

# What are Natural Capital Approaches?

Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authorities (IFCAs) have the unique challenge of managing and protecting inshore environments whilst also balancing the impact of their decisions on inshore communities.

Making choices about fisheries and nature conservation can be challenging - understanding trade-offs, long and short-term benefits and evidencing the decision-making process are tricky.

So, how can IFCAs make evidence-based decisions to maximise benefits for fishers, local communities and society as a whole?

A natural capital approach is about incorporating the wider benefits of the environment into decision making.

Natural capital approaches help make environmental, social and economic benefits of nature visible and quantifiable.

They provide frameworks to consider environmental, economic and social data when making decisions, to factor in a wider suite of benefits that healthy inshore environments offer to society.

These approaches also enable decision makers to balance trade-offs like short versus long-term benefits at local, national and international levels.

## HOW do they WORK?

You can consider things like:

### WATER FILTRATION

Water filtration by oysters cleans our inshore waters, making it nicer for people to swim in and use for recreational activities. This can lead to increased health and wellbeing benefits (with a potential associated drop in healthcare costs), and increased tourism revenue from more people visiting the coast. Clean water is also a better habitat for fish and other marine life, so supports greater biodiversity (including more fish!), consequently supporting recreational and commercial fishers.

### MITIGATING STORM IMPACTS

Inshore habitats protect the coast and reduce the impacts of storms on coastal communities. This means less people affected and less severely affected by storms, and less money lost from damages caused by storms.

### HEALTHY HABITATS

Healthy habitats create space for fish to breed, meaning there are more fish in the sea, so more fish available for recreational and commercial fishers, so more opportunities for recreation, and more opportunities for catching and selling fishing.

Natural capital approaches enable IFCAs to manage and protect inshore environments in a way that benefits both nature and society

**Want to find out more?** For more information and support on how to adopt natural capital approaches, contact: [marineNCEA@defra.gov.uk](mailto:marineNCEA@defra.gov.uk)