

Southern Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority

Full Authority Meeting – 11th June 2026

A meeting of the Full Authority was held at 2pm on 11th June 2026 at the Winchester Hotel & Spa, Worthy Lane, SO23 7AB.

Present

Cllr. Paul Fuller	Isle of Wight Council (Chairman)
Cllr. Rob Hughes	Dorset Council (Vice Chairman)
Cllr. Kate Wheller	Dorset Council
Cllr. John Savage	Southampton City Council
Cllr. Michael Rennie	Hampshire County Council
Cllr. Matthew Winnington	Portsmouth City Council
Dr Antony Jensen	MMO Appointee
Mr Richard Stride	MMO Appointee
Ms Alison Ruscoe	MMO Appointee
Mr Mark Cornwell	MMO Appointee
Ms Elisabeth Bussey-Jones	MMO Appointee
Dr Heidi Guille	MMO Appointee
Mr Neil Hornby	MMO Appointee
Dr Richard Morgan	Natural England
Mr Stuart Kingston-Turner	Environment Agency
Ms Pia Bateman	Chief Executive Officer (CEO)
Mr Sam Dell	Principal Deputy Chief Officer (PDCO)
Dr Sarah Birchenough	Deputy Chief Officer (DCO)
Mrs Jennifer Carr	Chartered Accountant

Senior IFCO David Mayne and IFCO Kyle Payton were also present. Ms Emily Bulled (Association of IFCAs) was present in the public gallery.

Apologies

80. Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Crispin Goodall (BCP Council), Cllr Paul Barrett (Hampshire County Council), Mr Colin Francis (MMO Appointee), Mr Rob Milton (MMO Appointee) and Ms Rachel Irish (MMO).

Declarations of Interest

81. There were no non-pecuniary or pecuniary interests declared.

Minutes

82. Members considered the Minutes of the meeting held on the 12th March 2026.

The CEO provided an update on Recommendations 61 and 62 that explicit reference had been included on the need to read the Annual Strategy and the two Team Plans together to provide transparency and accessibility for stakeholders in understanding Southern IFCA's strategic direction and that an additional page had been added to the Annual Strategy on 'Key Delivery Objectives 2026-2027' linking to, and providing detail on, the Focus Areas for the RPT and CET for the respective Team Plans. The CEO thanked Members for their feedback on the Annual Strategy and stated that it had been submitted to the Secretary of State.

PDCO Dell provided an update on Recommendation 70, that the Compliance & Enforcement Report now includes the relevant geographical areas of the District for offences and offence outcomes related to prohibition areas under relevant regulations where required.

DCO Birchenough provided an update on Recommendation 74, that the link to the public consultation for the MLA submitted by BCP Council for dredge works in Poole Bay/Christchurch Bay had been circulated to Members of the Authority following the June meeting.

DCO Birchenough provided an update on Recommendation 75, that the draft response to the MLA submitted by BCP Council had been sent to the Chair and Vice Chair of the TAC for review and that comments had been incorporated prior to submitting the consultation response. DCO Birchenough thanked the Chair and Vice Chair of the TAC for their support and input.

The minutes were agreed on general consent.

Chairman's Announcements

83. The Chairman provided Members with a brief overview of the recent Local Authority elections which had taken place in May, stating that this had been a busy period for Elected Members. The Chairman reflected that on this basis there had been less opportunity for involvement in Southern IFCA matters and thanked Members and the CEO for their support for the Authority's Elected Members during this period.

Sub-Committees

84. Members received minutes of the Executive Sub-Committee held on 10th March 2026 and the Technical Advisory Sub-Committee held on 5th February 2026.

PROGRESS REPORTS

Chief Executive Officer Updates

85. The CEO welcomed the new Elected Members from Hampshire and congratulated Cllr P Fuller, Cllr M Winnington and Cllr J Savage in retaining their seats following the recent local elections, noting the continuity and organisational expertise which this maintains through the Authority. The CEO also welcomed new General Member Ms A Ruscoe and stated that the Authority is looking forward to welcoming her contributions and perspectives to meetings.

