

Southern Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority

Full Authority Meeting – 12th March 2026

A meeting of the Full Authority was held at 2pm on 12th March 2026 at the Shire Hall Museum, High Street West, Dorchester, DT1 1UY.

Present

Cllr. Paul Fuller	Isle of Wight Council (Chairman)
Cllr. Kate Wheller	Dorset Council
Cllr. Lance Quantrill	Hampshire County Council
Cllr. Rod Cooper	Hampshire County Council
Cllr. Matthew Winnington	Portsmouth City Council
Dr Antony Jensen	MMO Appointee
Mr Richard Stride	MMO Appointee
Mr Mark Cornwell	MMO Appointee
Mr Rob Milton	MMO Appointee
Mr Neil Hornby	MMO Appointee
Dr Richard Morgan	Natural England
Mr Stuart Kingston-Turner	Environment Agency
Ms Rachel Irish	Marine Management Organisation
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

Dr Simon Cripps (MMO Appointee) was present online. Mr Simon Pengelly (Association of IFCAs), Ms Alison Ruscoe (holding a position on the MMO General Member Merit List) and Mr Oliver Hutchinson (Coasts in Mind) were present in the public gallery.

Apologies

53. Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Rob Hughes (Dorset Council), Cllr Crispin Goodall (BCP Council), Mr Colin Francis (MMO Appointee), Ms Elisabeth Bussey-Jones (MMO Appointee) and Dr Heidi Guille (MMO Appointee).

Declarations of Interest

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

Minutes

55. Members considered the Minutes of the meeting held on the 11th December 2025. The minutes were agreed on general consent.

Chairman's Announcements

56. The Chairman reflected on Community Drop-In Surgeries held in Mudeford and Poole and the benefits of engaging with the community through these Surgeries. The Chairman informed Members that the next Surgeries would take place next week in Warsash and Portsmouth, providing an opportunity for fishers in those areas to engage with the Chairman, Chair of the TAC, CEO and staff.

The Chairman referenced a planned celebration to mark the 15th anniversary of IFCA's being put together by the AIFCA which would take place in Northumberland. The Chairman also stated that Rob Clark, Chief Officer at AIFCA, had advised that meetings were taking place with the new Fisheries Minister Dame Angela Eagle and encouraged Members to feed any questions through AIFCA.

The Chairman referenced communications from AIFCA and the benefit these were having in promoting the good work of all IFCA's at a national level and to wider communities. The Chairman also extended his thanks to the Southern IFCA Compliance & Enforcement Team for their work in progressing enforcement cases, referencing the frustrations in extended delays experienced with the court process for prosecutions.

The Chairman also stated that the Authority is still awaiting the provision of project funding from Defra for the current FY. Cllr Quantrill raised that he had contacted Alan Mak MP for Havant, who had stated he was happy to raise the issue of an increase in IFCA funding with Defra as part of the spending review. Cllr Quantrill encouraged other Councillors to speak to their coastal MPs to provide support to Alan Mak MP.

Sub-Committees

57. Members received minutes of the Executive Sub-Committee held on 9th December 2025, the Technical Advisory Sub-Committee held on 6th November 2025 and an Extraordinary Meeting of the Technical Advisory Sub-Committee held on 4th December 2025.

PROGRESS REPORTS

Chief Executive Officer Updates

58. The CEO reflected on Community Drop-In Surgeries held across the District in recent weeks, including in Poole, Mudeford and Lymington, noting that these had been well received and very productive for both the community and Southern IFCA. The CEO outlined that each Surgery has given different insights into the challenges that primarily fishers in the District are facing, with good turnout across different sectors with attendance by members of the commercial, recreational sea angling and conservation sectors. Key themes that have arisen through the recent three Surgeries included gear configurations in the Poole Harbour Dredge Permit fishery, gear conflict in Poole Bay, and concerns on stocks of crab for the commercial sector and flatfish for the recreational sector. The CEO noted that gear conflict falls outside of the Southern IFCA legal remit but it has been insightful to gain further knowledge of where a lack of understanding exists on the role and remit of different regulators within the inshore environment and that this has been a recurring theme across all engagement sessions. The CEO informed Members that the final Surgeries are due to take place in Warsash and Portsmouth and invited Member attendance, particularly elected Members, to be involved in this initiative. The CEO referenced the Southern IFCA Annual Strategy 2026-2027 on the agenda and the intention to continue to develop face-to-face engagement in the coming Financial Year.

