



# Institute of Fisheries Management

## Strategic Plan 2020 – 2025

Revised November 2023



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## Introduction

Formed in 1969, the Institute of Fisheries Management is now **over 50** years old. It has adapted with the times to the needs of members and those with an interest in fish and fisheries, changes in society, the make-up and need of the fisheries sector and the climate and biodiversity emergencies.

The Institute has developed since the last strategic plan in 2010 and we now:

- employ four staff, enabling us to deliver more services and with greater professionalism
- provide a much greater training portfolio
- provide at least one specialist as well as annual conference each year
- have changed our governance structure to deliver with greater focus and accountability

We now look forward to the next five years and this document outlines a Strategic Plan for that period, having been approved by the IFM's Board of Trustees.



The strategy and its underlying plans will be reviewed according to unforeseen events in a rapidly changing world. Current events that form the backdrop to this strategy are:

- **The Cost of Living Crisis.** Individual and businesses have become much more conscious of gaining value for money after World events in 2022 and since have pushed up world commodity prices and inflation. IFM will have to respond to this (1) in managing its own costs and (2) providing good value to its members and customers and (3) planning for a potential reduction in income.
- **Climate Change,** the biggest issue facing humanity. As an environmental organisation we should be amongst those leading humanity's response to this crisis. IFM will play its role in supporting government policy to get its own business to Net Zero carbon emissions by 2025. We will also develop advice and guidance to help the fisheries management sector to do likewise.
- **Leaving the EU and creating new trade deals.** We will consider the implications for fish and fisheries management. Key areas to cover will be preventing the erosion of environmental standards, disease control, the import of invasive species, to maintain and enhance protected species and to improve the Common Fisheries Policy.
- **The Green Recovery and Green New Deal.** We will consider what, if any, role IFM could play in this to support the next generation of fisheries management practitioners. An obvious area might be in helping to train more employees/volunteers in the Rivers Trust movement.
- **Changes in the fisheries management sector.** The past 20 years has seen a gradual reduction in employment opportunities for fisheries management professionals. This has had an impact on the numbers seeking professional membership and thence the viability of IFM. We will respond to these challenges by seeking further markets, providing better services and influencing employers.

## Institute aims

These are the aims and objectives for the Institute:

### Our objects

**To promote for the public benefit, the advancement of the science and practice of sustainable fisheries and aquatic ecosystem protection, conservation and management, by:**

- **advancement of education, training, study and research about fisheries and aquatic ecosystem management,**
- **promotion of high standards and best practices throughout the fisheries management profession.**

### Our mission

**To support and promote sustainable fisheries management for the benefit of our members, fisheries, wildlife and society.**

### Our strapline

**Dedicated to professional and sustainable fisheries management.**

### Our vision for 2020 - 2025

Over this period, our key aim is to grow and diversify our membership. Whilst we remain the professional institute for fisheries management, we believe that we have something to offer to all those who have an interest in fish and their sustainable management whatever their background.

We will register as a company and use this new status to further improve our governance and business processes.

Our prudent past financial management has enabled us to survive the Covid-19 crisis and we continue to have substantial financial reserves.

It is our ambition over this period to invest some of these funds to the further improvement and expansion of the services and benefits we offer to members and society and to increase our profile and influence as the key body providing opinion, advice and training on professional and sustainable fisheries management.



## Our five year strategic outcomes

### By December 2025 we aim to be:

1. The membership body of choice for all those with an interest in fish and fisheries management, with 50% more members and engaging with a greater number and wider range of fisheries practitioners.
2. A Limited Company, with an effective and business-like governance and structure.
3. The major provider of training, education and technical services relating to fish and fisheries management.
4. An effective influencer of Government and their agencies with respect to policies and legislation to support and promote sustainable fisheries management and protection of the aquatic environment.
5. Aiming to become Net Zero by 2030.



## Objectives

The following objectives, in each of the IFM business areas, are designed to support the strategic outcomes for the next five years. These are the 'what' we want to achieve. The action plans and annual business plans will set out how and when these will be delivered.

### Membership

Although the Institute has increased the number and improved the quality of its services, membership has dropped by 30% over the last five years, from about 750 to 500. In the modern world, being a member of an organisation is becoming less attractive to people. Also, the level of employment specifically in fisheries management has dropped.

Coincident with this, the proportion of our income has shifted significantly such that most now comes from non-members being willing to pay for services.

