

By: KEIFCA Chief Fishery Officer

To: Kent & Essex Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority
– 26 November 2021

Subject: Creating a vision statement and evaluation criteria to use
in the process of developing future cockle fishery
management

Classification Unrestricted

Summary: This paper outlines the proposed process relating to the creation of a vision statement and evaluation criteria which will be used to evaluate different options during the development of future cockle fishery management.

Recommendation: Members are asked to **AGREE** on:

1. the suggested process to create a vision statement and evaluation criteria

Members are asked to **DISCUSS** and **COMMENT** on:

2. the wording of a possible vision statement;
3. the structure and wording of the proposed evaluation criteria.

Background

A vital component in the development of future cockle management is capturing a clear idea or vision of what we want the long-term future of the cockle fisheries in the district to look like. It is important to start this process as early as possible as developing a vision can not only help the Authority and the wider community focus on future challenges and ambitions but also provide a starting point to help weigh up different management options. The vision statement aims to capture and briefly summarise what the cockle fishery might look like in the future, including any key concepts or principles that would underpin how the fishery should be managed. If we don't know where we are going, how can we get there?

The process for developing a vision

Although it sounds simple, agreeing a 2 or 3 sentence meaningful vision statement which neatly sums up the key ideas and principles of the Authority, whilst also reflecting the values and ambitions of fishers and the wider community, is tricky. Our plan is to develop and then refine the vision over two meetings with a draft vision then being included in Consultation 1 for wider stakeholder feedback before a final version is agreed at the June 2022 Special Authority meeting.

- What would the fishery look like in 30 years' time in 2054?
- How would you describe the 'perfect' cockle fishery?
- How might the fishery change over time?
- What are the key challenges to the fishery in the next 30 years?

Writing a vision – linking into legal duties and government guidance

IFCA duties

The starting point for any vision statement needs to consider and reflect the underpinning legislation of the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009, which creates IFCA's. Section 153 of the Act sets out KEIFCA's duty to manage the exploitation of the cockle fisheries in a sustainable way, whilst seeking to balance the social and economic benefits of exploitation with the need to protect the marine environment. Section 153(d) also highlights the duty of the IFCA to seek to balance the different needs of persons engaged in the exploitation of the cockle fishery.

153 Management of inshore fisheries

- (1) The authority for an IFC district must manage the exploitation of sea fisheries resources in that district.
- (2) In performing its duty under subsection (1), the authority for an IFC district must—
- (a) seek to ensure that the exploitation of sea fisheries resources is carried out in a sustainable way,
 - (b) seek to balance the social and economic benefits of exploiting the sea fisheries resources of the district with the need to protect the marine environment from, or promote its recovery from, the effects of such exploitation,
 - (c) take any other steps which in the authority's opinion are necessary or expedient for the purpose of making a contribution to the achievement of sustainable development, and
 - (d) seek to balance the different needs of persons engaged in the exploitation of sea fisheries resources in the district.

The IFCA vision statement also provides a useful context and set of ideas that can help frame the vision statement

"Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authorities 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"

Useful guidance

Looking further afield, Scotland's Fisheries Management Strategy 2020-2030 document includes a useful structure for framing the strategic context and outcomes of its fisheries (Appendix 1). Probably the most relevant regional guidance to consider, are the objectives of the South East Marine plan (the marine plan that covers over 90% of the KEIFCA district). Any future cockle management will need to operate within this planning framework and the three headline objectives of, 'achieving a sustainable marine economy', 'ensuring a strong, healthy and just society' and 'living within environmental limits' closely echo the IFCA vision statement (Appendix 2). At a local level within KEIFCA, in 2014, the Authority developed and agreed its own sustainability statement and principles of sustainability, which help highlight key issues within a local context (Appendix 3).

Using the feedback from the Listening Phase

There were a wide range of responses to the question of future management priorities in the cockle fisheries. However, a number of priorities seemed to be repeatedly expressed in the replies including; sustainability, maintaining a well-run fishery, protecting the environment, consideration of the economic impact to individual fishers and the wider coastal community and the opportunity to access cockle stocks.

S2:2 What do you think the priorities for the management of the KEIFCA District cockle fisheries should be between now and 2054?