The CEO provided an update that three members of staff have passed their 6-month probation, 2 IFCOs and the Facilities & Administration Officer. In addition, two IFCOs have achieved warranted status following an intense programme of training and thanked PDCO Dell for driving this forward.

The CEO spoke on mackerel which has been featured in mainstream media in recent days, providing context on mackerel fisheries in the inshore sector and the sustainable practices used by inshore fishers with regard to this species, focusing on handline gear, harvesting of which has decreased in recent years due to stock shortages. Potential reductions in stocks over recent years are likely a combination of sustained pressures on this pelagic species in the offshore area, combined with the political challenges of managing a stock across multiple political boundaries and an absence of suitable international quota agreements, compounded by climate change impacts. The CEO outlined that in 2025 ICES recommended a c.70-77% reduction in catches

for 2026 to allow for the stock to rebuild, with 2025 seeing the lowest biomass and egg production on record, egg production being down by 41%. The CEO encouraged Members to reiterate, with regard to this issue, a positive message to support the inshore fleet, that the inshore and offshore sectors operate differently, with inshore fisheries being highly regulated and more sustainable and that the wider context is important when considering the relationship between fisheries and specific species.

The CEO commented on the recently laid Draft Statutory Instrument by the UK Government, amending the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations, related to offshore wind developments and compensatory habitats. Currently, developers are required to deliver like for like compensation, for example if developing in an area where a certain habitat is impacted, this same habitat must be compensated for elsewhere. This process appears to be unworkable and resulting in delays to development to meet the Government's 2030 offshore wind targets. The amendment introduces a tiered hierarchy of compensation which will enable developers to draw on a wider range of compensatory measures, delivered through a Marine Recovery Fund, which appears to allow developers to make contributions into the Government operated fund that will then deliver compensatory measures at a larger scale, which may include extending or designating new MPAs as an example. The fishing industry remains concerned about this approach due to further restrictions that may be required on their fishing practice. The CEO outlined that the Government have committed to a public consultation on potential compensatory MPAs by the end of the year and will keep Members updated.

The CEO informed Members that Mr Rob Clark, Chief Officer of the Association of IFCAs (AIFCA) and the Chief of Chief Officers, the CEO of Northwestern IFCA, have met with The Fisheries Minister Dame Angela Eagle, with the meeting focusing on three key themes; the strategic value of IFCAs, funding sustainability and stronger national integration. The meeting sought to highlight the IFCAs' unique, locally accountable governance model, which delivers balanced, evidence-based fisheries management in England's inshore water and is well placed to implement Fisheries Management Plans. As part of the meeting concerns were raised on short-term and constrained funding, and the need for stable, multi-year settlements to support workforce stability and long-term planning. The meeting also sought to discuss closer collaboration with Defra and the MMO, ensuring IFCAs are fully recognised and utilised as essential delivery partners for national fisheries policy. The meeting feedback indicated that The Fisheries Minister was supportive of the IFCAs and the way the IFCA model operates in local communities, recognising the value of localism and community engagement. A commitment from The Fisheries Minister was secured with regard to looking at more secure funding for the IFCAs, rather than the current, more short-term approach, which is very positive.

The CEO spoke to Members about the UK Fishing and Coastal Growth Fund, where there will be £360m of investment into fishing and seafood business and coastal communities across the UK, with England being allocated £304m of this fund. The CEO outlined that it has been confirmed that the MMO will be managing this fund through the existing Fisheries and Seafood Scheme (FaSS). The fund is yet to open but the Government will be providing more detail soon on funding priority focus areas and the process for applications.

The CEO thanked Elected Members for their contributions to the Authority, both via meeting attendance and in championing Southern IFCA's work within their communities, noting the upcoming local elections in May. The CEO wished all relevant Elected Members luck in the election process.

Budget Control Statement to January 2026

59. The CEO confirmed that the BCS captured the period 1st April 2025 to 31st January 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 the BCS shows a positive variance of c.29k against budget, and the annex to the report summarises the narrative of positive or negative variance greater than 1k in addition to contextual notes. The CEO outlined that there is a positive variance in all Major Budget Headers, the deficit arising primarily from awaiting provision of project funding from Defra.