Whilst we acknowledge this change, IFM is still, at its heart, a membership organisation, so a key part of this strategic plan will be to focus on attracting and retaining members.



To better understand our current and potential membership base, we recently conducted a survey of members, which included current and former members together with non-members.

The results of the survey have been included in shaping this strategic plan.

As we are a membership organisation – the professional body to represent all those with an interest in fish and fisheries management – we want to be seen as the membership body of choice for those people.

We want to appeal to a wider diversity of people, whether they are employed in fisheries work or have an interest in fisheries. We want to appeal to fisheries professionals, angling clubs, those occasionally working on fisheries and associated environmental issues, the interested individual, universities and colleges and across the spectrums of freshwater and marine fisheries.

We attract new members each year through training, our conferences and workshops. However, we lose more members each year than we gain and our attention must be as much on retention as it is on recruitment.

So, all of our activities will focus on making continuous improvements to all services and the offer to members, such that more people and organisations wish to become and remain a member of IFM.

As membership is central to the Institute and is arguably *the* measure of how well we deliver all of our services, we have set a high-level target, that is based on membership. That is to:

**Increase membership by 8.5% per year over next five years, from 500 to 750, an increase of 50%.**

This will be our focus, such that all activities in our strategy and business plans will be aimed on achieving this target by December 2025, and that the services and offer to members will mean that more people and organisations will wish to become and remain a member of the IFM.

There will be approaches and targets focused for each of the five countries of Ireland and the United Kingdom.

<b>Membership</b>	
<b>Objectives</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Develop a Membership Action Plan as a priority, to attract and retain members.</li> <li>2. Services to all IFM customers will be continuously improved.</li> <li>3. The offer to members will be improved and made clear.</li> </ol>
<b>Targets / Measures</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Implement and continuously improve the Membership Action Plan to include measures for each recruitment and retention</li> <li>2. Membership to increase by 8.5% per year</li> <li>3. Membership to increase from 500 to 750 by December 2025</li> <li>4. Membership and governance structures are more diverse and reflective of gender, ethnicity and age of those with an interest in fish or fisheries management</li> <li>5. Streamline membership categories</li> <li>6. Make membership renewal as easy as possible</li> <li>7. Adjust approaches and targets relevant to each country</li> </ol>

## Charitable status

The Institute was unsuccessful in its application to become a charity in 2022. After careful review, the current view, ratified at the AGM in October 2023, is to not proceed towards charitable status at this time.

The IFM will keep the implications and benefits of becoming a charity under review so that the option will remain open in the future.

Preparation to become a charity has made significant improvements to the Institute’s governance. For example, the creation of a Board of Trustees to oversee the work of an Executive Team, and with an Advisory Council; the improved documentation of policies and procedures.

<b>Charitable status</b>	
<b>Objective</b>	The Institute to continue to review the option to become a charity
<b>Targets / Measures</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. IFM to achieve charitable status by June 2021</li> <li>2. Governance structure to be reviewed and changed by June 2021</li> <li>3. Keep the option under review and present any proposals for change at a General Meeting for decision</li> </ol>

## Training, education and professional status

Training is a major strength and success for the Institute. Our suite of training courses, workshops and conferences are continually expanding and are highly valued and respected, and now provide the majority of the IFM’s income and business. We are now the biggest provider of fisheries related training in terms of numbers of delegates in the UK and Ireland.



Specific employers are coming to us to develop and deliver courses – from the Environment Agency to Natural England, Rivers Trusts and Water Companies, IFCAs and Marine Management Organisation.

We will build on this success and continue developing and providing training and educational services to meet market demand.

To do this, we have a dedicated team of willing people to develop training materials and deliver courses. Given the importance of this to our business, we (1) have now employed a full time Training Co-ordinator and (2) aim to remunerate authors and trainers at a more professional rate. This is something that our investment fund could initially finance with the expectation that it would pay for itself within a foreseeable term.

Our member survey said that help with mentoring and career progression is a service that would be appreciated. We will respond to that in our training and education portfolio.

We will work with employers and the Society for the Environment with the aim to improve employer recognition of the professional status of fisheries managers and the wider Chartered Environmentalist (C.Env.) award, supported by Continuing Professional Development (CPD).