The CEO informed Members that PDCO Dell has tendered his resignation and will be leaving the Authority in August. The CEO reflected on PDCO Dell's contributions to the Authority as one of the longest standing Members of Staff, particularly in shaping and developing the Compliance and Enforcement Team and his progression from IFCO, to Senior IFCO, to DCO and then PDCO during his time at Southern IFCA. The CEO outlined that as part of succession planning there had been an opportunity to reflect on the organisational structure of Southern IFCA and how best to support the Authority's long-term needs, stating that the role of Head of Compliance & Enforcement is currently being advertised. The CEO informed Members that the role will differ from the PDCO role and had been developed to reflect the Authority's evolving organisational needs and the needs of the CET moving forward. The CEO stated that the overarching intention is to build on the considerable technical expertise that already exists within the organisation, and specifically, the expertise held in the CET, while strengthening leadership capacity and supporting the development of talent within. The CEO informed Members that the recruitment campaign closes on 22nd June and interviews are scheduled for week commencing 29th June.

The CEO covered Defra funding, noting that the project funding provided to Southern IFCA over the last four Financial Years is expected to continue for this Financial Year, allowing for the continuation of MPA, FMP and Marine Consents work. However, Defra have in recent weeks withdrawn funding for FMP work from two other IFCA's. The CEO outlined that, at present, it is

not clear why this is the case and AIFCA are exploring this in discussion with Defra. The CEO reflected on the fragility of Defra funding, noting the challenges that delays in receiving the funding can create when managing the business.

The CEO informed Members that Dr Simon Cripps has resigned from his position as a General Member after almost 10 years of dedicated service to the Authority. The CEO passed on Dr Cripps' regards to colleagues, Members and staff and on behalf of the Authority, the CEO expressed sincere thanks to Dr Cripps for his contributions over the past decade and wished him every success in the future.

The CEO informed Members that Defra have recently been consolidating works around Marine Protected Areas and the management across 182 MPAs in English Waters. In doing so Defra have recognised the work of the IFCAs that is being undertaken in the inshore environment, and that fisheries in inshore MPAs are being well managed. The CEO noted that this has been an ongoing process in helping Defra to understand the work that IFCAs carry out in this regard with the AIFCA and the Chief Officers Group playing a prominent role in this.

Following the CEO's report, DCO Birchenough presented to Members a series of social media posts which had been developed and posted for World Oceans Day 2026. DCO Birchenough informed Members that the theme of this year's World Oceans Day was 'Strong Marine Protected Areas for Our Blue Planet' and that Southern IFCA had, starting on World Oceans Day, run a week long social media campaign to highlight the work undertaken by Southern IFCA in relation to MPAs in the District. This covered a general overview, highlighting the MPAs in the District, designated species and management in place, including a focus on the management of bottom towed fishing gear and compliance and enforcement approaches. Further posts focused on Marine Conservation Zones, Compliance and Enforcement in MPAs, the Black Seabream Co-Developed Principles and Juvenile Fish Surveys in The Fleet. DCO Birchenough informed Members that the campaign had been well received and there had been a lot of positive interaction with the posts across Southern IFCA's social media platforms on X, Instagram, Facebook and LinkedIn.

Budget Control Statement April 2025 – March 2026

86. The CEO confirmed that the BCS captured the period 1st April 2025 to 31st March 2026, and that the accompanying paperwork provided a summary of major budget headers as well as more detailed notes to provide an understanding of all positive and negative variance equal to or greater than 1k.

The CEO summarised that, at the end of the Financial Year, the BCS showed a deficit of c.77k, noting that although a deficit for the full year, when compared to the project budgeted deficit of c.204k at year end, Southern IFCA are in a more favourable position by c.126k.

The CEO provided a summary of the Major Budget Headers, outlining that the positive variance captured under the Compliance and Enforcement Header (c.34k) represents c.17k of savings on FPV fuel for FPV Vigilant and FPV Protector (combined), relating to operational prioritisation during the FY, seeing increased use of the drone across the District. The CEO noted that this was the first complete FY that FPV Vigilant had been in service and therefore moving forward the budget header has been informed by actuals rather than sea trials.