The CEO provided a summary of the Major Budget Headers, outlining that the positive variance captured under the Compliance and Enforcement Header (c.32k) represents c.12k of savings on FPV fuel for FPV Vigilant and FPV Protector (combined), relating to operational prioritisation during the first three quarters, seeing increased use of the drone and FPV Endeavour to align with the PHDP season. The CEO outlined that PPE cost savings (c.5k) reflect both team stability and outcomes of an internal recruitment campaign. An underspend of c.1.5k for access to a National Intelligence System (CLUE) reflects budgeting of licences beyond that which have been taken out to date. The CEO stated that at this stage of the FY, c.6k of savings are seen under the Prosecutions header, with these costs being unpredictable and likely to even out over the course of the FY.

The CEO outlined that the positive variance captured under the Research & Policy Header (c.18k) relates mainly to no costs being incurred to date for Byelaw advertisement or legal support (c.9k) and c.2k for the Drift Net Project, costs which may be incurred later in the FY, subject to community uptake. The CEO outlined that c.1k is being held prior to reserve transfer for monies received from PHDP holders for costs associated with the offset of MSC Certification fees for the fishery (to reimburse monies that were paid upfront by Southern IFCA previously). The CEO stated that money (c.2k) ringfenced for Solent Scallop Research remains dependent on another IFCA providing training.

The CEO discussed the positive variance captured under the Business Services Header (c.95k) being due to a reduction in staff salary and pension contributions (c.72k) as a combined result of one IFCO 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 IFCO in August 2025, with these vacancies being carried through. The CEO outlined a saving to date of c.3k for HR legal support and that costs associated with staff training of c.10k will be realised later in the year, noting the provision made in the budget for new starter training has not been required to date. The CEO stated that c.5k for MMO National Training Contributions may not materialise this FY and that the matter is currently being discussed nationally. Increased and unforeseen costs associated with insurance premiums across the entirety of the business of c.4.5k have been incurred and reflects increased costs for services. The CEO outlined that costs are yet to be incurred, in the majority, from General Member expense claims, these are anticipated to level out towards the end of the FY.

The CEO outlined that the positive variance under the Capital Equipment Header (c.25k) 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 the deficit in projected income of c.141k reflects the outstanding payment of project funding from Defra, c.90k, in addition to c.50k which relates to the potential sale of FPV Protector, budgeted for prior to experiencing delays in procurement and delivery of FPV Vigilant. The CEO stated that an amount of c.4.5k relates to the anticipated issuing of commercial and recreational permits under the Pot Fishing Byelaw, the Byelaw remaining with the MMO quality assurance team. The CEO stated that the delay is likely due to the national

delivery of FMPs and Tranche 1 outcomes. In addition, the BCP Shellfish Sampling contract (c.3.5k) will be realised later in the FY.

The Chairman queried whether increased fuel costs were impacting the ability to use the FPVs. The CEO stated that the Authority is currently in a fortunate position to have a c.8k underspend for fuel and that the reserves also exist for unforeseen circumstances. The issue will arise if fuel becomes difficult to source, in which event there may need to be reprioritisation of taskings.

ITEMS FOR DECISION

Southern IFCA Annual Strategy 2026-2027

60. The CEO reminded Members that, in accordance with the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009, Southern IFCA are required to submit to Defra and the Secretary of State, an Annual Plan which sets out Southern IFCA's main objectives and priorities for the year ahead. The CEO outlined that this is achieved through three core documents, the Annual Strategy, which provide overarching direction and sets the scene, coupled with two Team Plans, which provide detail on operational delivery. The three documents are to be read in combination, noting one cannot exist without the other, and this is an approach Defra are familiar with for Southern IFCA.

The CEO then discussed improvements to the Annual Strategy to clearly consolidate, interweave and provide understanding on Southern IFCA's role in a rapidly changing and demanding landscape, providing a clear and concise directional strategy that provides a golden thread through all of Southern IFCA's work, in a format that is user friendly and accessible for all audiences.

The CEO outlined aspects which had been carried forward from the current Strategy, namely the Southern IFCA Vision, Key Themes of industry collaboration, co-development and partnership working, and ten Strategic Anchors, ensuring that District work maintains direct alignment to wider contexts and both considers and embellishes the National IFCA Success Criteria in the context of changing landscapes in fisheries and conservation, guided by the National High Level Objectives. In addition, the Annual Strategy will also maintain the Organisational Anchor, recognising the importance of supporting, developing, investing in and maintaining the team in their central role of delivering Southern IFCA's functions.