- Sustainability, the key word for the survival of the commercial fishing industry, this gives industry the incentive to work with best practice, it protects the environment and hopefully proves to those in doubt that commercial inshore fishing is not the end of the World. Protecting the MSC status of the fishery by not changing something that is proven. Protect the fishing industry as an endangered species.
- Not to allow the sale of licenses to large processors so that they can continue to control the price of cockles
- KEIFCA need to reduce individual daily quota to be shared out amongst extra boats which in turn has only the same environmental impact but also allows a greater number of people to be employed and support many more families.
- It should be available to local fishermen if we are to rebuild coastal communities on a even

basis

- To make sure the stocks are not over exploited.
- The fishery should be opened up to local interests and managed so a sustainable income can be gained to rebuild our local fleets
- Conservation and running the cockle fisheries
- to maintain good cockle stocks, protect the environment and look after the commercial fishermen
- sustainability and environmental impact. I think KEIFCA have done a fantastic job to date of managing this fishery. It is a fishery that is hard to predict, and with the current economic and covid situation, needs to be carefully looked after. We do not know what the future holds, however locally the industry employs a lot of people, and is fragile.
- Sustainable fishery
- To maintain a sustainable fishery which provides jobs for fishermen and the processors, and to keep it as an MSC accredited fishery. *X 2 responses*
- To keep the sustainability of the cockle beds within the TECFO and to support the local economy.
- Sustainability of the cockle fishery but without negative impacts to the marine environment and other important fisheries
- The main priority must be to maintain a sustainable fishery. This will ensure jobs for the fisherman and shore staff.
- the fishery needs to be more of a level playing field for all boats working in the district. Also to continue to be well managed
- To keep a healthy fishery and also make it viable for fishermen to make a decent living.
- Stick to how you run it now. It seems to work very well for all involved
- The priorities should be rebuilding communities, whereby the fishing industry is seen as a beneficial place to work, what you put in you get out. People are not going to want to work hard all year round for peanuts, they need to have access to earn proper money for the time and effort they put in, because if this does not happen, it will not encourage people to come and work in the fishing industry. Therefore younger fishermen need to be prioritised because they will be the ones who will represent the numbers in the industry in years to come and will help rebuild the industry. The cockle industry has potential to deliver a good income to local fishermen within this region, but the quota needs to be distributed in a careful way, whereby it's not sold off, it's used to make a living, and if they do not use it, they should have it taken off them.
- Priorities should be sustainability and protection of the cockle grounds, whilst supporting local communities which have been dependent on the fishery
- Protection against over fishing
- Sustainability is key, and this is something the current system has a proven track record with.
- Having attained MSC status, it is imperative to maintain current levels of management of the fishery to sustain the current employment within the industry and to encourage future investment levels.

- I feel that keifca should prioritise in any new management, a system that gives stability and longevity and a system that allows fisher stakeholders who commit regularly and financially to the thames cockle fisheries an opportunity of fishing the tecfo area via any new licences/permits that may be issued in a new system. *X 4 responses*
- Additional opportunities outside of suction dredging and the present TECFO
- I think the priorities should be to work out a mechanism whereby the licences can be utilised in such a way that new blood can get into the industry and to help the wider industry to develop other fisheries within the area
- The quota system, so the grounds are not overfished, leaving stock for the year after
- To keep a sustainable fishery and support the local economy
- Recognise the fishery works but open it up to more people ie let other people have a chance
- To make it a fair opportunity. Closed fishery when everyone is struggling (apart from cockle boats) to survive
- The priority should be to maintain a healthy fishery as regards for quota management it should always be decided after sampling how much quota should be caught and where to maintain the cockle fishery
- to keep a well regulated fishery with more equal opportunities for a greater number of fishermen in the Thames area
- The priorities should be to open up to smaller boats allowing our business to grow
- To keep and protect the fishery from overfishing, to manage a sustainable amount of boats and continue as they have done for the past 30 Years. Unlike other fisheries such as in Boston and Kings Lynn were the fisheries have allowed as many as 65 boats to fish and destroy the fishery.
- To ensure the sustainability of the cockle beds within the district and to continue supporting the local economy
- Sustainability. Current system has proven to be successful in order to keep the cockle stocks at a sustainable level since the implementation of the Order. 2. MSC. System has to take into account that the current system with limited licences has achieved a MSC accreditation. Keeping that accreditation is crucial to guarantee the interest of the product in the international market. 3. Local Economy. 4. Carbon Footprint. Local vessels fishing a daily quota that minimizes the ratio (boat fuel emissions)/(kg fished daily) and the ration (haulage fuel emissions)/(kg fished daily). Current daily quota has proven to be efficient in this regard *x 2 responses*
- To maintain and continue what is time proven with the current TECFO
- To look after the environment and help sustain the fisheries

Initial vision ideas

Thriving local long-term sustainable cockle industry, that harvests cockles in an environmentally responsible manner balancing the competing demands of the present, without compromising the future ecosystem and coastal community needs.

KEIFCA will strive to successfully secure the right balance between social, environmental and economic benefits of the KEIFCA cockle fisheries with the aim of enabling a long-term sustainable cockle industry that supports our local coastal communities.

KEIFCA will strive to sustainably manage the cockle fisheries and wider ecosystem in KEIFCA district and support a viable cockle industry, recognising its important long-term contribution to coastal communities and providing skilled employment.