The CEO outlined that PPE and enforcement equipment (combined) cost savings (c.7k) reflect in the main team stability noting that 2 Project Officers were successfully promoted to IFCOs following successful internal recruitment (c.4k). An underspend of c.1.5k for access to a National Intelligence System (CLUE) reflected budgeting of licences beyond that which have been taken out to date and that there was also a saving of c.4k when compared to budget under the Prosecutions header.

The CEO outlined that the positive variance captured under the Research & Policy Header (c.18k) related mainly to cost savings anticipated for Byelaw advertisement and legal support (c.10k) and c.2k for the Drift Net Research Project, due to lack of community uptake. The CEO outlined that money ringfenced for Solent Scallop Research (c.2k) had remained dependent on another IFCA providing training during the FY which had not been realised. It was noted that no or minimal costs were incurred under both whelk sampling and whelk monitoring programmes, with industry participants providing voluntary information.

The CEO discussed the positive variance captured under the Business Services Header (c.99k) being due to a reduction in staff salary and pension contributions (c.80k) as a combined result of one IFCA embarking on a sabbatical for the first four months of the FY, as well as the resignation of the Office Manager in June 2025 and a Senior Research & Policy IFCA in August 2025, with these vacancies being carried through. The CEO outlined a saving to date of c.4k for HR legal support. The provision made in the budget for new starter training has not been required during the FY, with additional savings against budget relating to vacant staff positions (c.5.5k). The CEO informed Members that the allocated c.5k for MMO National Training Contributions had not materialised during the FY and that the matter remains under national discussion. It was noted that increased and unforeseen costs associated with insurance premiums across the entirety of the business of c.4.5k had been incurred and reflected increased costs for services.

The CEO outlined that the positive variance under the Capital Equipment Header (c.30k) is due to savings in depreciation on FPV Protector, with the FPV budgeted to be replaced in Q1 with a cost of £120k resulting in higher depreciation in the budget. The CEO stated that this replacement has been delayed, initially due to delays experienced in delivery of FPV Vigilant and more recently in order to await the outcomes of the 2026-2029 AIFCA Spending Review bid and consideration of operational need.

The CEO summarised that a deficit in projected income of c.55k in part related to the sale of FPV Protector, which was budgeted for prior to experiencing the delays in procurement and delivery of FPV Vigilant. An amount c.4.5k related to the anticipated issuing of commercial and recreational permits under the Pot Fishing Byelaw which remains with the MMO quality assurance team, the delay likely being due to the national delivery of Tranche 1&2 Fisheries Management Plans (FMPs). A deficit in projected income of c.8k reflected in part a reduction in project funding from Defra (140k budgeted, c.132k received) following a change in Defra's previous commitments. It was noted that an unexpected income of c.12k from bank interest was received during the FY.

Ms E Bussey-Jones asked for detail on the costs associated with byelaw development. The CEO outlined that this could involve legal scrutiny of byelaw content and wording as well as costs for advertising the byelaw in accordance with due process set out by Defra. The CEO outlined that the costs are dependent on the nature of the byelaw and are specific to each byelaw being developed.

ITEMS FOR DECISION

Draft Statement of Accounts for Year Ended 31st March 2026

87. The CEO and Mrs J Carr discussed with Members the Draft Statement of Accounts for Year Ending 31st March 2026, explaining the parallels of this item with the Budget Control Statement. Members were informed that following Members approval, the Draft Statement of Accounts would be submitted to external auditors for a limited scope assurance report.

The Chairman thanked the CEO and Mrs J Carr for the prudent and careful budgeting for the 2025-26 FY and for finding cost savings during the year, reducing the overall deficit.

Cllr R Hughes proposed the recommendation which was seconded by Cllr M Winnington. All Members were in favour.

Resolved

88. That Members approve the submission of the draft Statement of Accounts to the external auditors for the financial year ended 31st March 2026.

