

CHAPTER 9

PARTICIPATORY GOVERNANCE IN INSHORE FISHERIES

CO-MANAGEMENT IN ENGLAND AND WALES

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Abstract

First established in 1888, the Sea Fisheries Committees (SFCs) of England and Wales predate the concept of modern inshore fisheries management. However, their organisational structure, function and working practices are closely aligned with principles that are now commonly advocated and associated with good governance, not least because of the extent of participation that they provide to the fishing industry in a largely co-management system. In this chapter, I provide an outline of the institutional framework within which SFCs operate; explain their structures and functions; evaluate their governance credentials and, using my first hand experience of working at a senior level within a SFC, offer a critique of the effectiveness of SFCs as an inshore fisheries co-management model.

9.1 Introduction

For more than one hundred years the majority of inshore¹ fisheries within England and Wales have been managed by Sea Fisheries Committees (SFCs). The first SFCs were established soon after the confirmation of the *Sea Fisheries Regulation Act* in 1888. The Act allowed for the establishment of sea fishery districts and the appointment of a committee, responsible for regulating and developing the fisheries within their district. County councils were established in the same year and it was, by and large, through application by these local authorities to the government that SFCs were created and financially maintained. Today, there are twelve SFCs districts that cover the majority of the inshore fisheries of England and Wales (see Figure 9.1.) Their empowering legislation was consolidated in 1966 and further legislation has provided for additional fisheries and environmental responsibility within their districts.

While all SFCs are established and empowered by the same legislation there are distinct differences between them making it difficult to provide a standard model that accurately describes all of the SFCs (Symes 2002). For instance, there are differences in the geographical scale of the fisheries districts; in the varying complexity of the local authority structure within the districts, which in turn affects the size of the Committee; in the size and structure of the workforce; and in the number and content of the regulatory instruments used by SFCs.

In sections two to five of this chapter, I explain the structure and functions of SFCs, their links with two national fisheries management bodies, and their relationship with the fishing industry. In sections 6 and 7, drawing upon my personal experience of working

¹ Inshore fisheries in the UK are generally considered to be those fisheries within the six-mile fishery limits.

as a Chief Fishery Officer for a major SFC, I provide a critical appraisal of the work of SFCs by examining, first, the extent to which they embody principles of good governance, and, second, their effectiveness in managing inshore fisheries. In the conclusion, I argue that if SFCs are to continue to play a valuable role, they must improve the calibre of local authority members and the impartiality of industry members, and they must be provided with adequate funding and regulatory flexibility.

9.2 Structure of Sea Fisheries Committees (SFCs)

9.2.1 SFC DISTRICTS

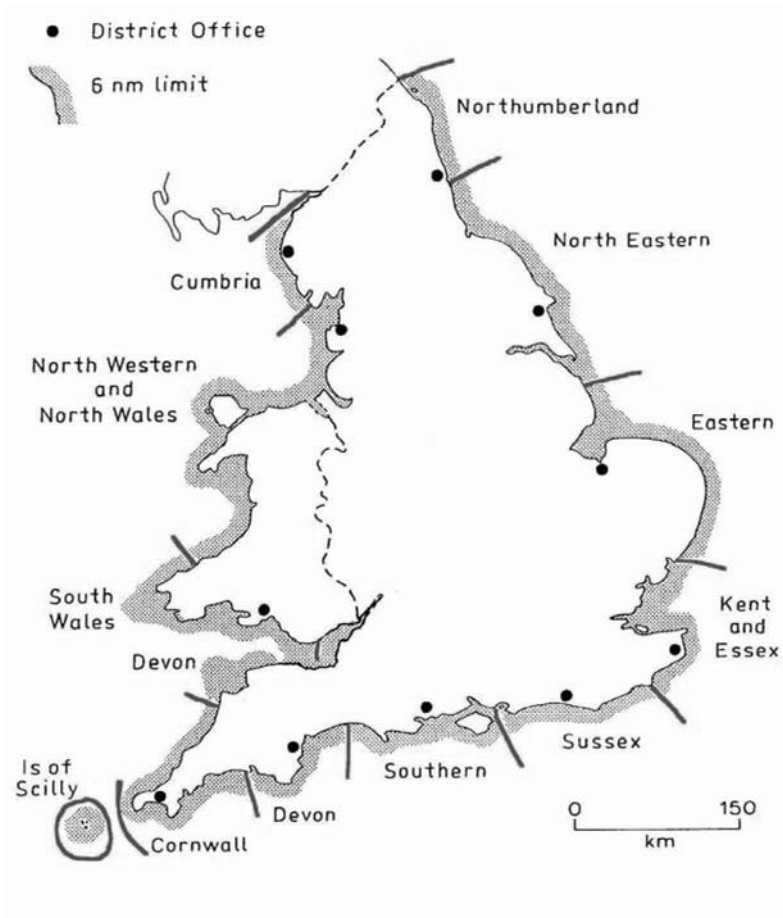


Fig. 9.1. Sea Fisheries Districts (adapted from Symes, 2002)

The SFCs districts vary in size from the smallest (Northumberland) with a coastline of 111 kilometres and sea area of approximately 1,372 square kilometres, to the largest (North Western and North Wales) with a coastline of approximately 1,713 kilometres