fisheries policy and meet future needs for the sector. In both cases this study can contribute and indicates how management of inshore fisheries can be developed.

The project funding reflected the wide support for the principle of sustainable fisheries. Monies were received from the global Sustainable Legacy Fund, the European Fisheries Fund and the major UK retailer the Cooperative. The Sussex Sea Fisheries Committee who led the work provided its fisheries team to support and manage the consultants Food Certification International and Nautilus who developed the three stage technical reports and the final summary document titled 'Navigating the Future'



INSHORE FISHERIES Sustainability Pilot

Whether involved in fisheries management, the industry or a consumer we hope you find value in the work, and we would welcome your thoughts on the report. We expect this pilot can act as a catalyst for the development of inshore fisheries management plans and promote the future delivery of sustainable inshore fisheries.



Tim Dapling B.Sc. M.Sc. MIFM
Chief Fisheries & Conservation Officer
Sussex Inshore Fisheries & Conservation Authority

To find out more about the project and its findings please visit

www.sussex-sfc.gov.uk/UKIFSP

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