Community Drop-In Surgeries: Outputs from a 16-month Engagement Programme

89. The CEO outlined the premise for the Community Drop-In Surgeries that had been held across a 16-month period and that the report aimed to consolidate the key outcomes, themes and priorities identified through direct engagement with members of the inshore fishing industry and wider community of stakeholders, noting the positive sector balance achieved. The CEO informed Members that the intention of the forums was simple but purposeful, to get out into local communities, listen first-hand to the experiences and challenges faced by stakeholders and creating opportunities for open and informal discussion in accessible settings, attended by the Chair, Chair of the TAC, CEO, PDCO and DCO.

The CEO stated that the forums had provided valuable insight into matters on the coast and that the overall outputs had been constructive and positive allowing for the emergence of several key themes. The forums were well received by the community, and officers have had positive feedback on the coast. The CEO outlined that through the surgeries, 85 stakeholders had been engaged across 11 surgeries, representing 14 ports. 112 matters were raised, through which 14 key themes have been identified. The CEO informed Members that the report details how those matters raised were broken down into themes and how matters had or were proposed to be addressed. Following this, there remained 27 matters which fell into 4 categories; concerns regarding the Southern IFCA Pot Fishing Byelaw, concerns regarding access to fisheries across the District, a call for increases in MCRS and an Essential Fish Habitat policy driver review.

The CEO reviewed each of these categories in turn, outlining the information provided in the report and providing more detail on each matter. The CEO reflected on an overview of each matter, the current status of any relevant management or proposed management, industry feedback which had been received through the Community Drop-In Surgeries relevant to each category, other considerations at a local, regional or national level that were pertinent to that category and then a plan of action to take each matter forward and aim to address the issues raised through the Surgeries. The CEO noted that the matters represent technical areas of work but noted the importance of the full Authority considering undertaking the proposed exploratory works in response to matters raised by the community to determine which areas of work may be viable to progress through into the 2027/28 Financial Year. The CEO reflected on the importance of the Surgeries in helping to guide the work of Southern IFCA and the importance of, whilst recognising requirements at a national level, remaining ingrained in the local communities.

Cllr J Savage raised concerns about Atlantic salmon and the potential implications of work on the Net Fishing Byelaw. The CEO outlined that there were multiple policy drivers for the development of net fishing management in harbours and estuaries and that those related to the protection of salmonids were not proposing to be reviewed, rather focussing on the policy driver related to Essential Fish Habitats (EFH). The CEO outlined that spatial squeeze in this regard is limiting the ability of inshore net fishers to diversify and that this is the focus of the proposed works, aiming to work closely with fishers in the development of pilot research, not to look at management related to salmonids where there may be a risk of impact.

Ms E Bussey-Jones discussed that the Surgeries appeared to have been very beneficial and that the function of the TAC will be in reviewing each element and determining whether it can be taken forward or not, so that the Authority can listen to and explore the needs of the community and either take forward a review or outline why an area of work cannot be taken forward so as

to be fully transparent in this process. The Chairman commented on the benefits of engaging with the fishing community on their terms.

Cllr R Hughes queried whether other IFCA's have taken a similar approach and whether there is any wider information sharing that could take place to identify any common themes for the inshore sector at a national level. Ms Emily Bulled from AIFCA commented that this process was an example of good practice and that AIFCA would encourage replication in other areas, noting that similar work is ongoing in Northumberland IFCA and the national work with inshore fishers being undertaken by AIFCA.

Mr R Stride commented on the proposed review of legacy byelaws noting the importance of maintaining the 12m restriction on vessel length and queried whether any additional criteria could be considered as being required in the future to fish in the District. Mr Stride also welcomed the proposed review of EFH to quantify the level of risk and support the inshore net fishing sector. Mr Stride further welcomed the proposed resumption of the MCRS review and queried whether there was any risk associated with the removal of the Pot Fishing Byelaw from the MMO quality assurance process. The CEO outlined that the review would require returning to a consultation period and therefore the current byelaw would need to be removed from the process but could be returned to that process if the Authority resolved to make no changes after the proposed review takes place. Mr Stride also asked about the outcomes of the FMP programme and whether this would still be taken into account, the CEO confirmed that Southern IFCA would continue to monitor the outputs of the FMP process noting that some proposed outcomes would not be able to be enforced by Southern IFCA, therefore there is a need to align and also pre-empt some of those outcomes tailored to a local level. The CEO and DCO Birchenough confirmed that there was no identified risk in removing the current byelaw from the quality assurance process and that communications with Defra and the MMO would be maintained throughout this process as required.