The CEO informed Members that for the 2026-27 FY, the Annual Strategy included the Southern IFCA: 2026-2027 Mission, framed in part in response to discussions had at the Community Drop-In Surgeries, to 'foster empowered engagement that gives stakeholders a voice, builds confidence, drives meaningful actions and creates ownership'. To help achieve the Mission, specific and measurable actions have been identified as 'give a voice', 'build confidence', 'drive actions' and 'create ownership'. For each of these actions it has been identified what Southern IFCA can do, for example a key area of work in addressing common themes raised during the Community Drop-In Surgeries which will help embed Southern IFCA within the community. The Mission will aim to, where possible, intertwine into the Annual Strategy, work which is driven by the community as well as that directed by Defra. The CEO outlined that empowered engagement is about communicating with confidence and knowledge, understanding the audience interests/needs and influencing, where fishers are not just engaging but feel able to contribute and shape results.

The CEO stated that all of the Annual Strategy components have been drawn together to form delivery metrics which explicitly underpin the work that Southern IFCA is achieving, providing a golden thread from the Annual Strategy into the team plans and staff Personal Work Plans, making all those at Southern IFCA accountable and engaged, from Authority Members to each member of staff.

The CEO reflected on the challenge of demonstrating what is being achieved across multiple landscapes through the Annual Report and the new Local Authority Reports, introduced in 2025, providing bespoke reporting to the community based on geography. The CEO outlined that this year, this will aim to be built on to try and differentiate reporting to consider the complexity of our stakeholders, for example the recreational angling sector, to make Southern IFCA's work as accessible as possible for each of our unique stakeholder groups, recognising Southern IFCA's accountability to the community, the 6 Local Authorities and Defra.

The Chairman thanked the CEO for a comprehensive and eye-catching Annual Strategy which highlights the key deliverables for Southern IFCA for the coming Financial Year.

Dr S Cripps recognised the work, knowledge and skill that had gone into creating the Annual Strategy and that the output is likely what Defra and the MMO are seeking from IFCAs, however felt that the current format delivered an overlying set of principles as opposed to a strategic plan with operational priorities, and that it was difficult to understand how progress against the Annual Strategy would be measured and whether stakeholders would be able to fully understand intended delivery across the year. Dr S Cripps also noted that Fisheries Management Plans are currently not referenced.

The CEO thanked Dr S Cripps for his productive feedback. She reiterated that the three documents are designed to be read together, and that this can be made more transparent and accessible through the delivery metrics page. The CEO stated that the inclusion of key priorities in the Annual Strategy will be an important addition, to ensure that the audience is not required to read the digest the Team Plans in order to understand these priorities. The CEO proposed introducing an additional page on delivery objectives that draws in the operational priorities from the Team Plans, namely Black Seabream Implementation & Review, Review of the Poole Harbour dredge fisheries, Review of the Solent dredge fisheries and the application of Remote Electronic Monitoring (REM) and Artificial Intelligence (AI) in inshore fisheries. The CEO provided further detail on each of these priorities on how they work towards fulfilling legal commitments, partnership working, supporting the industry, ensuring ongoing compliance and exploring innovative practices and ensuring holistic delivery of management as fisheries evolve.

The CEO also outlined that, in reference to Fisheries Management Plans, the Annual Strategy references Southern IFCA's delivery of duties in this regard to support the Government vision, and that this work is embedded into Southern IFCA's delivery across all relevant workstreams. The CEO stated that Southern IFCA have not received confirmation that the Defra funding for these additional duties will continue into the next Financial Year, but that Southern IFCA are able to continue supporting Defra due to prudent financial planning which has enabled the retention of the Project Officer for FMPs for an additional 12 months. The CEO noted that the Annual Strategy references ongoing support for Defra works will be subject to spending review outcomes but that Southern IFCA will continue to support the FMP programme through its overall delivery.

Mr R Stride commented that the Annual Strategy was very clear and accessible, and that although some detail may be lacking, it is clear how all three plans are designed to work together. Mr Stride noted that maintaining alignment with national and international directions is referenced but that there is a need for IFCAs to be able to look at the needs of the local District area and deliver solutions in that regard, which risks being taken away when there is an expectation to align with wider policy. Mr Stride outlined that there is a risk when the community feeds into a process which is then also impacted by other national or international requirements, that the feedback provided is not valued which can impact perceptions at a local level.