Training, education and professional status	
<b>Objectives</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Expand our training and education portfolio</li> <li>2. Increase the awareness of professional status and employer recognition</li> </ol>
<b>Targets / Measures</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Develop new courses, and delivery methods, according to market demand, ensuring applicability to each of five countries of the UK and Ireland</li> <li>2. Remunerate training staff at more professional rates, dependent on a business case</li> <li>3. Aim to employ a full time Training Officer dependent on a business case</li> <li>4. Develop a mentoring and career progression service and buddy system, including reviewing our relationship with Internships, Apprenticeships and Further and Higher Education students.</li> <li>5. Develop and implement a strategy to engage and influence employers to recognise fisheries and environmental professionalism, with the aim of enhanced recognition for Chartered Environmentalist, supported by Continuing Professional Development. This should include a competency framework for fisheries professionals, starting with Fisheries Monitoring Accreditation Scheme by 2022.</li> <li>6. Develop and provide a repository resource of technical and legislative material</li> <li>7. Consider if and how to develop materials for less academic audiences, including children</li> </ol>

## Advocacy, influencing and representing fisheries professionals

The IFM aims to be seen as the respected and authoritative voice for fish and fisheries management and those employed in the sector, and to be able to influence legislation and policies for the better protection and enhancement of fisheries and the environment.

We are members of the Environmental Policy Forum (EPF), and also the Wildlife and Countryside Link (WCL), where we are one of 60 conservation organisations to use their strong joint voices for the protection of nature in England.

Whilst we lead on fisheries matters in this, and although we are stronger in collaboration, the Institute has not previously been seen frequently enough or loudly enough to have an individual voice on many important matters affecting the environment and even fisheries.

Since 2022 we have started to improve this. We have started and will continue to improve the development of well prepared, authoritative position statements, that are well communicated, to influence governments and agencies to develop policy and legislation that will protect and enhance fish, fisheries and the aquatic environment, and to increase the standing and respect for the Institute in the fish and fisheries management sector.

We will become more responsive, proactive and professional in preparing position statements on fisheries and aquatic environmental matters. Positions will be communicated to those they are targeted at and followed up.



To do this we are reviewing the aims, structure and process by which we develop our positions. We will develop a forward look and secure support from a pool of identified technical experts.

We will complete the creation of a small policy forum that will network and identify what topics and legislation are relevant and that we will get involved in – and with whom best to partner if necessary, for example the Fisheries Society of the British Isles, Fisheries Management Scotland.

We will consider developing a part time position to be able to be dedicated to leading this important part of our business and remuneration for engaging appropriate experts to develop position papers. We will also see if it is possible to appoint a Board member with such expertise.

We will consider how we can best influence, and so will develop an influencing strategy. For example, we will identify people and positions with fisheries roles in governments that we should aim to influence and

e.g. invite them to our conferences. In the Welsh Government there are species leads – some for fish such as salmon and eels. We will consider the use of celebrities or other ambassadors for fish and fisheries, though these should be selected and used carefully.

We will review how we re-focus some of our activities. For example, we might revitalise branches and specialist sections by identifying the top 4 - 6 topics to focus on in a year, and to possibly allocate funds to develop via steering groups and partnerships, specialist sections and branches.

## Advocacy, influencing and representing fisheries professionals

<b>Objectives</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Influence governments to realise a better future for fisheries.</li> <li>2. Be more responsive, proactive and professional in preparing position statements on fisheries and environmental matters</li> </ol>
<b>Targets / Measures</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Review the process and structure for developing position statements.</li> <li>2. Create a policy forum, forward look and consider employing a part-time officer to lead this.</li> <li>3. Seek to ensure world-leading environmental standards, disease control, prevent of the import of invasive species and the protection of species and habitats</li> <li>4. Promote sustainable fisheries exploitation and the conservation of species and habitats including the designation of more protected areas</li> <li>5. Develop and expand our pool of technical experts</li> <li>6. Develop and implement an Influencing Strategy</li> <li>7. Review how to refocus and revitalize some parts of our business to connect position statements more closely with specialist sections and branches; review, find capacity decide priorities and implement.</li> <li>8. Consider employment of a part-time Policy Director</li> <li>9. Publicise our position statements more effectively: Tidy up our policies web-page; ensure new statements are supported with a news item and social media</li> <li>10. Seek a Board member with policy expertise</li> </ol>



## Governance

Becoming a Company Limited by Guarantee will be a further stimulus to change our structure and governance to run our organisation in a more business-like and professional way – for example to become more nimble with decision making and producing topical position statements.