Dr H Guille commented that there is a need to consider how things are looked at holistically, and how impacts from reviewing certain measures may have a wider impact across the District, as well as considering what is happening in the wider area. For example, species changes in the southwest which are starting to move into the District may start to impact fisheries and wider ecosystems and therefore, where possible, there is a need to look through these reviews at future proofing and to avoid any unintended consequences.

Cllr K Wheller stated that the initiative has been very positive and it is good that the conversation is being continued, noting that for stakeholders to understand why the Authority cannot do something is just as important as why something can be done, otherwise the flow of conversation risks being stopped.

The CEO reflected on immediate actions that were taken as a result of the Surgeries, with fishers raising a possibility for aiding with the incremental lobster size increase and a solution being found quickly to provide gauges across the next three years to support fishers in working toward each increase. The CEO also noted that there had been immediate responses to more challenging matters, accepting when more could be done in response to certain issues and being upfront about this to the community. The CEO also reflected that the Lyme Regis Surgery had resulted in Mr M Cornwell joining the Authority which has been hugely positive.

Dr A Jensen commented that the process had been very beneficial, reflecting particularly on the Pot Fishing Byelaw noting that the proposed measures need to be brought up to date considering developments that had been made in the period since the byelaw was made.

Cllr M Winnington commented on the difference between engagement and consultation noting that engagement is a process that continues and can be iterative and responsive. Cllr Winnington suggested that the stakeholder briefing note from this process should reference all locations

attended and perhaps allow for stakeholders to recommend new places to hold engagement sessions in the future and any intentions to revisit Surgery locations. Cllr Winnington asked for further information on what may be included on the proposed website page, noting that this is targeted at direct stakeholders for fisheries but could also be extended to provide more information to the general public to learn more about Southern IFCA and the role and remit in inshore fisheries. Members discussed the benefits of information sharing to provide detail more widely to the community, the CEO commented that the webpage focus would initial be on the Community Drop-In Surgery outputs but there is an intention to review the website as a whole going forward.

Cllr J Savage commented that there is currently high public interest in water and nature issues and the ability to communicate work currently being done in relation to fisheries is important to share as part of this wider picture. The Chairman commented that the fishing industry and the conservation interests are very much aligned and are looking to work collectively towards shared goals. Cllr M Rennie commented that the issues related to fisheries management can be shared within Hampshire County Council and offered to assist in finding locations for future meetings on Hayling Island.

Ms A Ruscoe noted that the Community Drop-In Surgeries had been a positive initiative and that there is a need to consider how to formalise the process that Southern IFCA will return to these areas and keep the dialogue going. Ms Ruscoe queried whether fishers had discussed any conservation measures in relation to their fishing activities. The CEO commented that the Community Drop-In Surgeries had been a pilot project and that the next round of consultation would be structured out on the ground, for example engaging with fishers while at sea. The CEO commented that fishers are seeking to explore opportunities for reducing impacts and adopting new methods and technologies in this regard, for example gear developments in Poole Harbour which are the subject of a current review of permit conditions. The CEO reflected on EFH and wrecks in the District in this regard and how this would align with the proposed review of legacy byelaws and approaches to spatial management.

The two recommendations were agreed by mutual consent.

Resolved

90.