The CEO reflected on the complexity of the landscape in which Southern IFCA operates, noting that there is a legal structure and duties under which Southern IFCA has to operate, the national IFCA Vision, the Southern IFCA Vision, national directions, and accountability to Defra which all have to be taken into account. The CEO stated that the benefit of the Community Drop-In Surgery

initiative is that it has allowed the community to come together to share ideas, voice concerns and provide feedback which is allowing for the identification of common themes across the District and different sectors. The CEO stated that it is possible to achieve both local delivery in line with wider and legal requirements on Southern IFCA, recognising the complexity and challenge of doing so but that improving the accessibility of communications on why Southern IFCA takes certain actions and what duties are being operated under through the 2026-2027 Mission will aim to provide increasing clarity and transparency in this regard.

The Chairman suggested that future strategies may benefit from the inclusion of case studies and how stakeholder input has helped shape Southern IFCA's direction. Members discussed that this is a benefit of producing an Annual Report as a way of documenting progress and outputs, including through the use of case studies.

Mr R Milton stated that he is supportive of the aims and goals for communication and engagement under the 2026-2027 Mission.

Mr N Hornby raised that a lot of the content of the Annual Strategy is ongoing work and that a strategy should be multi-year. Mr Hornby commented that the ordering of the different elements in the Annual Strategy may require further consideration in order to facilitate understanding the progression from overarching duties and aims to operational delivery.

Cllr K Wheller queried whether there should also be a five-year strategy for the IFCA. The CEO responded that this would be beneficial, however there is a requirement on IFCA's to produce an annual strategy, and, in addition, funding is currently inconsistent which makes it difficult for long-term planning. The CEO stated that this could possibly be something that would be aligned with spending review periods but that this has not yet been possible and the current spending review outcomes for the period 2026-2029 are delayed.

The Chairman proposed the recommendation, subject to the inclusion in the Annual Strategy of the two recommendations listed and communication to Members once these recommendations have been actioned, seconded by Dr A Jensen. Twelve Members voted in favour; Mr Neil Hornby abstained.

Recommendations

61. For the CEO to include explicit reference to 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.

62. For the CEO to add an additional page to the Annual Strategy on 'Key Delivery Objectives 2026-2027' which links to, and provides detail on, the Focus Areas for the RPT and CET from the respective Team Plans.

Resolved

63. That Members approve the Annual Strategy for dissemination to the Secretary of State and publication of Southern IFCA's website prior to 31st March 2026 subject to the above recommendations.

Compliance & Enforcement Team Plan 2026-2027

64. PDCO Dell discussed how the Compliance & Enforcement Team (CET) Plan 2026-2027 would deliver against the Annual Strategy 2026-2027.

PDCO Dell outlined that the CET would continue to deliver against IFCA Success Criteria 2, in implementing a fair effective and proportionate enforcement regime through an intelligence-led,

risk-based approach to compliance and ensuring that investigation processes are in line with statutory requirements.

PDCO Dell stated that in the coming FY, the CET will be focusing on driving operational effectiveness across all areas of the team's work, identifying and introducing operational efficiencies including continuing to explore the use of REM and AI solutions via implementation of small-scale inshore pilot projects. PDCO Dell outlined that the CET will be supporting the Southern IFCA 2026/27 Mission, many deliverables for which are embedded in section 7 of the Plan relating to Community and Stakeholder engagement. PDCO Dell stressed the importance of such engagement and that it is integral to how compliance and enforcement is delivered through maximising voluntary adherence to the rules and regulations, as well as supporting the continued building of trust with local coastal communities and fishing fleets.

PDCO Dell outlined that another focus for the coming FY is the implementation of the Black Seabream Co-Developed Principles across three Marine Conservation Zones (MCZs) in Dorset. And that the CET will be supporting the UK Government Vision, as described in the Joint Fisheries Statement, in relation to control and enforcement, including setting out how the team will continue to work closely and in partnership with other regulators, including but not limited to the MMO, Environment Agency and Cefas.

The Chairman proposed the recommendation, seconded by Mr R Stride. All Members voted in favour.

Resolved

65. That Members approve the Compliance & Enforcement Team Plan for April 2026 to March 2027.

Research & Policy Team Plan 2026-2027

66. DCO Birchenough provided Members with an overview of the Research & Policy Team (RPT) Plan 2026-2027, detailing how the Plan would deliver against the Annual Strategy 2026-2027.