Developing evaluation criteria

The evaluation criteria provide a more detailed set of statements that outline the key aspects of running successful sustainable cockle fisheries. The criteria can be used to make a framework that can help evaluate future management options and link options to the vision statement. There are a number of different starting points to this process but coupling the criteria directly to some of the key concepts in the 153 IFCA duties and the IFCA vision statement will mean there would be a clear connection from our legislative responsibilities to how we consider each proposed option. Feedback from the Listening Phase highlighted a number of consistent factors people felt strongly should be considered when evaluating options.

S3B2. Do you think KEIFCA should develop underpinning objectives or criteria for the management of the cockle fisheries in the district to help direct future fisheries management? If you do, what do you think they should be?

- Regular meetings with IFCA and industry.
- Yes, limit the annual tonnage of cockles caught to make the fishery more sustainable for extra boats.
- Help fishermen be helpful to fishermen and be instrumental in helping to bring in young or new fishermen
- full-time fishermen that are skilled
- I think that this should be talked about once a decisions has been made about the TECFO.
- yes
- We believe that the current objectives and criteria are suitable for the future fishery. X 2 responses
- The CFFPB needs to support itself as a regular fishery.
- Maintainance of the stock for future fishing exploitation. Augmentation of future volumes

where possible whilst minimising the impact on the marine environment and other fisheries

- It should be an objective to regulate the number of vessels allowed to work in the area. To maintain a sustainable fishery and to protect the established industry by maximising catches.
- Open the fishery up to local fishermen who have seen other methods such as bass fishing removed without compensation
- Annual tonnage restricted slightly to help stocks replenish for future years to come.
- Current unpinning objectives and criteria are more than sufficient and have added to the success of this fishery.
- Objectives should be to protect the marine environment and to reassure current industry that the fishery is on a safe trajectory, as this is the only way to guarantee future investment & development. Owners with investment in the industry must not feel as though the fishery will regularly drop to a low number of landings, as was the case in 2016, as seasons such as this take years to financially recover from.
- no
- Criteria should be based on Track Record and continued financial commitment to the Thames cockle fisheries. *X 4 responses*
- Yes TAC
- No, as 30 years is a long time and no one can foretell where it will be in 30 years time
- The CFFPB need to support itself as a regular fishery with limiting the quota and size of vessels
- More opportunities for young fishermen to learn. More licences more jobs. Ability to fish for other shellfish, inside Regulated area
- To consider the environment if it is healthy stock. Having a ground that is close to me which would save on fuel
- The CFFPB fishery needs to be able to support itself as a regular fishery But the current regulated area doesn't need any changes *x 4 responses*
- The underpinning objectives as they are now are proven to work within the Thames fishery.

Initial ideas for an evaluation criteria framework

The framework below draws a lot from the feedback of the Listening Phase and tries to break down some of the key issues identified in the questionnaires, letters and oral evidence into its constituent components. The evaluation framework also reflects core IFCA duties and the responsibilities of the IFCA in developing management.

The framework gives a structure and asks a consistent set of questions about each management option. It is entirely possible that there might be some criteria (e.g. a simple framework) that might be quite hard for any option to meet or there might be criteria that a large range of different options would

meet (setting TAC within stock limits), the important thing is for the Authority to consistently and systematically evaluate each option. There could also be some criteria that are less important or harder to evaluate at the beginning of the process (is the option straightforward to enforce) while there are other criteria that are vital at the start of the process but become less important once decisions about options have been made (simplicity of framework).

The following questions or criteria could be asked of each potential option and could help evaluate different options.

Creating a well-managed fishery

- Does the option provide a simple framework that is easy for fishers, Authority members and other stakeholders to understand and work within?
- Will the option be easy and cost-efficient to administer, and not create too much paperwork for applicants to fill in?
- Will the option help create clear rules and regulations and be straightforward for KEIFCA officers to enforce and fishers to comply with?

Creating an environmentally responsible fishery

- Does the option help ensure the cockle stock population is fished within clear limits that take into account stock assessments and breeding stock?
- Does the option help assess and monitor the impact of the fishery on the seabed, and strive to make the impact as small as possible?
- Does the option help consider the impact of the cockle fishery management on the wider ecosystem (including carbon footprint) and support internationally recognised accreditation systems (Marine Stewardship Accreditation).

Helping support a prosperous and resilient local coastal economy

- Does the option provide a framework that will help sustain a viable long-term cockle industry in the KEIFCA district?
- Will the option help support local skilled employment?
- Will the option help assist long-term investment and growth in the local economy, supporting local shore side infrastructure and supply chains?
- Will the option help to 'add value' to the cockles that are caught in the cockle fishery?