(1) That Members resolve to undertake a review of:

- a) The Southern IFCA Pot Fishing Byelaw, in accordance with the parameters described in Table 4.1.
- b) The legacy byelaws relevant to fisheries access in the District, in accordance with the parameters described in Table 4.2
- c) The Essential Fish Habitat Policy Drivers under the Net Fishing Byelaw, in accordance with the parameters described in Table 4.3

(2) That Members resolve to reconvene the MCRS Byelaw Review, in accordance with the parameters described in Table 4.4

GUEST SPEAKER:

Presentation by the AIFCA Communication & Engagement Manager on the work of the AIFCA

91. Ms Emily Bulled, Communication & Engagement Manager at AIFCA, presented to Members on the priorities and focus of the AIFCA, giving an overview of the organisation structure and the Annual Delivery Plan. Ms Bulled outlined that the priorities are representing and promoting the IFCAs at a national level and promoting a greater understanding and appreciation of the work of the IFCAs. Under the first priority, Ms Bulled outlined that the intention is to improve visibility, the profile of IFCAs and communications, this being achieve through the development of a quarterly

newsletter and the development of IFCA films called Lead, Champion, Protect and Conserve, each covering a different aspect of the IFCAs' remit and associated work. Ms Bulled outlined a focus on Member recruitment, working with the MMO, with development underway for graphics, animations and Member information packs that will be rolled out to support Members in joining and being part of IFC Authorities. Ms Bulled outlined that AIFCA are keen for this information to also be disseminated through the constituent Local Authorities and invited Elected Members to help share that information as it is rolled out.

Ms Bulled reflected on the anniversary of 15 years of IFCAs being in place and the opportunity to share success stories and how IFCAs have continued to evolve and deliver in the inshore sector since their inception. She informed Members of a national celebration due to take place in collaboration with the Inshore and Small-Scale Fisheries Consortium to reflect on inshore fishing as a livelihood and progress in inshore waters. Members were informed that the AIFCA have a key role with the ISSF, understanding the challenges facing the small-scale inshore fishing industry and how solutions can be found with key policy makers, noting that £6m of the Fishing and Coastal Growth Fund has been assigned to inshore small-scale fisheries.

Ms Bulled covered other programmes including the Coastal Health Programme, providing guidance and reporting processes in the event of a marine event, and future work of the AIFCA, including the establishment of an IFCA Communications Group with key partners from both within the IFCAs and external organisations with an aim to deliver work on virtual briefings, development of the AIFCA website, providing social media training and furthering engagement with Defra and MMO communications teams.

The Chairman thanked Ms Bulled for the presentation and reflected on the good work being delivered by AIFCA. The Chairman emphasised the importance of driving forward communications and developing tangible outputs to further promote the work of the IFCAs nationally. Cllr R Hughes commented that Ms Bulled would be welcome to attend harbour group meetings in Dorset to support the spread of communications and information on the work of the IFCAs. Cllr K Wheller commented that videos of the Southern IFCA coast would be good and could be promoted by the constituent Local Authorities. The CEO informed Members that there is already an open invitation to Ms Bulled and AIFCA to visit the District and partake in Southern IFCA patrols and survey work to gather photos and videos for use in communications.

ITEMS FOR INFORMATION

REM & AI Final Report Phase 1

92. PDCO Dell informed Members that the purpose of this item is to provide Members with a summary overview of achievements and lessons learned following the completion of Phase 1 of the Southern IFCA Pilot Project for REM and AI, covering the period April 2024 to March 2026, focusing on three priority fisheries within the District; Bottom Towed Fishing Gear, Inshore Netting and Pot Fishing on under 12m licenced, registered fishing vessels.

PDCO Dell outlined the project objectives that had been defined for the review and noted that all the work on the project to date had been thanks to volunteers from the fishing industry, including Authority Member Mr M Cornwell. PDCO Dell registered his thanks to all the volunteer fishers involved in the project and commended them on their forward thinking on the use of technology in the inshore fleet.

PDCO Dell outlined that future work would involve working in the Inshore Netting and Pot Fishing priority fisheries, focusing on the work agreed under the Compliance & Enforcement Team Plan for 2026-27. PDCO Dell noted the importance of Southern IFCA continuing to work in partnership with other regional IFCAs to contribute to the delivery of the nationally agreed REM and AI Strategy and with the local fishery industry.