DCO Birchenough outlined two RPT Focus Areas for the coming FY, as detailed in section 3 of the Plan, to review management of dredge fisheries in The Solent and a permit condition review for the Poole Harbour Dredge Permit Fishery. For the former, DCO Birchenough outlined that this would comprise undertaking a wider review of the management of dredge fishing in The Solent, taking account of changes in species composition and the development of the fishery since the introduction of the Solent Dredge Permit Byelaw in 2021. For the second Focus Area, DCO Birchenough outlined that a review of permit conditions aims to ensure the continued delivery of sustainable management for the dredge fishery in Poole Harbour, taking particular account of fishing gear management and application within the fishery in the context of Poole harbour as an MPA, as well as seeking to further develop the Monitoring & Control Plan for the fishery.

DCO Birchenough informed Members that the RPT Plan also details ongoing work relating to supporting Defra delivery of Fisheries Act Objectives, reviews of management interventions and monitoring inshore fisheries through survey work and data collation and analysis.

DCO Birchenough outlined that the RPT will seek to develop communications and engagement to support the Southern IFCA: 2026-2027 Mission, with specific opportunities to be implemented in 2026-2027 through Technical Advisory Sub-Committee reports, community engagement outputs and survey outputs.

DCO Birchenough provided Members with a provision timetable for Member Working Group meetings throughout the year in order to take a proactive approach to this process and maximise

potential input from the Authority. DCO Birchenough noted that this will provide a marker for orientating workstream delivery but will remain a flexible process, with any changes or additional dates determined as required.

Dr R Morgan queried whether the planned work in the Solent also included looking at the use of pump-scoop dredges and what the current position of the Southern IFCA was on this. DCO Birchenough outlined that a paper had previously been taken to the TAC outlining the current position, which is that, at present, there is insufficient data to enable the completion of the required MPA assessments to underpin this work, Southern IFCA are reviewing evidence gaps to determine feasibility. DCO Birchenough also outlined that in addition to the MPA assessments there are a number of other considerations relating to stock sustainability, multi-gear use in a single fishery and accessibility which also require careful considerations.

Mr M Cornwell queried whether, regarding scallop dredge fisheries, there was any proposal to look more widely across the District. DCO Birchenough outlined that the relevant byelaw in this case, the Solent Dredge Permit Byelaw, has a fixed geographic distribution for The Solent, focusing the area of work in that part of the District, however whilst there are not any plans currently to explore survey work or management reviews of scallop fisheries in other areas this could be a future area of work based on consideration of the underpinning evidence and any potential need for data or intervention. Mr M Cornwell spoke of the benefits of managing scallop fisheries using similar measures across the District.

Mr R Stride expressed disappointment that the Minimum Conservation Reference Size (MCRS) review was not able to be progressed at this time due to the timelines for the FMP process. The CEO reflected on the relationship between national and local delivery and that the review remains ongoing, albeit subject to external constraints at present.

Dr S Cripps stated that it would be beneficial during the coming FY to see how the outputs from the Juvenile Fish Surveys are helping to inform or support management. Dr S Cripps also queried the potential for surveying wrasse populations, linked to monitoring of the Live Wrasse Fishery. DCO Birchenough outlined that the Southern IFCA would not have the scope or technical expertise to conduct wrasse populations sampling, noting that this is a proposed action within the Wrasses Complex FMP, which would be the most appropriate route for this type of survey work. DCO Birchenough outlined, in relation to the Juvenile Fish Survey, that data from the Southern IFCA surveys has been fed into relevant FMPs and that the additional work this year to age group bass sampled in the survey can also be fed into the Bass FMP as part of ongoing implementation work.

Members discussed bass fisheries in the District and changes observed over time in the prevalence of larger individual fish and how the size frequency of fish populations may relate to fishing for those species.

Dr A Jensen proposed the recommendation, seconded by Cllr K Wheller. All Members voted in favour.

Resolved

67. That Members approve the Research & Policy Team Plan for April 2026 to March 2027.

GUEST SPEAKER:

Coasts in Mind: 100 Years of change in Poole Harbour

68. Mr Oliver Hutchinson, Project Officer for Coasts in Mind Dorset presented to Members on the Coasts in Mind Project, which aims to map 100 years of coastal change through community heritage. The project is run by the Museum of London Archaeology in partnership with

DigVentures and Humap, funded by a grant from The National Lottery Heritage Fund, Lloyd's Register Foundation and Historic England.