We will use all officers with a governance role, to have clear responsibilities for each of the objectives in this strategy. We will review how we can become more effective and efficient. For example, to embrace new technologies; be more business-like in our operations and governance; consider more professional remuneration for officer roles, for example, Marketing, Communications and Policy, according to performance. We will look to other professional institutes for ideas, good practice and experience.

We will ensure that we have good connections with and representation of each of the five countries of Ireland and the United Kingdom as we run our business, with a leadership team in each.



We will identify and appoint people, whether members or externally, who have expertise that can advise the Institute and its officers and enable succession planning and the IFM's future sustainability.

### Governance

<b>Objective</b>	The Institute to develop a new and more business-like governance and culture
<b>Targets / Measures</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Officer roles to be reviewed, clarified made more accountable and changed by September 2021</li> <li>2. Officers to be competent, reflect the diversity of the sector, motivated and rewarded, providing the best possible services to the Institute</li> <li>3. Closer collaborations and partnerships to be continuously considered.</li> <li>4. Conduct a review of how to be more effective and efficient for implementation by September 2021.</li> <li>5. Good practice from other organisations and greater use of technology (e.g. functionality in our website; video-conferencing) to be constantly reviewed.</li> <li>6. Increase capacity and capability to provide increased and more responsive services,</li> <li>7. Communicate and publicise better (more quickly, clearly, with more impact)</li> <li>8. Ensure decision making is streamlined, nimble and clear</li> <li>9. Ensure we have good connections with and representation of each of the five countries of the UK and Ireland; have a leadership team in each</li> <li>10. Identify and appoint people who (1) have expertise that can advise the Institute and its officers (2) enable succession planning and future sustainability (3) offered their services in the recent member survey and (4) invigorate membership of our governance for the more dynamic running of our business</li> <li>11. Register as a Company Limited by Guarantee</li> </ol>

## Finance

The Institute’s finances are in good health. Whilst employing an increasing number of staff we have returned a small surplus each year. In fact, our investment in those professional staff has enabled us to provide better services which has returned a greater income. Our experience over the past ten years is that investing in professionalism pays for itself.

We have healthy financial reserves which could enable the Institute to operate for a long period in a crisis – as it did for the Coronavirus pandemic. The reserves were originally developed with the foresight and good financial management starting 30 years ago, with the objective to be able to employ a full time officer, paid for by the growth from that investment.

We have learnt though that investment in employment and professionalism actually pays for itself. We average a balanced budget each year and our investment continues to grow.

We haven’t needed the growth to pay for our employees – they have paid for themselves.

So, we have decided to use a proportion of the investment fund, up to £25,000 per year, to invest in services to members and new markets.



We will consider paying professionals for expertise and services we can’t do ourselves. For example, a marketing function is a key objective to drive the Institute forward. If we were to appoint a volunteer without the expertise, we shouldn’t expect a good outcome. We will be prepared to pay for and get professional services that invest in the Institute. For good governance, major investments will be based on sound business cases.

Finance	
<b>Objective</b>	Apply sound financial management facilitating delivery of key outcomes in the strategy and supporting business plans
<b>Targets / Measures</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. A balanced budget or a small surplus to be achieved each year</li> <li>2. Be prepared to use the Institute’s reserves to invest in services, dependent on the production and review of a sound business case for each initiative</li> <li>3. Maintain capital reserves to underpin the Institute’s operations</li> </ol>

## Marketing

To be more effective and business-like we will need to understand our market better. This is something that most successful businesses do, and the Institute has started to adopt since 2022.

We are reviewing where and what our markets are, who we are targeting and therefore the services we offer and how we will provide them. We will aim to reach more diverse audiences but not at the risk of losing our current core membership. Different groups will need slightly different offers. We are considering how we bring in more people who have a practical involvement or interest in fish and fisheries but who are not necessarily professionals or have an academic background. Membership recruitment approaches will need to be tailored according to target audience, country or even region.

We are continually reviewing our offer and the services we provide, as the member survey has indicated. Whilst we have some indicators of what people might want we will need to do more research and seek advice or best practice on how to do this.

We may need to be prepared to abandon some past practices because they may not be relevant or practical in today's world.



We have limited expertise in marketing and, apart from some helpful marketing feedback picked up during the members' survey, we have been gaining professional help with this. We have also appointed a Board member with marketing and communications expertise.