IFCO Payton gave a presentation to Members on the outcomes of the Pilot Project, running through the equipment that is on different vessels and how this is set up, giving Members examples of what can be seen and how the cameras are orientated to best observe fishing practices. IFCO Payton also showed Members the data that is received from the equipment and how sensors on fishing equipment, such as trawl doors, allow for an understanding of when fishing activity is taking place. IFCO Payton outlined that one of the outcomes of the project is an understanding of the robustness of the equipment under sea going conditions and that this has provided valuable insight that has been passed along to the suppliers for future developments. IFCO Payton covered other benefits of the equipment for the skipper of the vessel including being able to observe deck operations when in the wheelhouse and therefore the health & safety of any crew onboard as well as in fish holds or engine rooms. IFCO Payton covered the initial work with pot fishing vessels and that this was already providing a valuable insight into what data can be captured and what future developments may be required to increase the data that can be collected.

Members expressed their thanks to IFCO Payton for an interesting presentation and to all Officers for the work on this project to date.

Members discussed the next steps in this project and PDCO Dell commented on the success of being able to deliver REM/AI within the District on a small budget compared to other projects. PDCO Dell outlined that the project would continue to progress in line with the priorities and objectives initially set, including as one example the ability to count pots using AI noting the technological solutions could help with the challenges of implementing pot limitations as a management measure. PDCO Dell informed Members that a Fishing and Seafood Scheme (FASS) application had been submitted for a new set of REM equipment to be deployed on a whelk pot fishing vessel. Other aspects of future work include in relation to dredge fisheries operating within MPAs for the purposes of compliance & enforcement as well as gathering data to further inform understandings in these fisheries.

Dr H Guille raised that the fishing industry and regulators would have different requirements for collecting data and that this is often not joined up, querying how the additional data collection using REM/AI could be aligned to existing data collection so as not to create an additional burden on the fishing industry. Dr Guille also queried how REM/AI could be used for environmental data collection and who would own the data from the project following its completion.

PDCO Dell outlined that there are challenges in achieving joined up data collection and use but Southern IFCA is working closely with partner organisations and national projects to address and explore solutions for these challenges. PDCO stated that Southern IFCA also do not want to create an increased burden on the fishing industry in exploring the potential for new technologies.

Mr N Hornby asked how the training of AI was progressing. IFCO Payton responded that this has not been developed as much as the REM aspect to date and that there is a need to understand how to get clearer shots of species from the right angle to provide images that could be used to train an AI, noting that this requires significant input from the fishers but is something which is being actively explored.

Mr R Stride commented that the vessels currently being used in the project are of a larger size than some of the small vessels which operate in the District, for example net fishing within harbours and estuaries. Mr Stride stated that this would provide different technical issues to be overcome in using REM and whether there had been any thoughts on how to address this. PDCO Dell commented that there is a need for volunteer fishers using smaller vessels to be able to explore this in practice but that there are opportunities within a variety of fisheries to keep exploring this through the next stage of the project.

Mr Stride asked whether the AI analysis was being carried out onboard the vessel. PDCO Dell responded that it is being explored that AI cameras would be on the vessel with analysis of data as it is collected.

Dr A Jensen asked the benefit for fishers on the investment in using the technology. Mr M Cornwell commented that, as a volunteer in the project, he had found multiple benefits including the ability to monitor crew safety and the ability to have Wi-Fi capability on the vessel through the equipment which aids with catch reporting at sea. PDCO Dell commented that identifying the benefits to industry is a core component of the project and will continue through future phases.

Compliance and Enforcement Report

93. PDCO Dell provided an overview of the work undertaken by the Compliance and Enforcement Team for the reporting period February to April 2026. The data provided in the report is aligned to national IFCA metrics that are reported to the AIFCA and Defra on an annual basis, in addition to the provision of District specific metrics. PDCO Dell outlined sections of the report which now include reference to the relevant geographical areas of the District, including offences and offence outcomes.

Behind the Scenes

94. A Behind the Scenes report was provided by all staff at Southern IFCA covering the period of March to May 2026.

Senior IFCO David Mayne provided Members with an overview of investigations and case files detailed in his Behind the Scenes report. The Chairman reflected on the important role of the Compliance & Enforcement Team within Southern IFCA and thanked all the Officers for their hard work.