Mr Hutchinson explained how the project had arisen and the locations where the project was piloted, outlining how working with the community across all aspects of coastal life, enabling storytelling in a way which could be appreciated and understood, had enabled the gathering of historic information to provide an insight into different activities and changes over time.

Mr Hutchinson outlined the application to Poole Harbour, as one of four locations for this project, collating photographs, videos, documents and any other materials that provide an insight into historical coastal life. The project is seeking input from the community on the indicators that could be included, for example recreational or commercial fisheries, certain habitat types or other coastal industries, and the archive is coming to the point of being made public to facilitate public contributions to support input from Poole Museum and other existing archives. The project is based on a bespoke platform to provide an engaging way for people to view the information and learn about different topics, when a particular information record is selected the base map will reflect Poole Harbour at the time the record is relevant to and information can be searched in 20 year timeframes as well as by keywords. Mr Hutchinson gave an overview of the type of information that had been provided to date, showcasing images and videos related to fishing activity.

The project has already had input on fishing in Poole Harbour, with many fishing families providing information and records for inclusion in the database, as well a pop-up event being held near Fisherman's Dock which was well attended. Mr Hutchinson informed Members that information is still being sought for Poole Harbour and encouraged anyone to reach out with any relevant information or if they know anyone from the community who may wish to contribute.

The Chairman thanked Mr Hutchinson for an interesting and engaging presentation. Members discussed the benefits of the project and the importance of protecting and providing historic records both for understanding the history and importance of, for example inshore commercial and recreational fishing in the Harbour, as well as for understanding change over time. Members discussed where records may be held and offered support to the project. Contact information for Mr Hutchinson and links to the project website (<https://cim.mola.org.uk/>) will be sent round to Members following the meeting.

ITEMS FOR INFORMATION

Compliance and Enforcement Report

69. PDCO Dell provided an overview of the work undertaken by the Compliance and Enforcement Team for the reporting period November 2025 to January 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.

Cllr R Cooper requested clarification that the number of offences detected had increased over the last 12 months. PDCO Dell confirmed that this was the case specifically with reference to the Solent Dredge Permit Byelaw fishery. Dr R Morgan queried whether the offences detailed in relation to Prohibition Area 16 under the Bottom Towed Fishing Gear (BTFG) Byelaw 2023 were related to different vessels, PDCO Dell confirmed this was the case. Cllr M Winnington queried where Prohibition Area 28 under the BTFG Byelaw 2023 was located, PDCO Dell confirmed this Prohibition Area was located on the northeast coast of the Isle of Wight. PDCO Dell provided Members with geographical detail on the BTFG offences referenced. Members requested that this detail be included in future Compliance and Enforcement Reports for context.

Cllr M Winnington queried whether there had been any outcomes from the prosecution case management hearing detailed in the report which had taken place in February. PDCO Dell stated

that not guilty pleas had been entered and a trial scheduled for May 2027. PDCO Dell reflected on the current delays being experience with the court system.

Recommendation

70. That the Compliance and Enforcement Report for future meetings includes the relevant geographical areas of the District for prohibition areas and, where required, for offences and offence outcomes.

Community Engagement – Black Sea Bream

71. DCO Birchenough provided Members with an overview of planned engagement activities with the Dorset and wider community ahead of the launch of the Black Seabream Co-Developed Principles in three Dorset MCZs (Purbeck Coast MCZ, Poole Rocks MCZ and Southbourne Rough MCZ) on 1st April 2026. DCO Birchenough outlined that engagement would be carried out through the provision of information materials both by email, through the Southern IFCA website and social media, and in-person on the coast. Information materials have been produced in a variety of formats including a leaflet in two different styles, a poster, a information leaflet on the data collection programme, a waterproof copy of the handling guidance and a Black Seabream Custodians sticker for all fishers and charter businesses who are engaged with black seabream fisheries in the three MCZs to display on their vessels. DCO Birchenough also stated that relevant businesses would be encouraged to promote the Co-Developed Principles via their websites and any organisation, business or community group that wished to promote their support for the Co-Developed Principles would be invited to add their logo to the Dorset Community section of the black seabream webpage on the Southern IFCA website.

DCO Birchenough stated that the intention for Year 1 of the Co-Developed Principles was on engagement and encouraging compliance with the voluntary measures. Southern IFCA will continue to work with the Dorset Community in the implementation and monitoring of the Co-Developed Principles and following the end of the breeding season on 31st July 2026, a review will be carried out considering all relevant feedback, input and evidence that has been gathered during Year 1.