Marketing	
<b>Objective</b>	Apply marketing expertise to inform us better what our market is and what we should offer to best meet market requirements
<b>Targets / Measures</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Seek and deploy necessary expertise by December 2021</li> <li>2. Create a marketing strategy by April 2022</li> <li>3. Review Institute's target audiences, what services we offer and how we provide them, to increase our appeal, membership and to maintain our viability</li> <li>4. Develop a suite of marketing material to support communications</li> <li>5. Strengthen our offer to members and provide products for prospective members</li> <li>6. Build an IFM figurehead</li> </ol>

## Communications

As we develop an understanding of our market, we must also understand how best to communicate with those within it. In the modern world there are many methods of communication. We are using social media, but the majority of members, perhaps because they are mostly older, prefer email. We must understand our market and adjust accordingly.

We have developed and are implementing a communications strategy.

We will be nimble in using social media such as Twitter and Facebook more, and whilst still using email, encourage our older members to engage more with social media.

FISH is our flagship newsletter and is highly rated by our members. We will continue with its high quality and we have enhanced it and the reach of articles within it by e.g. publishing individual articles from FISH on our website publicised through social media.

A good website is crucial in the modern age as it is the virtual window to any business and its services. We will keep it updated and fresh and use the in-built CRM system to enable more targeted communications.

We will be clear about what we are communicating and in consistently branded format.



Marketing and communications, whilst requiring different expertise, are synergistic and should operate together. We have created a Marketing and Communications team to liaise closely with Membership and Policy teams.

Communications	
<b>Objective</b>	Provide a diversity of communications methods to appeal to a wider diversity of customers
<b>Targets / Measures</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Develop and implement a communications strategy.</li> <li>2. Create a Marketing and Communications team to liaise closely with Membership, and Policy teams</li> <li>3. Maintain a diversity of communications techniques</li> <li>4. Use communications nimbly and more frequently to ensure our members have access to the latest news and views and to know IFM is active</li> <li>5. Continue using email, as it appeals most to our core audience</li> <li>6. Encourage more to follow us on Facebook and Twitter in order to receive more regular news and feel more connected</li> <li>7. Apply and develop the functionality available in the new website to enable mote targeted communications via its CRM system.</li> <li>8. Develop a series of video messages/guides</li> <li>9. Consider employing a part-time communications officer</li> </ol>

## Branches

The Institute has 11 branches, where local events are held, providing access to activities for members and the public and partner organisations. The level of activity in each varies between branches and between years depending on the enthusiasm of the branch committee, who are volunteers. We wish to provide a network of thriving and active branches to give more opportunities for members, public and a more diverse audience to engage in fisheries management learning events.

Branches	
<b>Objective</b>	Provide a network of thriving and active branches
<b>Targets / Measures / Activities</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. All branches have at least one event arranged in 2022</li> <li>2. Develop 'Setting up a Branch' Guide</li> <li>3. Hold Good Practice workshop for branches</li> <li>4. Provide ongoing support to Branches</li> <li>5. Apply other ways of increasing local engagement, e.g. by working with other organisations</li> <li>6. Provide regional member lists for Branch Secretaries and update with new members</li> <li>7. Ensure 5 nations' needs addressed</li> <li>8. All branches with at least 2 events in 2025</li> <li>9. Centralise administration</li> </ol>

## Specialist sections

We have five specialist sections, providing technical expertise to the Institute in the following areas: Marine and Transitional waters; Fish and their Environment; Recreation; Fish Health; Fisheries Administration. These have existed since at least 2010; some are more active than others and some are now more relevant than others. We will review and align our specialist sections to be of greatest use and relevance to the Institute, in particular to ensure we are best placed to conduct our advocacy role to greatest effect.

Specialist sections	
<b>Objective</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We have active specialist sections aligned to policy themes</li> </ul>
<b>Targets / Measures</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Conduct review of Specialist Sections to enable them to be more active, relevant and aligned with national policy areas</li> <li>2. Sections provide a source of expertise and inspiration for specialist conferences</li> <li>3. We build technical resilience through professional development, engaging experts and succession planning</li> </ol>



## Implementation and review

This strategy will be implemented via a series of action plans for each of the business areas above, over the five years, and a series of annual business plans.

Progress against those plans will be reviewed quarterly by the Executive Team and annually by the IFM's Board. They will be adjusted according to unforeseen events and priorities that present themselves during that time.

This third version was published in October 2023 following a review September - November 2023.

### Strategy development team, 2020

Chris Mills	President	Paul Coulson	Director of Operations
David Bunt	Chairman	Ian Wellby	Director of Training
Nicola Teague	Chair, Welsh Branch	Lawrence Talks	Executive Director