Ms E Bussey-Jones queried whether the delays currently being experienced in the court system was impacting the timeline for the system of defendants entering a plea, it was agreed that there is an impact being seen. Ms A Ruscoe queried whether fishers were allowed to continue normal fishing practice while an offence is being investigated, PDCO Dell confirmed that this is the case.

The Chairman asked about the Solent Scallop Fishery in and the level of juveniles being seen in recent surveys and whether this was a positive indication for stock levels. DCO Birchenough responded that the outputs of the survey programme and specifically the end of season survey carried out in March had shown higher levels of juvenile scallops in the Solent and that it is a positive result and it is hoped that these will grow to marketable size to help support the Solent Dredge Permit Fishery. DCO Birchenough noted that there are many variables influencing patterns and trends in scallop stocks, so survey results continue to be analysed with this in mind.

Marine Licencing

95. DCO Birchenough delivered an update report on marine licencing applications (MLAs) received by Southern IFCA during the last quarter. DCO Birchenough identified that 12 MLAs had been received between April and June 2026, 7 of which required a response, and 5 MLAs identified as not requiring a response. DCO Birchenough outlined that the report provided a summary of MLAs where a response was required for the last quarter.

DCO Birchenough informed Members that during the reporting period Southern IFCA had been consulted on the BCP Council MLA for sediment dredging on Dolphin Sands and Shingle Bank for the purposes of beach replenishment, noting that this had initially been raised with Members at the March meeting. DCO Birchenough outlined that Southern IFCA have responded to the MLA consultation, the response raising serious concerns with the proposed works with the

potential for impact on fisheries of commercial and recreational importance that would result in negative social, economic, cultural and community effects, and the overall sustainability of the inshore, small-scale fishing fleet in the Poole Bay and Christchurch Bay areas.

To inform the consultation response, Southern IFCA engaged with representatives of the commercial and recreational sectors through the South Coast Fishermen's Council, Poole & District Fishermen's Association and the Poole & District Sea Angling Association. The response set out recommendations based on reviewing the application and associated documentation, any identified inaccuracies, points where further clarity was requested, points and concerns raised by the stakeholder community and general comments which concerned the process and consultation on the application. DCO Birchenough informed Members that responses had also been submitted by partner organisations including the local MMO team, Natural England and the Environment Agency as well as the fishing community themselves and outlined that post the consultation there are no set timelines for the next stage in this process at this time.

Ms E Bussey-Jones thanked Officers for the quality of the response.

Sector Group Meetings

96. The Chairman invited Members to receive the minutes from recent meetings of The South Coast Fishermen's Council, and The Dorset, Hampshire and Isle of Wight Marine Conservation Group, noting that the next meeting of The Recreational Angling Sector Group was due to take place later in the summer.

Dr R Morgan queried a point raised at The Dorset, Hampshire and Isle of Wight Marine Conservation Group by the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust on scallop hand gathering in the Seaview area and whether this overlapped with any management areas for seagrass. PDCO Dell stated that there had been no reports to Southern IFCA of hand gathering within any prohibition areas in the District.

Date of Next Meeting

97. Members considered the date of the next meeting to be held at 14:00 on Thursday 17th September at Northwood House, Ward Avenue, Cowes, Isle of Wight, PO31 8AZ.

Resolved

98. The date of the meeting was confirmed.

The meeting concluded at 16:54.

AOB

99. As an item of AOB, at the final meeting of the Authority that he would be attending PDCO Dell reflected on his time at Southern IFCA over the last 14 years stating that it had been a privilege to work with such a dedicated group of people. PDCO Dell reflecting on the successes and challenges that had faced the Authority during this time noting the commitment to local decision making by Members and staff which was key to Southern IFCA's success. PDCO Dell thanked the Southern IFCA Team, reflecting on their strengths, professionalism and knowledge and wished the Authority every success for the future. Members expressed their sincere thanks to PDCO Dell for his hard work and dedication to the Authority both as an Officer & Senior Officer, Deputy Chief Officer and then Principal Deputy Chief Officer. Members wished PDCO Dell luck in his future endeavours.