Behind the Scenes

72. A Behind the Scenes report was provided by all staff at Southern IFCA covering the period of December 2025 to February 2026.

The Chairman thanked Officers for their detailed reports.

Marine Licencing

73. DCO Birchenough delivered an update report on marine licencing applications (MLAs) received by Southern IFCA during the last quarter. DCO Birchenough identified that 10 MLAs had been received between January to March 2026, 4 of which required a response, and 6 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 since the publication of the agenda, an MLA had been received for consultation submitted by BCP Council, proposing dredging works in a defined area over Dolphin Sands and Spit Bank to obtain sediment for beach replenishment within the region. DCO Birchenough provided Members with an overview of the proposed works. DCO Birchenough outlined that Southern IFCA had responded to a Scoping Study in October 2024 ahead of the submission of the full licence application for this MLA and that in this response an offer had been made to provide data held on fishing activity in the relevant areas for both

commercial and recreational interests, and an offer to help facilitate further engagement between the applicant and relevant stakeholders. DCO Birchenough outlined that the full licence application was currently being reviewed to inform a response, noting that serious concerns have been raised by the local fishing industry on the potential for significant impacts on both commercial and recreational fisheries that would result in negative social, economic, cultural and community effects, and the overall sustainability of the inshore, small-scale fishing fleet operating in the Poole Bay and Christchurch Bay areas. DCO Birchenough stated that input would be sought from relevant fishers' groups/organisations and individual fishers across both the commercial and recreational sectors to inform the response. DCO Birchenough provided Members with details of the current public consultation and how stakeholders can input to this process.

Dr S Cripps raised that the Southern IFCA response should make reference to the Southern IFCA's conservation duties as well as the implications for the fishing sectors. DCO Birchenough thanked Dr Cripps for his feedback and outlined that additional organisations will also be consulted through this process such as Natural England and the Environment Agency. Dr R Morgan outlined that Natural England would provide a response and will query at Natural England who is developing this response. The Chairman requested that information on the public consultation be provided to Members after the meeting. The CEO outlined that consideration would be given to providing an organisational response as well as a response detailing concerns raised by the fishing community. Members discussed the types of MLAs that the IFCA is consulted on, DCO Birchenough outlined that licences related to maintenance, capital or aggregate dredging works form the majority of those received that require a response from Southern IFCA, and that these are all considered separately. Dr A Jensen queried whether assistance could be provided by the Chair and Vice Chair of the TAC in reviewing the response, DCO Birchenough thanked Dr A Jensen and Mr R Stride for their support and will aim to provide a draft copy of the response for review prior to submission. Mr R Stride provided Members with detail of the concerns held by the local commercial fishing industry with regard to the proposed works.

Recommendation

74. That Members of the Authority be provided with a link to the public consultation for the MLA submitted by BCP Council for dredge works.

75. That the draft response to the MLA submitted by BCP Council for dredge works be reviewed by the Chair and Vice Chair of the TAC to support Officers prior to submission.

Sector Group Meetings

76. The Chairman invited Members to receive the minutes from recent meetings of The South Coast Fishermen's Council, and The Recreational Angling Sector Group, noting that the next meeting of The Dorset, Hampshire and Isle of Wight Marine Conservation Group is due to take place in April 2026.

Members discussed the point in the Recreational Angling Sector Group minutes that the RSA sector generally were happy with the current recreational bass limit of 2 fish per person per day and wished to further understand the rationale behind the proposed increase to 3 fish, recognising the benefit of having the MMO in attendance to provide additional information on such points at these stakeholder meetings.

AIFCA Draft Annual Delivery Plan 2026-2027

77. The CEO informed Members that the Association of IFCA's draft Annual Delivery Plan for 2026-2027 had been received from Rob Clark, Chief Officer at AIFCA and invited Members to provide any feedback.

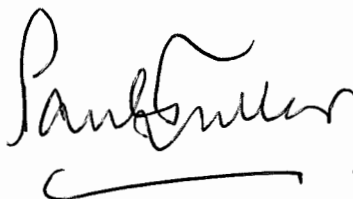
Date of Next Meeting

78. Members considered the date of the next meeting to be held at 14:00 on Thursday 11th June 2026 at the Winchester Hotel & Spa, Worthy Lane, SO23 7AB.

Resolved

79. The date of the meeting was confirmed.

The meeting concluded at 16:50.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Paul Grier", with a horizontal line underneath.