To strengthen and support our dynamic local coastal community

- Does the option provide fair opportunities for individuals and businesses, and help support young or new fishers?
- Does the option help encourage businesses to invest in a safe and skilled workforce?
- Does the option help support the heritage and culture of the cockle fishery, including supporting local tourism associated with the Thames cockle fishery?

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OVERARCHING PRINCIPLE OF SUSTAINABILITY

Protect our natural marine environment, based on an ecosystem approach

Maximise opportunity and long term sustainable economic growth for the rural economy

Secure the future of our fishing industry for future generations

ENVIRONMENTAL OUTCOMES

Our fisheries are managed in a way that protects biological diversity and which ensures that marine ecosystems continue to provide economic, environmental, social and wider benefits based on best available scientific advice.

We fish within limits based on the best available scientific advice, using the precautionary principle, and aligned with the delivery of fishing at Maximum Sustainable Yield (MSY).

ECONOMIC OUTCOMES

We have productive and resilient fisheries and we seek to optimise inclusive economic growth.

We provide equality of opportunity for fishing opportunities, with support for local jobs, new entrants and small family owned businesses to grow and contribute to the long term economic growth of the Scottish fishing industry.

We support fishing and onshore industries to grow sustainably, and be internationally competitive, through building and maintaining access to markets.

We maximise the benefit of fishing to the local and national economy, with strong links between the marine and onshore sectors.

We have quality jobs which are underpinned by our Fair Work principles.

SOCIAL OUTCOMES

We recognise the value of fishing for our rural coastal communities in supporting local jobs and ways of life, also respecting diversity and equality.

We recognise and value the contribution made by migrants.

We protect and encourage the fishing industry to grow in a sustainable manner, and for the wider benefits that flow from fishing to be realised in these communities wherever possible.

We recognise and promote the heritage and culture of our fishing communities.

Appendix 2 - Objectives of the South East Marine Plan

Achieving a sustainable marine economy

- 1) Infrastructure is in place to support and promote safe, profitable, and efficient marine businesses.
- 2) The marine environment and its resources are used to maximise sustainable activity, prosperity, and opportunities for all, now and in the future
- 3) Marine businesses are taking long-term strategic decisions and managing risks effectively. They are competitive and operating efficiently.
- 4) Marine businesses are acting in a way which respects environmental limits and is socially responsible. This is rewarded in the marketplace.

Ensuring a strong, healthy and just society

- 5) People appreciate the diversity of the marine environment, its seascapes, its natural and cultural heritage and its resources and can act responsibly.
- 6) The use of the marine environment is benefiting society as a whole, contributing to resilient and cohesive communities that can adapt to coastal erosion and flood risk, as well as contributing to physical and mental wellbeing.
- 7) The coast, seas, oceans and their resources are safe to use.
- 8) The marine environment plays an important role in mitigating climate change.
- 9) There is equitable access for those who want to use and enjoy the coast, seas and their wide range of resources and assets and recognition that for some island and peripheral communities the sea plays a significant role in their community.
- 10) Use of the marine environment will recognise, and integrate with, defence priorities, including the strengthening of international peace and stability and the defence of the United Kingdom and its interests.

Living within environmental limits

- 11 Biodiversity is protected, conserved and, where appropriate, recovered, and loss has been halted.
- 12 Healthy marine and coastal habitats occur across their natural range and are able to support strong, biodiverse biological communities and the functioning of healthy, resilient and adaptable marine ecosystems.
- 13 Our oceans support viable populations of representative, rare, vulnerable, and valued species.

Appendix 3 - KEIFCA sustainability wording

KEIFCA sustainability statement

Maximising environmental and economic potential within the marine ecosystem to enable the optimum exploitation of sea fisheries resources, with consideration to balancing the competing demands of the present without compromising the future coastal community and ecosystem needs.

KEIFCAs principles of sustainability

- KEIFCA recognises its responsibility to protect local and regional fish stocks and to develop management measures that reduce overfishing of these stocks. KEIFCA also recognises its wider responsibility to work in partnership with others to promote the sustainable exploitation of trans-boundary stocks that have significant parts of their lifecycle outside the KEIFCA district.
- KEIFCA will consider the impact that proposed management measures will have on the functioning and health of the whole ecosystem and recognises the role the wider ecosystem plays in supporting sustainable fisheries. KEIFCA will promote management measures that will help maintain or if needed recover the key ecosystem functions.
- KEIFCA will try to encourage responsible, economically viable fishing practises.
- The development of management will be fair and seek to balance different needs and principles. In developing management options the best available information as well as traditional knowledge will be used to help create where possible adaptive solutions that respond to changes.
- KEIFCA will promote clear and open communication with stakeholders and will endeavour to fully engage with our local communities and recognise their needs and responsibilities when considering fisheries management measures.
- KEIFCA regards the right to fish also brings with it a social responsibility to undertake this activity in a responsible manner that complies with the law and the spirit of environmental stewardship.